



**The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience
of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born.**

**Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute
Doctor of Psychotherapy by Professional Studies**

2018

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SUMMARY PLAN

DOCTORATE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY BY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES PROGRAMME PLANNING

Name: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor
 Post Currently Held: Psychologist in private practice
 Title of Final Programme: Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies

Title of the final Project: The Forgotten Parent: exploration of the lived experience and psychological challenges of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

Composition of Proposed Programme of Study

Module	Module Title	Credit	Level	Completed/To Be Completed		Passed
				Semester	Year	
DPY 4421	Review of Personal and Professional Learning (RPPL)	20	7	Second	2019	Yes
DPY 4442	Research Challenges	40	7	Second	2019	Yes
DPS 4443	Practice Project (PEP)	40	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
DPY 4443	RAL 7 at Level 7	40	7	Second	2019	Yes
DPY 4444	Programme Planning	40	7	Second	2020	Yes
RAL at Level 8	Major project capability	120	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
DPY 5547	Professional Knowledge*	40	8	Second	2021	Yes
DPY53 60	Final Project	360	8	First	2022	Yes
Total credit in Programme		540				

*These are the professional knowledge seminars I have attended:

- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): Foundations and Innovations". Dr Zoe Boden February 2021
- Writing your book: from Dissertation to Publication. Dr Sonja Falck's. November 2020
- Narrative Life Writing Genres as Tools for Academic and Professional Development. Dr Mona Livholts's. 2020
- Phenomenology – what to consider before starting. Dr Rupert King.. December 2019
- Exploring embodied imagination in the research process. Dr. Deborah Kelly July 2019
- Creativity in academic writing: from data collection to publication. Dr Marie Adams and Dr Sofie-Barger-Charleson.. March 2019
- Experience – near approaches to practitioner inquiry. Metanoia Institute. Dr Jonathan Wyatt. January 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I want to thank God for all His blessings in my life and his guidance when fulfilling this dream. For the family that I grew up with, which leads me to thank my father, who has been one of the inspirations for this project, his interest and support in this journey have actually brought us even closer. To my beautiful mother in heaven, who is my angel protector and forever an example of kindness and love. My eldest brother, who helped me understand how my parents had a different role with him than with me, and who, in the final stages of this research, joined my mother in heaven and together served as an inspiration to continue in life even when life hurts. My sister, best friend and colleague who has been consistently in every corner of my life, supporting, encouraging, and especially loving me.

An immense thank you to my family over the years; all of you have been amazing in supporting me and understanding the time I had to invest in this project and each of the assignments of my doctorate journey. My husband, who showed me the beauty of fatherhood through his active role with our girls, read many of my drafts and encouraged me to persevere during the inevitable difficult times on this journey. My beautiful daughters showed me the beauty of parenting and were patient, understanding that mommy needed many hours for her doctorate. The words “mommy, I am proud of you” gave me unlimited energy to finish this project.

This research would not be possible without my amazing participants, who generously took the time and effort to share their experiences and allowed me to enter their world - I wish to express my gratitude to them for sharing their stories with me. I am also grateful to my patients who, for more than 15 years, have shown me the beauty of helping others. Being part of their life has given meaning to mine.

My profound appreciation to my Academic Adviser, Dr Alistair McBeath, who has been very encouraging and supportive on this journey, and to my Academic Consultant Dr Kate Reid, who guided me through the research process and encouraged me to try new ways of doing things. Also, Dr Joel Vos who initially helped me clarify my research ideas and map the road ahead.

I am grateful to my clinical supervisor Josie Remzi, who gave me her guidance and time throughout this journey, and also offered me the beauty of self-compassion during difficult times.

My critical friend Jayne Dales-Tibbott, and my colleague and friend Penny Brown, who helped me by engaging in detailed discussions about my findings and supporting me to feel confident about my research process. Her empathic responsiveness and companionship gave me confidence that everything was achievable.

I want to express my love and thanks to my beautiful friend “comadre” Mariela and my friend Mayret, who have been there at every success and obstacle of this journey, not just listening to me but also encouraging me to continue.

Finally, I want to thank Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University, their professors and administrative team, for their help and collaboration during this project.

ABSTRACT

The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

In today's Western society, fathers have a different and more active role than their fathers. While there has been a great deal of research on the mother's emotions, fatherhood's consequences have received less attention in the literature. This study explores the way fathers think about their experience of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood.

An exploratory qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as the study focused on understanding fathers' meaning and experiences. Seven fathers were recruited using snowballing sampling. The mean age of participants was 34 years (range=32 to 41 years); and the mean age of their children was 2.5 years (range=1 to 4 years).

Four superordinated themes were revealed: Development of contemporary fatherhood; Fatherhood Challenges; Meaning in Life; and Father in Action. The findings expand on our understanding of fathers' experiences, and suggest fathers face a development between the role of their own father in comparison with their own role. This leads contemporary fathers to face many challenges, needing them to adapt their meaning in life to family necessities, and to be active in the upbringing of their children. This research serves to grow in the knowledge and awareness of how fatherhood has changed over the years and provides tools to offer fathers psychotherapeutic support.

Keywords: fatherhood, IPA, lived experience, first-born.

*"To empower women,
we need to empower fathers."*

Margarita Chacin

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter of my dissertation will share my rationale for conducting the research project; the study's aims and research question are stated in the introduction. In seeking to contextualise the study, consideration of knowledge on the lived experience of fathers is discussed.

Engaging in reflexive and reflective thinking during my research has been extremely important, due to my commitment and connection to the topic area. This has been supported through discussions with my Academic Advisor, Academic Consultant, Critical Friend, Personal Supervisor, and peers throughout the process. In the following sections, I located myself with the subject matter under investigation both professionally and personally.

1.1 Introduction

In today's western society, fathers have a different and more active role than their own fathers. While there has been numerous research on the mother's emotions, the consequences of fatherhood have received less consideration in the literature. The current national clinical guideline in the United Kingdom recognises the importance of early recognition and intervention in poor mental well-being for women during pregnancy, and up until their first year postpartum. It is estimated that up to 39 per cent of women experience mental health problems during this perinatal period (Marchesi *et al.*, 2016).

Palkovitzs (2002) demonstrated the importance of fathers' development and well-being. For example, from 8 per cent to 16 per cent of men report postpartum depression (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). Some men also experience increased depression during their partners' pregnancies. Fathers' depression during pregnancy and after the child's birth can adversely affect

both the mother and child (Junge *et al.*, 2016). Significant correlates of fathers' postpartum depression include: negative emotions, financial concerns, balancing work-life demands, low education levels, and marital problems (Kumar, Oliffe, and Kelly, 2018). Acknowledgement of perinatal depression has been made by organisations such as the Cross Reach Charity and Mind Org UK. However, it seems that no support is offered for fathers after this period.

The empowerment of women seems to have been significantly supported and developed. In England, around 133,000 mothers with toddlers as their youngest child were employed in 2017 (65.1 per cent), compared to 55.8 per cent in 1997 (Labour Force Survey, 2017). Therefore, it seems significant to enable the empowerment of fathers.

Fathers are more involved in active childcare than some decades ago (Parker & Wang, 2013). As father involvement increases, questions about the consequences for his mental health and well-being is gaining importance.

Psychological challenges are part of life. As Erikson (1968) wisely demonstrated in tracing the crises of development from infancy to adulthood, the specific challenges change us as individuals, but they are ongoing as long as we are.

Society has become more receptive to the increased presence of both parents. Men who start a family today are expected to create their own role as a father and find a balance between their job, childcare, housework and hobbies, on an equal footing with women (Solberg & Glavin, 2018).

Predictors of fulfilling fatherhood, especially in different fatherhood contexts, are still relatively unknown. Nevertheless, the father's active involvement in child-rearing is nowadays taken-for-granted in many societies (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006).

Several studies have researched the psychological impact on fathers following a child diagnosed with a chronic condition, or when an unexpected event has happened. There seems to be a paucity of studies when children and parents are physically and mentally healthy. However, it seems relevant to consider the psychological consequences caused by the sometimes-rapid change occurring in the lives of parents and particularly fathers; this study may act as a pilot as it will explain and validate the lived experiences of fathers.

My fascination with fathers' experiences throughout the early childhood of their children correlates significantly with personal experience. There is a gap of 15 years between myself and my siblings, and I consider my father was one person with them and a different one with me. He was physically and emotionally available to me, while my siblings describe a paternal figure as a financial provider more than a present figure. This will be widely explained when explaining the biography of the researcher.

I have evidenced my daughters' father enabling and empowering me as a woman; this has allowed me to develop my professional career. I have also experienced his struggle and the different role he has compared to his paternal figure.

In addition to my subjective experience, I have worked with clients struggling with the fatherhood role and note a substantial rise in this respect. They are demonstrating high levels of anxiety regarding the mentally and physical demands concerning the well-being of their children. In addition to this reasoning, it seems to be a lack of information and acknowledgement of how the demands of fathers have changed over the last decades; and how they seem to be struggling, holding guilt, or not feeling understood. It seems reasonable to assume that specialists in the psychotherapy world who work with fathers would benefit from the literature that validates and explains the psychological challenges they go through.

There seems to be a lack of UK studies of fathers in general, especially during their offspring's early childhood. One of the main objectives of this research is to validate and acknowledge the fathers' psychological challenges. In addition, this research aims to grow in knowledge and awareness to offer a supportive psychotherapeutic tool to fathers.

In this line of ideas, my research will attempt to answer the question: What do fathers think about their experience of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood?

1.2 The researcher, telling my story...

When people have asked me why I am so interested in fatherhood there are several answers, but the main reason is that I have a father and my daughters have a father. I consider it is relevant to present my personal context, as it provides insight into the enthusiasm behind my choice of topic. It also locates me as the researcher within the context of the research. Here I present my personal history, which is inseparable from my current research.

I was born in Venezuela, and I am the youngest of three children. I was born when my brother was 17 years old and my sister 15. When I was born my mother was 39 years old, and my father 53. Compared to my peers, I had older parents who were most likely to be traditional in their upbringing ideas. The reality was that my parents described themselves as "being already tired of so many rules and restrictions imposed on my siblings". At times, my sister was even stricter than my parents were. However, in a nurturing way, I had four people making me feel very wanted and loved.

Some aspects were however very traditional, my father was the financial provider and my mother a stay-at-home mother, but with an academic background. She was a teacher and finished her masters when I was five years old (I have memories of going with her to some lessons). She also mentioned that even though I was not seeing her going out to work, she wanted us to have an image of her of as an intelligent woman. She worked from home as

an estate agent, but this job was significantly linked with my father, and he was still the one who had absolute control over it.

1.3 My own father

I want to start this chapter by positioning my own personal experience about having a father. My father retired the year that I was born, which meant that I grew up with a physically present father; he had his own business as an estate agent. However, he did not have to commit to a working schedule, which meant that he could drop me off and pick me up at school. I have vivid memories of him taking me to the playground when I was a young child and pushing me on the swing for long periods. Moreover, I think because of my father, I developed a significant connection with my tactile sense as ever since I was a young child he would scratch my legs and back before going to bed.

While growing up, my father was very encouraging about me taking risks and following my dreams; he was also very academically-orientated, although this felt like pressure at times. This might be linked with me following my doctorate dream and researching about fathers; maybe it has much to do with his inspiration in these areas.

The death of my mother when I was 20 years old was the most painful experience in my life. Reflecting on my experience, I felt I had to go through my grief process very quickly, as six days after my mum died I went back to university, and my life had to continue as 'normal'. I was crying most of the time on my own, and I took on the responsibility to look after my dad, as I was worried that something could happen to him. Once more, I showed a 'strong face' while I was broken inside. After a couple of years, I could look back and feel that my mother passing away was an experience of healing and connection with life. I learned to value life, people around me and the Blessing to have had a wonderful mother for that period of my life.

I always felt the love of my father, especially when I needed support in practical ways. I moved to the United Kingdom eight years ago, and despite being 4,812 miles away I feel closer to my father than ever; now, he is 88 years old. Regarding our communication, we are forced to talk to each other on a personal level as he seems more interested than ever before.

During the writing stage of this dissertation, I realised that my father was one of my inspirations and protagonists of this journey. So, because of that, I created a set of questions and interviewed him.

I asked him about his father, realising that he would see changes in three generations. His answer was:

"My father was a man devoted, almost totally, to agricultural activities. That was his passion since he was a child since his father was a farmer and breeder. He more eagerly attended those activities than care for his children, since in turn, his father (that is, my grandfather) was a farmer. This, it is added that the role of raising children was of the woman."

I never met my grandfather as he died before I was born. However, in my father's answer I can clearly see a complete absence of a father as an emotional figure; his response is based on him as a working force and the example set by his own father. In addition, there is no expectation to be present as clearly this was the role of the woman. I also found it interesting how proud he sounded when talking about his own father, which shows acceptance and satisfaction with his upbringing.

I asked him about what memories he had of his own father:

"I lived with my father half since he and my mother lived separately. I lived a short time with him, from 2 years to 5 or 6 years. I remember very little of that period, since all day he was in the field performing his agricultural work"

So once again, besides being physically absent, he felt that his father was fulfilling his role successfully as being a 'devoted' worker. However, when I

asked him if he could change anything about his father what would it be, he said:

"During those years of my childhood I would have wanted to share with him for a long time since I have very few memories of the moments, I was with him".

Which seems a confrontation, as an adult, of memories that he does not have when growing up more than an emotional lack while he was a child. Additionally, I asked if he could give you advice; what do you think he would tell you? My father answered:

"There is no doubt that he would say to me, 'son, dedicate yourself to working in the fields so that you can form as an honest and industrious person'".

Once again, clearly seeing the focus on the work defines his personality and life in general.

However, I also asked him about his own experience as a parent, and he explained:

"I do not consider myself a perfect father; I would have liked to have the tools and channel information that we currently have for raising children. I did what was up to be enough to raise them, but if I were to re-initiate, as a parent, there is no doubt that he would change some mechanisms or methods for rearing. I think I missed the opportunity to be closer to my children, to share more of my time with them and pay more attention to other activities."

Of course, as a daughter listening to this and even re-reading it, I am confronted with mixed feelings. First, I am proud of my father to realise his lack of resources while raising us, but conscious of the time and activities he missed out on to share and be with us. Furthermore, when I directly asked how his role has changed over the years, he said:

"There is no doubt that if both, Audio Emiro and Josymar, were born again, it would provide them with closer attention to them, I would enjoy their

childhood more, for which effect I would take time away from my professional and individual activities. Regarding you, there is no doubt that I felt you closer with regarding your sibling, as you will remember we shared many pleasant moments".

I can see in his answer that he managed to identify (as described previously) how he was one way with my siblings and another with me, especially around connecting through activities.

I also decided to ask him about what he likes most about being a father. He answered:

"first have children and, of course, have enjoyed the presence and closeness of beings whom I love. I have enjoyed the opportunity to have been useful to my children, and to have shared with them pleasant moments in my existence".

And when asked about most challenging about being a parent? He said:

"I think that it is not easy to understand the child's feelings fully, his anguish, his joys, his concerns, especially when one has not previously been educated or trained to be a father. I did the best I could and tried to do well. Of course, if I had to assume the role of father, would change some attitudes and procedures".

I can see in this answer a massive amount of humility and consciousness around his lack of emotional connection and the realisation that it was not his intention, and that he used the available resources.

Finally, I asked him his thoughts about contemporary fatherhood? What did he think had changed? He said:

"Currently, parents have a greater degree of information regarding the upbringing of children; there are more tools that allow training and information to carry out the activity of being a dad. However, there are cases in which the news channels are so wide and so easy access, especially for

children, that this forces parents to be very attentive and careful so that this information (sometimes distorted) does not harm the child's mentality".

I can see his answer still being rational, rather than emotional. However, I can also see the lack of information and resources that traditional fathers had available, which at times might have reduced the guilt of doing the best they could in their fatherhood role.

While going through this last answer, I notice myself getting emotional and apprehensive; I can feel my chest tightening. Of course, I know there is an emotional connection with my father. However, I cannot stop thinking about how compassionate I feel towards the lack of emotional affection he had when growing up and how easily, as a contemporary parent, we can judge without really going deeper into personal experiences.

1.4 Experience with the fathers of my daughters

I have two daughters; my eldest is 12 years old, and I lived together with her father till she was around two and half years old. There were many reasons why we decided not to be together anymore. However, during the years that they had physical contact (he is now living in Chile), I would describe him as a hands-on father and affectionate towards his daughter, which allowed me to continue pursuing my career progression as a mother.

My youngest daughter is four years old. From the moment he knew I was pregnant her father took an active role towards the pregnancy and me as a woman, from attending to the appointments and scans to being physically and emotionally present during the delivery of our daughter. I have been with my husband for nine years. Since we decided to be together, it has been fascinating to see how he has managed to build a close relationship with my eldest daughter and be a father figure at every level. After analysing my interviews, I asked my eldest daughter to draw a description of what a father was to her (see Appendix A). Her description matched my husband, her 'daddy Dennis' as having an active role in her day-to-day life.

The active role of my two daughters' fathers have made me feel that we are a team, and it has enabled and empowered me, as a woman, to have the opportunity to develop both my professional career and other aspects of my personal life such as fitness and friendships. On the other hand, I have also noticed their struggle and the different role they have in comparison with their own paternal figures.

1.5 Professional context/ Psychology practice

I graduated as a psychologist 15 years ago, and I have always been passionate about parenting, relationships, and fatherhood.

I have no training in male psychology. However, early in my career, I was interested in parenthood in general; my undergraduate dissertation was on parents of children with cancer. Part of my inspiration was that I noticed that most of the attention was focused on the child, more than on the parents as individuals going through a challenging situation. This informed my practice as it helped me when seeing parents considering their coping strategies.

After graduation, I trained in couple therapy, which made me understand the demands on males regarding the upbringing of their children. I also realised that there was no training in this area in the city where I lived. I decided to train other therapists and psychologists in relationship therapy; and emphasise acknowledging the struggle of fathers and their natural willingness to be part of the development of their children.

My interest in researching fatherhood was ignited because I wanted to create a psychological programme based on Acceptance and Commitment to support fathers struggling emotionally. However, when discussing this with my Academic Advisor (at the time), we identified a research gap after investigating and reading more about this topic. It was not correct to develop a programme when there was insufficient data regarding the father's experiences.

This study emanates from my research work and my practical experience as a psychologist. There has been a significant increase of male parents in my private practice, and I have seen many clients struggling with the demands and expectations of fatherhood. I have enjoyed the journey of working therapeutically with them. I consider that modern societal changes have naturally caused an imbalance in families, requiring an active role in the child's upbringing; while years ago just providing financially was enough. Nowadays, I am seeing mainly individual clients. However, I can see how the male referrals have increased and how more fathers feel comfortable acknowledging how difficult it is to cope with all the responsibilities.

1.6 Female researcher

The fact that I am a woman is also significant, and I have considered this throughout the whole research process. This is explained by the recent research of Lefkowich (2019) entitled *When Women Study Men: Gendered Implications for Qualitative Research*. This identifies that researchers could use reflexive practice and field journaling to understand better how gender norms and uneven power dynamics are introduced to, co-constructed within, and generated from, qualitative studies. These reflections and concerted efforts to confront broader social injustices embedded in research practices are necessary for researchers to produce valuable data and promote reciprocal research benefits. Without such efforts, researchers may reinforce the same structures of power and stereotypical gender norms that they aim to disrupt in their scholarship.

I have tried to minimise the effect that being a female researcher may have had by allowing my analysis to be driven by the data, constantly trying to keep my mind open, and having these analyses checked by third parties. I have attempted to ensure that any inclinations or perspectives do not colour my interpretations of the data.

In addition to this, I have identified that one of the outcomes of my experiences is that I have developed a passion for integration and justice regarding fathers. As previously explained, there seems to be some acknowledgement of support when a problematic situation arises. However, in the day-to-day life the focus seems to be more on the demands.

As a woman interested in the father experience, I consider that my gender could actually help men to open up about their feelings without the fear of criticism or judgement from other men, which may have allowed participants to speak freely. I think my passionate view toward men can be a positive way of interpreting their experiences.

1.7 Impact of my natural science and quantitative background on my research

Learning has always been a passion in my life. However, now I realise that my learning experience during my Psychology bachelor's degree (Venezuela) and master's (Spain) was completely different. My experience relates to Eraut (1994), who acknowledges the need for a general theory of practice and distinguishes professional knowledge as 'knowledge how' or practical knowledge instead of 'knowledge that', the technical expertise at the heart of higher education. During my years of training, my scientific knowledge was mainly acquired through an intensive study period. I learned that the knowledge gained via the possession of abstract, library-based knowledge or complex, high-level skills has now proven not to be sufficient.

Throughout my doctoral experience, I learned to see and acquire knowledge in a new way. For example, I had never experienced the power and intensity of the embodiment process during the analysis. I managed to immerse myself for a whole week with my themes, moved (or danced) across them, and generated the names for each was a unique experience; I am now wondering how different my results could be without this enlightening process. As it was

the first time I was going through this process, I even felt a sense of fear, as that internal connection (of my body) with the external world felt like magic.

One of the challenges I faced during my doctorate related to my background in natural science was my reflexivity and interpretation. This process has triggered a massive amount of frustration and resistance. It felt very unnatural to my way of learning and doing research, as throughout my career, stopping in the description was more than enough. It is what I have done in 36 years of my life. A quote that helped me through that journey was:

"In everyday life, each of us is something of a phenomenologist insofar as we genuinely listen to the stories that people tell us and reflect on our own perception" (Halling, 2008)

I have now concluded that it is about allowing openness, connection, and letting the imagination take control of the words.

My reflexive journal was an immense help through my transition into reflexivity, as I had never used this tool in my career, and I enjoy it, especially all the creativity, freedom and personal connection that goes with it. Additionally, it allowed me to have an intimate dialogue during the different stages of my research. The journal has helped me as a way to unload my emotions, knowing that nobody can judge or mark them; it has also allowed me to write in my mother tongue (Spanish); this has been a therapeutic tool in moments of stress or annoyance. For example, after finishing the analysis of the interviews and having the data in front of me, it felt like a massive wall that I had to climb alone. The reality is that this is my doctorate, and it has to be me (with the support of my advisors), but having the journal and making sense of this allowed me to be conscious of the process and have the energies to climb that wall.

During my professional career, my research and publications were mainly quantitative. However, since starting my doctorate journey, I knew I wanted to

learn new skills and get out of my comfort zone. The whole doctorate journey, including the professional knowledge seminars and supervision, has boosted my personal and professional confidence to feel proud of the results and products of this research, which needed to be qualitative.

As my qualitative researcher identity developed, a clearer concept of the kind of knowledge my research intended to produce progressed. The role of the researcher and the inherent vulnerability in inquiry (Behar, 1996), rather than the research product, is invited to take centre stage at appropriate times. Bridging the gap between practice and research is precisely the aim that the scientist-practitioner model achieves (Corrie & Callahan, 2000).

I agree with Van Manen (2007), who refers to the term phenomenology of practice when discussing the different ways of knowing the world. I felt curious about exploring different ways of knowing, and this was even more important as this ideology was the one that fit with my research topic. In addition to the creativity that goes with it and the potential, depth, and richness of each of my research participants, more than the generalisation of quantitative analysis, while analysing my data, I accepted that every finding is correct and not just one truth. I learned through my research to connect with a sense of freedom from the chains of the quantitative world and let my ideas flow unrestricted through this new and adventurous world.

1.8 English as a second language

As part of my project, I consider it relevant to highlight the personal challenge of doing a whole study and writing this dissertation in a second language, while all my previous research had been in my mother tongue Spanish.

I remember during the first year having to familiarise myself with the terminology of doing research. On many occasions, I had to reassure myself that it was not about my knowledge but the differences in languages.

I can see a progression from my first assignment to the final version of this document:

1. I put my values of humbleness and supportiveness into practice, and I decided to ask for support and reassurance from supervisors, friends, and family, especially to proofread my documents.
2. It was challenging to have the patience to articulate what I wanted to transmit and transcribe it into words.
3. I was also compassionate towards the process and identified that not every mistake was because I was multilingual.

Finally, I also decided to invest in having my whole dissertation professionally proofread by Wordsmith services. It was an immense support and reinforcement that I had put all my energies and efforts into my doctorate journey.

1.9 Impact of COVID-19 on my research

When starting my doctorate in 2018, I did not plan to go through a pandemic in the middle of my interviews and analysis of results. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented disruption to the fabric of society, our health service and the economy. The UK Government's lockdown, implemented on 23 March 2020, stipulated severe restrictions on social contact, on the ability for many people to work, and significantly reduced access to services.

The pandemic had a significant impact on my research, and I had to be flexible and adapt, especially the recruitment and interviews. Regarding the accessibility of the participants, I initially planned to recruit via leaflets in libraries and GP surgeries. However, as this was impossible, I had to rely on social media platforms and snowball sampling. Participants needed to have access to a computer and Zoom platform, which with those recruited was not an obstacle.

I also had to adapt the informed consent. Instead of a printed version, I sent this to participants electronically before the interviews. I asked them to sign the informed consent and return it as an attached document before the interview. Additionally, it was hard to know whether the respondent had privacy when answering questions. I was also aware that participants were engaged in the remote interviews.

Finally, only one interview was conducted face-to-face. I was careful to follow the guidelines, including social distancing. Before the interview, I double-checked with the participant that he felt comfortable with this.

It was to my advantage that the interviews took place at the beginning of the pandemic. Moreover, I decided to include a question related to the father's experience during the first lockdown; this was also analysed and explained as part of the product of this dissertation. Another advantage was the geographic location of the participants, as this was not limited to a travel time. This allowed me to include a father living in a diverse location in the United Kingdom.

I was planning in this dissertation to write about the impact of COVID-19 in my research. However, in the final stages of writing, when I felt at the peak of my motivation, my family and I faced COVID-19. Until this point, I saw it as an external factor affecting my day-to-day life and me finding ways of continuing with my goals, but on this occasion, I had to stop. I had to look after both my family and my own physical and mental health.

My eldest daughter was the first one with symptoms, but it only took a day for me to start a high temperature as well; and a day after my youngest fell ill. At this point, I was the only one dealing with the illness of the three of us. My husband was away because of his work, but he moved his trip and came back a day earlier to look after us.

At that early point, I was faced with the anxiety and fear of the illness, while at the same time trusting my immune system and my family's to do its job. Initially, I thought just to take a few days off, but the brain fog and my lack of concentration were bigger than my willingness to continue. I therefore took a conscious decision to stop the writing of my project and reschedule my clients for that week; it was a time of self-care and family care and disconnection from my work and academic responsibilities.

Looking back, I am glad I managed to focus on us, as at that time playing board games and supporting each other was what we needed. Even linking it to contemporary fathers, I allowed my husband to take care of us and decided to go to bed and sleep a couple of times, which felt entirely against my nature but I realised that the world continued. I needed this time for my body to heal properly; it felt very enlightening.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced my motivation and passion for understanding the lived experience of fathers; explained from the theoretical perspective of my professional and personal self.

The first section of this chapter presented the study's aims, and the research question is stated in the introduction, followed by my personal story as a researcher, a daughter, and a wife. I also described how my professional practice and research experience influenced choosing my research topic; how my position as a female researcher could have impacted my research journey and results; and the actions I took to minimise this. I finished this chapter with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my life and research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a review of the published psychological research about the fatherhood experience. The purpose of this review is to situate the proposed research study in the context of the existing literature relating to the fatherhood experience. Initially, there is an explanation of the process that has supported the literature review, commencing with the search strategy and rationale. The found literature will be discussed and evaluated, supported with a thematic summary, including empirical research and theoretical ideas relevant to the current topic.

The first theme focuses on the social construction of fatherhood evidenced in theory and broader research. The second offers a review of the transition to fatherhood, followed by explaining paternal mental health and psychotherapeutic support. Finally, there is an exploration of the literature that examines paternal involvement and the impact of fathers on child development.

2.1 Search strategy and rationale

The purpose of the search was to locate empirical evidence relating to the experience of fathers. The first search was undertaken when the author began this study in March 2019; then, the process was repeated each year to ensure thoroughness. Combinations of theories were inputted into books and peer review journals including: Web of Science, Medline, Biosis citation index, Scielo citation index, KCI Korean journal and Russian Science. During this process Boolean operators were used as follows: father* AND psycho* AND emotion* AND experience* AND challenges* AND meaning*. Following these electronic searches, the snowball technique, including citation searching, was used to follow up references cited in the reference list of the articles.

Agreed inclusion and exclusion criteria were set to the following: 1) studies should be in the English language; 2) fathers as participants were mentally and physically healthy. Overall, this chapter indicates the need for further investigation into the experiences of fathers. In its final part, it will be explained how the present study addresses the gaps in knowledge identified within this literature review.

2.2 The fatherhood construct

Finding a singular definition of fatherhood is as broad and personal as the number of people on our planet. Each of us has had a unique father experience; many of us are fathers or live with our children's fathers; thus, our implicit theoretical conceptions of fatherhood are shaped by personal experiences. Many researchers highlight the lack of attention writers have paid to the role of fathers in research (O'Brian, 2004; Pollock, Quinton, and Golding, 2002; Reeves, 2006).

Fathers' participation during the upbringing of their children has significantly increased during the last decades. This is explained by Solberg and Glavin (2018), who remarked that growth in the father's positive engagement depends on a sense of mastery, meaningfulness, control, and manageability concerning his child, his partner, and his new everyday life. Identified factors facilitate or inhibit the development of a positive fatherhood role.

Similarly, in their phenomenological study, Eskandari, Simbar, Vadadhir, and Baghestani (2016) studied 17 Iranian fathers who had experienced fathering for the first time, and revealed that a father is a good-tempered, faithful, patient, and hardworking man with essential knowledge and proficiency. A father should accept his role as the father. He is also expected to participate actively in dealing with family daily issues, value and promote the health and well-being of his children and have self-management and self-care skills. In this research

it can be seen how a father is expected to perform several roles with little consideration of their feelings around these demands.

Some researchers have argued that because the father's role is less well defined than that of the mother, fathering is especially sensitive to the context in which it occurs (Marsiglio, Roy, and Fox, 2005). Within the family context, this idea is known as the father vulnerability hypothesis (Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010). It suggests, for example, that interparental conflict has a more detrimental effect on the father-child than on mother-child relations. Additionally, Petrassi (2012), who aimed to discover some of the discourses available to professional English women when constructing the father's contributions at home, found that men have greater involvement in childcare than before, as most mothers go out to work.

i. Demands and expectations

The role of the father in a child's life reflects the society at the time, including the provision of policies and practices to enable men to take active roles in their child's early lives. 'Good fathering' is no longer defined by a man's ability to protect, provide, and implement discipline within the family (Dunlop & Mletzko, 2011; Fischer & Anderson, 2012). Instead, contemporary western fathering is increasingly fair, with men more actively involved in domestic and infant care responsibilities. Describing those men who assume a more significant share of roles traditionally filled by women will experience challenges to traditional sources of male self-esteem, potentially heightening the risk for depressive disorders among men (Dunlop & Mletzko, 2011).

What once seemed a natural pattern of a parenting model in which fathers were viewed as 'helpers' to mothers is now yielding new cultural ideas, such as co-parenting (Pleck, 1997). This author also described how changes in the responsibilities of men and women are creating a new set of expectations,

beliefs, and attitudes about what men and women should do in the family context. The ideal of coparent represents a significant shift as it obliterates a "gender division of labour in domestic and breadwinning responsibilities". (Pleck, 1997, p. 48)

Moreover, it seems that fathers' demands are constantly growing. This is evidenced by Solberg and Glavin (2018), who explored how Norwegian men experience becoming a father for the first time and how they perceive their role during their partner's pregnancy, childbirth, and the early period with a newborn child. They remarked that growth in the father's positive engagement depends on a sense of mastery, meaningfulness, control, and manageability concerning his child, his partner, and his new everyday life.

Finally, men do not father in a social vacuum; we need to consider the bi-directionality of the father-child relationship in determining the development of fatherhood. As the child grows and develops, displaying a new set of developmental assets (as well as liabilities), the father is also developing and changing (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, and Lamb, 2000).

ii. Fatherhood development

In contemporary society, many men have naturally increased their involvement to include more caregiving and parenting activities; it seems reasonable to suggest that fatherhood's experience has a transforming effect on men, as indicated by Knoester and Eggebeen (2006). In their study, these authors used data (N = 3,088) from the first two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households to explore the effects of the transition to fatherhood, and the addition of subsequent children, on men's psychological and physical health, contacts with extended family, social interactions, and work behaviours. They claimed that the transition to parenthood and the addition of subsequent children primarily transform the organisation of men's lives, especially when

they become coresident fathers. Men making the transition to parenthood are most likely to be affected. Fatherhood encourages men to increase intergenerational and extended family interactions; participate in service-orientated activities; and spend more hours in paid labour at the expense of spending time socialising.

However, in the last 40 years the literature demonstrates that perceptions of fatherhood (in westernised societies) and contemporary ideals of fathering practice have shifted in response to the social, economic, and demographic factors outlined above and in response to changing ideas about gender roles and masculinity. Perceptions of fatherhood have altered to embrace a more actively involved, nurturing paternal role (Gillies, 2009; Wall & Arnold, 2007).

In many western societies, therefore, there is increasingly a contemporary notion of a father who is both sensitive to and actively involved in the nurturing of his children within a relationship (with his children's mother), founded on expectations of equal co-parenting and in acknowledgement of the cultural context in which his paternal role is accomplished (Strier, 2014). Parenthood presents significant developmental challenges to adults and can lead to personal reorganisation and growth, openness to learning, new coping strategies, increased differentiation and integration, maturity, and a prime generative encounter (Palkovitz, 2002; Snarey, 1993; cited in Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006).

In their seminal work on the social construction of fatherhood, Lupton and Barclay (1997) note that fatherhood is a site of competing discourses and desires that can never be thoroughly and neatly shaped into a single identity, and that the meaning of fatherhood is dependent on the current discourses used to represent it. This view is reflected in contemporary approaches to fatherhood, and the range of 'fatherhood discourses' outlined by Lupton and Barclay (1997) more than 20 years ago remain relevant to exploring the experience of fatherhood today:

Fatherhood as a logical step, a 'natural part of adult masculinity; fatherhood as an enterprise, something that needs to be worked at; fatherhood as a major responsibility; father as protector/provider; fatherhood as demanding, a source of stress and strain; 'good' fatherhood as close involvement with one's child; 'good' fatherhood as 'being there'; fatherhood as a source of fulfilment, joy (Lupton & Barclay, 1997, p. 143).

The father's male gender may function as a moderator of the child's perceptions of her father's parenting; that is, the same parental behaviour may be perceived differently by the child depending on the parent's gender. For example, discipline on the part of fathers may have a stronger effect than when mothers show the same behaviour (Pleck, 2010). Furthermore, Silverstein, Auerbach, and Levant (2002), in their study about contemporary fathers reconstructing masculinity, explained how the data illustrates the specific types of gender role strain associated with contemporary fathering and shows how men are spontaneously reconstructing fathering and masculinity in general. These authors described the traditional father as a man who focuses on achievement by providing material resources for the family.

On the other hand, the conventional father maintains emotional distance from his children, focusing more on discipline than affection. Because a 'real' man must avoid 'sissy stuff', and childcare has traditionally been defined as 'women's work', a traditional father limits his involvement in childcare. He might 'babysit' if his wife has to be away, but he does not actively manage the children (Silverstein *et al.*, 2002).

iii. Impact of women in the workforce

Relations between women and men's employment patterns and their family roles are increasingly being recognised. Various issues concerning the links between the worlds of work and family are considered to illustrate the impact

of shifts in work patterns on both men's and women's family roles. (Coltrane & Adams, 2008).

Since the mid-1960s, there has been a significant increase in women's participation rate in the labour force. The Bureau of Labour Statistics (2017) identified that between 1960 and 2016, the employment rate for mothers with children under age 6 increased dramatically from about 20 per cent to 65 per cent. It is even higher among mothers of children aged between 6 and 17 (75 per cent)

Maternal employment is a significant influence on paternal involvement, which has increased considerably over the last half-century (Pleck, 2010). Bianchi (2009) also identified that a working woman decreases their time devoted to housework, but they still spend time on childcare, especially in children under six. Additionally, women who do not work outside the home continue to significantly share childcare with their husbands (Coltrane & Adams, 2008).

Part of the explanation for mothers' versus fathers' greater involvement is that our culture more clearly scripts the maternal parenting role than the paternal role. In contrast, paternal parenting is less clearly scripted and more discretionary. However, Larson and Richards (1994) described that mother and father-initiated interactions with children with equal frequency when both parents and children were together. Additionally, children's interactions toward each parent were similar, but adolescents might spend less time with their parents than when they were younger and less time alone with their father than with their mother.

Fathers' willingness and capacity to perform caregiving tasks can match a mothers' skills. Russell and Russell (1987), in their research on mother-child and father-child relationships in middle childhood, investigated parent-child relationships in 57 Australian families with the eldest child aged 6–7 yrs. Interviews focused on time spent with children, the performance of child-need

tasks, and the frequency of parent-child interactions. During home observation, parent and child behaviours were coded into 20 categories, and ratings were made of affective reactions. Results show that mothers who interacted with their children more were more directive and were more involved in caregiving, whereas fathers' interactions occurred more frequently in the context of play.

Additionally, fathers might do so less than mothers on a routine basis but can effectively function as supervisors and managers of their children's activities (Parke *et al.*, 2003). In conclusion, it appears that fathers are capable of this type of caregiving function but execute it less regularly than mothers. In conclusion, the evidence suggests that fathers are as much caregiving agents as mothers.

2.3 Transition to fatherhood

Many documents research the impact of the stresses associated with the pregnancy period on fathers' mental health. Many parents do not consider that the transition to parenthood is a significant period in adult life, and they do not seem to contemplate the many changes in their lives when deciding to have children. To welcome the new member of the family, parents need to adapt their behaviours and expectations. New parents will face many challenges on personal, parental, marital, and family levels. A growing body of evidence suggests that fathers' challenges during this transition can result in anxiety, distress, and an increased risk of depression (Kumar *et al.*, 2018).

i. Pregnancy

There seem to be different ways to respond during the pregnancy stage of their partners. Leite (2007) indicated that during the prenatal period, there are two groups of men who are likely to experience higher levels of boundary ambiguity as reflected in inconsistencies between physical and psychological presence:

- Group 1: men who may be physically absent from any activities and decision-making associated with the pregnancy are psychologically viewed by themselves and their child's mother as holding the father's role during the pregnancy.
- Group 2: men who may be more actively involved in activities and decision-making associated with pregnancy, yet do not experience a psychological identification with the father role.

However, paternal involvement during pregnancy seems to affect maternal well-being, as studied by Giurgescu and Templin (2015). They examined the relationships among fathers of the baby involvement during pregnancy, depressive symptoms, and psychological well-being in African-American women. They used a prospective study design and found that women who reported father involvement during pregnancy had lower depressive symptoms and higher psychological well-being levels, compared with women who reported no father involvement during pregnancy. Furthermore, they described that fathers' involvement is important during pregnancy; nurses should encourage fathers to participate in prenatal visits, ask questions, and educate fathers on pregnancy and procedures during prenatal care.

Additionally, Leite (2007), in his research with young fathers found that many of the men perceived that they had a secondary role compared to the mothers of their children. The young men described maternal grandparents' involvement as a discouragement to their own physical and psychological presence. Leite (2007) concluded that the medical model that typifies pregnancy approaches influences men's perceptions of their role during the prenatal period. He suggested that this model may increase the redundancy and marginalisation that these men perceive and the degree to which they may feel unnecessary to the process of pregnancy, especially when this is reinforced by behaviours of their partners or extended family. This research

highlighted the importance of the prenatal period on young fathers' well-being; and that boundary ambiguity could be identified and supported as experienced by nearly half of the participants.

ii. Labour

Regarding the relevance of the father figure during labour seems to have a positive impact not only in the life of the child but also on both parents. As explained by Dellman (2004), research suggests that women place a high value on their partner's presence and support in labour. This is related, in mothers, to reduced anxiety, less perceived pain, greater satisfaction with the birth experience, lower rates of postnatal depression, and improved outcomes in the child. Moreover, in a study completed in the UK, women who had the support of a partner during labour felt more optimistic about the birth and were found to require minor pain relief (Chan & Paterson-Brown, 2002).

Additionally, Longworth, Furber, and Kirk (2015), in their narrative review of fathers' involvement during labour and birth and their influence on decision-making, suggest that fathers' level of participation during delivery ranges from being a witness or passive observer of labour and birth, to having an active supporting and coaching role. These findings also suggest that there are several facilitators and barriers to fathers' involvement during labour and delivery. A limited number of studies have examined fathers' involvement in decision-making, and specifically how fathers' influence decision-making during labour and birth.

Another relevant study was made by Jarneid, Gjestad, Roseth, and Dahl (2020), who studied fathers' experiences of being present at an unplanned birth outside a maternity facility. They identified a fathers' stress and worry and how they managed to keep a cool head and reason in an unprepared situation. However, the fathers needed help and reassuring contact with health

professionals. They described how the birth increased the father's attachment to his partner and baby; however, they also identified fathers' feelings of exclusion and reactions following the birth. They concluded that fathers' perceived lack of expertise and fear of complications led to stress, worry and anxiety, but health personnel's support provided reassurance and control. Many fathers experienced mastery, pride, and joy after birth. However, when arriving at the hospital, they felt rejected and wished that maternity care staff had approached them to discuss the experience.

iii. Perinatal period

In a review of men's transition to fatherhood, the postnatal period has been identified as the most interpersonally and intrapersonally challenging, coping with the new reality of being a father (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). As with mothers, fathers can be overwhelmed and experience an array of emotions - confusion, love, a sense of great responsibility, uncertainty, and frustration - as they manage their new roles' demands and expectations (Chin, Hall, & Daiches, 2011).

It seems relevant to acknowledge that the way fathers deal emotionally with their newborns could positively or negatively affect them, the mother and child. Boss (1992) suggested that transition times, such as the move to fatherhood, often reflect heightened boundary ambiguity levels. Additionally, adjusting to parenthood can be a challenging time in the lives of some men, filled with the stress of caring for a new-born, lack of sleep, and role strain and gender role conflict (Singley & Edwards, 2015). Additionally, evidence suggests that a father's mental health and well-being directly impact their partner's health in both the pre and postnatal period, especially if the woman is experiencing postnatal depression (Burgess, 2011).

A qualitative study explicates that fathers experience psychological distress in the perinatal period but may thus be reluctant to express their support needs or seek help amid concerns that would detract from their partner's needs. Resources are needed to be tailored to men, framed around fatherhood rather than mental health or mental illness, and align men's self-care with their role as supporters and protectors (Darwin *et al.*, 2017). Edeka, Petrou, and Ramchandani (2011) studied the healthcare costs of paternal depression in the postnatal period and identified that paternal depression was associated with significantly higher community care costs.

iv. First year

Negative thoughts among new fathers have been found in several research pieces; these findings suggest that postnatal negative thoughts are common in fathers during the first year post-birth. All fathers in the study made by Baldwin, Malone, Sandall, and Bick (2019) reported experiencing at least some parenting-related negative thoughts; this indicates that some degree of postnatal negative thoughts may be functional and representative of a non-clinical parenting transition. For example, parenting concerns, such as fear for an infant's safety or worries about understanding infant communication, may encourage parents to be more diligent and attentive to meeting and understanding their needs, positively influencing parenting confidence and behaviours. This suggestion would provide a valid explanation for findings reported by Kim *et al.* (2014), where fathers reporting more negative thoughts were significantly more invested in caregiving practices and expressed more positive emotions about their infant and their own parenting experience.

Furthermore, it had been proven that valuable insight into the most commonly experienced paternal negative thoughts, including negative thoughts related to interpersonal relationship changes, understanding infant communication, and

negotiating family and professional commitments (Wroe, Campbell, Fletcher, & McLoughland, 2019).

Additionally, Kowlessar, Fox, and Wittkowski (2015) studied fathers' experiences during their first year to fully capture their experiences and transition to parenthood. First-time fathers were interviewed 7-12 months after the birth of their baby. The results uncovered experiences during pregnancy and fatherhood, identifying that early fatherhood represents the continuation of a man's transitory journey, which starts during pregnancy. They pointed out that the antenatal period is critical to engaging with and supporting motivated expectant fathers; and antenatal psycho-education classes can be adapted to accommodate men's needs. The man's mental health impacts the woman in the antenatal and postnatal periods; and addressing the needs of men during pregnancy can function as an early intervention for his family system, reducing the financial cost to health services in the long-term.

Another recent line of research has identified high levels of depression in men in the postnatal period. Some data indicates that testosterone levels in men drop in the months before and immediately after their child's birth. However, compelling evidence of this change as a causal mechanism for early fatherhood depression is lacking. Other research suggests that the dramatic marital and role changes accompanying parenthood exert strong psychological forces that may increase men's risk for depression. With men playing more significant roles in parenting in the coming century, the prevalence of depression in men may correspondingly increase. Studies have repeatedly reported increased psychopathology and behavioural disorders in the children of parents with depression, whether father or mother. Thus, the risks of intergenerational transmission of the effects of paternal depression are significant (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010).

Evidence suggests that men also experience a high level of stress and have postnatal depression, with peak rates of 25.6 per cent in the first 3–6 months

of the postpartum period (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). After childbirth, mothers' and fathers' lived experiences of postpartum depression and parental stress was researched by Johansson, Benderix, and Svensson (2020); qualitative interviews were conducted and analysed from an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) perspective. They identified that experiences of problems during pregnancy or a traumatic delivery contributed to postpartum depression and anxiety in mothers and affected fathers' well-being. Postpartum depression seemed to affect spouse relationships, with both mothers and fathers experiencing loneliness and spouse relationship problems. Experiences of emotional issues and troubled upbringing in the parents' family of origin may contribute to vulnerability from previous trauma and long-term depressive symptoms for mothers. This study's findings demonstrate the significant impact postpartum depression and parental stress have on parents' everyday lives and the spouse relationship. These results support a change from an individual parental focus to couples' transition to parenthood in child health care.

2.3 Paternal mental health

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2007) defines mental health not just as the absence of mental disorders, but as a state of well-being. The individual realises his abilities to deal with the everyday stresses of life and work productively to contribute to their community. It is the foundation of well-being and effective functioning, is linked to behaviour, and is determined by multiple and interacting social, psychological, and biological factors (WHO, 2007). Tudor (1996) defined mental health as having six dimensions: affective, behavioural, cognitive, socio-political, spiritual, and psychological. These definitions suggest various risk and protective factors, both individual and environmental, but emphasise social relationships for good mental health.

A transformative perspective proposes that fatherhood experiences change men's well-being, connections with family, social interactions, and attachments to the labour force. Knoester and Eggebeen (2006) suggested that it is expected that fatherhood leads to:

- Altered feelings of well-being
- Increased interactions with extended family
- Involvement in more service-orientated activities
- Greater attachment to the labour force

These findings reinforce the relevance for further studies that explore other areas of psychological effects of fatherhood. Also, an important aspect to consider when describing the fatherhood construct is the father figure as a financial provider. Doherty, Erickson, and LaRossa (2006) asserted that there is an emphasis given to new fathers' economic provider role and that there is a socially constructed consensus that fathers should have a specific concern about the financial security of their families. This expectation could pressure the father to conform to these expectations; this pressure could negatively affect psychological effects.

i. Psychological impact

Becoming a father impacts a man's psychological development and well-being. As Parke (1981) described, children influence their fathers just as fathers alter their children's development, which means that the father-child relationship is a two-way process.

Many pieces of research have described how fatherhood demands can cause mental health disorders. A recent systematic review reported that the prevalence rates for any anxiety disorder in men ranged between 4.1 and 16.0 per cent during their partners' pregnancy and between 2.4 and 18.0 per cent

during the postnatal period (Leach, Poyser, Cooklin, & Giallo, 2016). Additionally, prevalence rates of antenatal and postnatal depression in fathers in a systematic review of 20 studies ranged from 1.2 to 25.5 per cent (Goodman, 2004).

A recent qualitative study of first-time fathers of children under the age of 12 months and in the UK identified the necessity of preparation for fatherhood - rollercoaster feelings of excitement and apprehension; a new identity with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth; physical and emotional challenges; changed relationships with a partner; coping and support from family and friends; health professionals and services provision and support; barriers to accessing support; and men's perceived needs of more information on the physical and emotional demands of parenthood (Baldwin *et al.*, 2019). In another qualitative study of 19 fathers in the UK, similar themes were identified involving the legitimacy of paternal stress and entitlement to health professional support, protecting the partnership, navigating fatherhood, and diversity of men's support networks (Darwin *et al.*, 2017).

As fathers' involvement is vital during pregnancy, nurses should encourage fathers to participate in prenatal visits, ask questions, and educate fathers on pregnancy and procedures during prenatal care. Nevertheless, more demands for them, without understanding how they feel or providing the emotional resources (Giurgescu & Templin, 2015).

Additionally, Leahy-Warren, McCarthy, and Corcoran (2012) found in their study that fathers who reported higher levels of depressive symptoms were more likely to report lower levels of parental self-efficacy. Also, depressed fathers reported higher frequencies of negative thoughts related to parenting confidence and satisfaction, representing a dysfunctional transition to fatherhood.

Furthermore, Rosinska and Tylka (2016) researched the correlations between self-care for health and its psychological constituents such as personality traits, health locus of control, self-efficacy, positive and negative affect, and health valuation, examined in the population of fathers of small children. As a result, they found that positive correlations were noted between the general level of individual health self-care (including an active attitude towards their own health and health practices) and health valuation, extroversion, conscientiousness, self-efficacy, external health locus of control - influence of others (or powerful others) and positive emotionality. Negative correlations were detected between health self-care (generally and within particular health scales) and neuroticism and negative affect. The following factors proved statistically significant for self-care for health: health valuation, personality traits, and external health locus of control - influence of others.

However, many studies have found that maternal psychopathology, such as depression will alter parenting behaviour; evidence suggests paternal depression is a critical determinant of fathering (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Raymond, 2004). Moreover, fathers who report depression at eight weeks postpartum have children with more behavioural problems three years later (Ramchandani, Stein, Evans, & O'Connor, 2005). Nevertheless, (Cummings *et al.*, 2010) recognised that both parents' mental health is essential, identifying the impact of children's adjustment when considering the father's mental health. Papp, Cummings, and Schermerhorn (2004) found that paternal (and maternal) depression was indirectly linked with poor child adjustment through a poor marital relationship. Mothers' depression was directly related to child problems, suggesting that paternal and maternal depression may be linked to child outcomes through different pathways.

Becoming a father is linked with positive and negative psychological consequences for men themselves (Eggebeen, Knoester, & McDaniel 2013). Low and Stocker (2005) identified that fathers' parenting may be more vulnerable to problematic marital relationships than mothers' parenting, and

paternal depression may have a more significant impact on their parenting and, in turn, their children's adjustment than maternal depression. Finally, Palkovitz (2002) reported in his qualitative examination of fathers that men report joy, anticipation, and excitement about being a father, while also reporting increased stress, anxiety, frustration, depression and, as noted earlier, marital conflict.

ii. Unexpected scenarios

The emotional consequences of fatherhood regarding unexpected scenarios have been widely studied. This includes when a child or parent is diagnosed with a chronic condition (McNeill T, 2004; Bridges, 2018; Rafferty, Tidman, & Ekas, 2020) or when an unforeseen event happens (Lindberg & Engstrom, 2013; Lizcano et al., 2013). However, when every aspect of parenting has developed as expected by society it seems to have been assumed that no psychological impact should appear.

The findings of Waldvogel and Ehlert (2016) demonstrated that a family structure consisting of two biological parents with biological children seems to be most beneficial to paternal well-being, while some other forms of contemporary fatherhood are associated with impaired well-being independently of sociodemographic or relationship aspects. More specifically, a history of family separation in non-residential biological fathers and blended-family fathers and the concomitant loss of father-child contact, is shown to be particularly disadvantageous for the well-being of these fathers. Shared living arrangements, maintaining regular contact with biological children, or forming a new intact family could protect these fathers from adverse outcomes. Additionally, Woo and Raley (2005) explained that married or cohabitating men have less probability of experiencing depression when becoming a father than single men.

However, the early-timed entry into fatherhood has apparent adverse effects, as explained by Hofferth and Goldscheider (2010), who studied psychological adjustment in men and identified a variety of disruptions in men's lives associated with early fatherhood. These include interruptions in education, increased financial and social responsibilities, and unstable partner relationships, which contribute to lower life satisfaction levels for young fathers.

2.5 Psychotherapeutic support

i. Individual support

Statistics show that although fewer men than women are engaged with psychological services in the UK (Singleton & Lewis, 2003), it is unlikely that this is a true reflection of men's mental health as fewer men than women consult their GP, and when they do are reluctant to discuss psychological difficulties (Wheeler, 2003). Research carried out by Mind (2009) described how men and woman deal with psychological distress differently: men are more predisposed to take recreational drugs, drink alcohol, and be less likely to talk to friends or family about their problems, or when feeling low.

Millar (2003) suggests six recommendations for promoting help-seeking in men:

1. Increased publicity about counselling, explicitly aimed at men
2. Increased liaison between counsellors and GPs
3. Increased provision of information about the 'nuts and bolts' of counselling before the first appointment;
4. Greater accessibility to low-cost counselling for men
5. Greater use of online counselling
6. Increased awareness of male gender constructs by all mental health professionals.

Some studies have identified psychological variables affected during fatherhood. Isacco, Hofscher, and Molloy (2016), in a quantitative study, identified that few fathers would seek mental health services, and increases in anxiety, depression, and parental stress would promote less mental health help-seeking. Skreden *et al.* (2008) identify that the paternal increase in psychological distress and somatisation score from 6 months to 5 years reflects that preschool children's fathers experience more distress than when their child was six months old. Galbally and Lewis (2017) agree that investing in understanding the inter-relationship between parental depression, parenting and child outcomes will be crucial to improving social well-being into the future.

De Cock *et al.* (2017), in their study on the longitudinal associations between parental bonding, parenting stress, and executive functioning in toddlerhood indicated that for both mothers and fathers, feelings of bonding negatively predicted experienced parenting stress over time. In addition, for both parents, a negative indirect effect of bonding on child executive functioning problems was found via experienced parenting stress. These findings indicate the importance of monitoring parents who experience a low level quality of early parent-child bonding, as this makes them vulnerable to parenting stress, consequently putting their children at risk for developing executive functioning problems. Skreden *et al.* (2012) compare parenting stress and emotional well-being in mothers and fathers of preschool children to look for predictors of different aspects of parenting stress in mothers and fathers, and differentiate parenting stress from psychological distress and anxiety. Fathers reported significantly more social isolation than mothers.

Regarding fathers' mental health, Waldvogel and Ehlert (2016) described that to change their behaviours, men and women will often need skills that they have not acquired in growing up in the context of traditional gender socialisation. It is here that psychologists can help support men and women, as they reconstruct both masculinity and femininity. However, for psychologists to help clients with these issues, they must be trained to think of problems in

living in terms of gender role strain rather than individual or family pathology. Many men (and women) can benefit from a support group or psychotherapy that normalises their strain and provides emotional support as they struggle to change (Waldvogel & Ehlert, 2016).

The reasons men identify for not seeking professional help for mental and physical health problems are varied but fit into three interrelated areas: the male socialisation process; the influence of stigma; and lack of knowledge about consultation processes (Smith, Robertson, & Houghton, 2006).

Finally, when unpredictable birth complications arise, fathers may need additional social support. Child health professionals should reconsider how they support fathers, especially during complicated births. A lack of support may lead to poor psychological mental health, feelings of exclusion, and negative birth experiences. Better efforts should be made to change medical professionals' attitudes and behaviours toward fathers to better support their partners and have a more positive birth experience (Vallin, Nestander, & Wells, 2019).

ii. Group support

Research has shown the benefit of supporting fathers in groups to help them through the fatherhood transition and well-being in general. As a way of promoting fathers' involvement in childcare, a family-centred approach should consider the triadic interaction of the father-mother-child. These findings seem relevant for primary health professionals and policymakers who design community health programmes for early childhood (Chu & Lee, 2019).

Emotional support involves showing empathy, care, love, and trust. Informative support offers information that can help solve a problem; while instrumental

support is practical aid with solving a problem. Appraisal support focuses on self-evaluation and promotes self-efficacy (Vallin *et al.*, 2019).

This same study by Vallin *et al.* (2019) showed that the more social support fathers receive, the greater chance of a positive delivery experience. Medical professionals do not provide much appraisal support, but fathers feel empowered and feel they can better support their partners when they experience this. However, many fathers express a lack of multiple social supports, leading to negative psychological mental health feelings, such as helplessness, anxiety, and stress. The current study highlights that fathers do not always ask for social support; therefore, fathers might benefit more if medical professionals are proactive in supporting them.

Additionally, this research showed that while fathers want to participate in childbirth, they are not treated as patients and are often neglected; thus negatively affecting their psychological mental health. Fathers' birth experience and ability to cope with and support their partner and child could be improved if medical professionals provide more comprehensive social support for fathers (Vallin *et al.*, 2019).

In a study performed by Kerstis, Wells, and Andersson (2018), the results highlighted that the father groups served as an arena for reflection and sharing experiences for new fathers, especially when the father group leaders' attitudes and motivation were high. Furthermore, the results highlighted that fathers' participation in the groups could positively improve fathers' relationships with their partner and child. The father group leaders described that the father groups were places where fathers could receive support during their transition into fatherhood and network and socialise with other new fathers. The father group leaders described that some of the sessions' topics directly influenced fathers to discuss equality and their co-parenting relationship. They also identified that participating in father groups might help

reinforce the idea in fathers to take more extended parental leave and build stronger relationships with their child and partner.

2.6 Paternal involvement

One of the most significant achievements in fatherhood research has shown that providing financially and having contact with children alone is necessary, but insufficient to promote positive child outcomes. One of the areas of paternal involvement that has received considerable scholarly and policy attention is the father's financial contribution to the child and the child's mother (Gavin *et al.*, 2002). Fathers also often spend time with their children through active, physical involvement, and these experiences can promote opportunities for emotional connections (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013). During childhood, high-quality father involvement promotes higher employment rates, healthier relationships, and other favourable life qualities for the child well into adulthood (Nettle, 2008).

Fathers' involvement with their children has significantly increased over the last 30 years, as researched by the Fatherhood Institute (2010), showing that:

- 48 per cent of fathers attend antenatal classes, and 86 per cent attend at least one scan
- 93 per cent of fathers who live with the mothers of their children attend the birth
- 93 per cent of fathers sign their babies' birth certificates
- While the average time spent by fathers of young children on childcare has increased eight-fold since the 1970s, 82 per cent of full-time working fathers said they do not get to spend enough time with their family.

Ways of researching fathers' involvement has developed over time, as measuring the time the father was spending with the child did not seem

enough. This is one reason why the implicit definitions of parental involvement often vary from study to study. Different activities are included in the operational definitions of paternal involvement, making comparisons difficult at best. Therefore Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985) found it necessary to group the studies concerning similarities in the implicit definitions of paternal involvement. For purposes of analysis, one can distinguish three components of parental involvement:

Engagement. The first and most restrictive type of paternal involvement involves time spent in actual one-on-one interaction with the child (whether feeding her, helping him with homework, or playing catch in the garden). Such involvement, which we labelled engagement or interaction, does not include time spent in child-related housework or time spent sitting in one room while the child plays in the next room.

Accessibility. We included these times in a second category comprising activities characterised by less intense degrees of interaction. These activities imply parental accessibility to the child rather than direct interaction. Cooking in the kitchen while the child plays in the next room or even cooking while the child plays at the parent's feet are examples of accessibility.

The final type of involvement is the hardest to define. However, it is perhaps the most important since it reflects the extent to which the parent takes ultimate responsibility for the child's welfare and care.

Responsibility involves:

- knowing when the child needs to go to the paediatrician,
- making the appointment, and
- making sure that the child meets this appointment.
- making childcare and babysitting arrangements,
- ensuring that the child has clothes to wear, and

- making arrangements for care and nurturance when the child is sick.

Much of the time involved in being a responsible parent is not spent directly interacting with the child. It involves more than "helping out" or "babysitting." thus, survey researchers can easily overlook this type of involvement. It is also hard to quantify the personal commitments involved, mainly because the anxiety, worry, and contingency planning that characterise parental responsibility often occur when the parent is ostensibly doing something else (Lamb *et al.*, 1985).

Pleck's (2010) goal was to increase the strength of the links between aspects of father engagement and child outcomes; he created a modification of Lamb *et al.*'s (1985) scheme to distinguish further specific qualitative aspects of interaction: warmth, responsiveness, and control. This has encouraged researchers to measure time with the child and the quality of the interactions as well.

Mothers and fathers differ in their degree of responsibility for the management of family tasks. From infancy through middle childhood mothers are more likely to assume the managerial role than fathers. Both mothers and fathers are equally capable of this type of supervisory behaviour, as shown in laboratory studies and home contexts. However, fathers are less likely than mothers to perform this supervisory role in everyday settings (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991).

Chu & Lee (2019) identified that the quality and quantity of father's involvement in childcare was influenced by their and the mother's psychological distress; this means that to promote father's involvement, a family-centred approach for childcare ideally should reflect the father-mother-child triadic interaction. As explained by Hudson, Elek, and Fleck (2001), the changes in paternal involvement positively impact men, as paternal engagement is strongly

associated with greater parenting satisfaction and the partnered relationship for mothers and fathers alike.

i. Ways of paternal interaction

In contemporary society, men have expanded their range of involvement to include more caregiving. With this, the importance of play as the father role's distinctive feature has diminished in importance, and play has become merely one of the various ways fathers are involved with their children.

It has been evident in many pieces of research, the natural way of seeing a father playing with his child:

"There is less and less justification for viewing the identification of fatherhood with play and companionship as something with unique psychological significance as was once thought" (Lamb & Lewis, 2010, p.117).

Nevertheless, Hossain and Roopnarine (1994) described how the quality of play across mothers and fathers varies. Father interaction style tends to be more physical play with characteristic degrees of arousal, excitement, and unpredictability in terms of the interaction's pace. This is opposite to the mothers' playful interactive style which is portrayed as more modulated and less arousing in tempo. When playing more conventionally, motor games or toy-mediated activities are more verbal and didactic.

The researchers Lamb and Lewis (2010) made a significant contribution to identifying the significant differences in play between fathers and mothers, based on work conducted 20–30 years ago when traditional conceptions of fathers' role predominated, and maternal employment was still relatively uncommon. It was viewed negatively, as fathers were much less involved in the day-to-day care of their infants.

ii. Factors influencing involvement

The relevance of examining the determinants of father involvement comes from the view that the paternal role is less culturally described and determined than the maternal role. It is assumed that various factors determine the degree of father involvement with children.

The role of biology in defining the father role has become widely recognised. This perspective suggests that, due to hormonal changes, fathers are biologically prepared for the parenting role and neurological predispositions to respond to infants as part of their preparation for the caregiving role (Swain, Kim, & Ho, 2011).

In a study made by Storey, Walsh, Quinton, and Wynne-Edwards (2000) it was found that men experienced significant pre, peri, and postnatal changes in each of the hormones prolactin, cortisol, and testosterone, a pattern of results that were similar to the women in their study. Additionally, prolactin levels were higher for both men and women in the late prenatal period than in the early prenatal period, and cortisol levels increased just before birth and decreased in the postnatal period for both men and women. Testosterone levels were lower in the early postnatal period, which corresponds to their infants' first interaction. Hormonal levels and changes were linked with a variety of social stimuli as well. Men with lower testosterone held baby dolls longer and were more responsive to infant cues (crying) than men with higher testosterone. Men who reported a more significant drop in testosterone also reported more pregnancy or couvade symptoms. Together, these findings suggest that lower testosterone in the postnatal period may increase paternal responsiveness in part, by reducing competitive non-nurturing behaviour.

Similarly, prolactin levels were higher in men showing more responsiveness to infant cries and men reporting more couvade symptoms during pregnancy. Storey *et al.* (2000) argued that the cortisol increases in late pregnancy and

during labour might help new fathers focus on and become attached to their new-borns. Men's hormonal levels are linked with baby cries, the pregnancy birth cycle, and their partners' hormonal levels. Women's hormonal levels were closely linked with the time remaining before delivery, and men's levels were linked with their partner's hormone levels, not with time to birth. That father hormone levels are linked with those of his partner suggest that contact with the pregnant partner may play a role in paternal responsiveness, just as the marital relationship's quality is linked with paternal involvement in later infancy.

Social variables need to be considered in understanding the operation of biological effects. Perhaps intimate ties between partners during pregnancy stimulates hormonal changes, which, in turn, are associated with more nurturance toward babies. This perspective recognises the dynamic, or transactional, nature of the links between hormones and behaviour in which behaviour changes can lead to hormonal shifts and vice versa.

Finally, one of the most significant pieces of evidence that humans (mothers and fathers) are biologically prepared for caregiving comes from studies made by Swain, Lorberbaum, Kose, and Strathearn (2007), who identified how our brains react when exposed to babies. From the earliest days of life, fathers and mothers are neurologically primed to respond to infants. Brain imaging techniques such as MRI show more neural activation when shown pictures of babies than pictures of inanimate objects.

Men's own psychological and family background, attitudes toward the fathering role, motivation to become involved, childcare, child-rearing knowledge and skills all play a role in determining men's level of involvement with their children. The relationship that fathers develop with their parents has been viewed as a possible determinant of fathers' involvement with their children. However, evidence in support of this proposition is not clear-cut. Two views have guided this inquiry. First, from the social learning theory (Bandura, 1989) comes a modelling hypothesis that suggests that men model themselves after

their fathers. This modelling process will be enhanced if their fathers were nurtured and accessible. Second, a compensatory or reworking hypothesis argues that fathers tend to compensate, or make up for, deficiencies in their childhood relationships with their fathers by being better and more involved when assuming this role (Roy & Smith, 2013). There is support for both views. Several studies suggest that fathers' positive relationships in childhood are related to higher levels of later father involvement (Cowan & Cowan, 1992).

Additionally, Hofferth (1999) found that men whose fathers were active participants in rearing them are more involved with their offspring, take more responsibility, are warmer, and monitor them more closely than men reared by less involved fathers. Men may reject their own experiences with their fathers and opt for alternative compensatory parenting practices. In a qualitative study, Daly (1993) interviewed young children's fathers about their role model sources for their own fatherhood identity. Some fathers emulate their fathers; others compensate; and still others report little influence of their fathers as mentors or models. However, most fathers did not view their fathers as models or wanted to do better as fathers than their fathers. Many fathers opted for a piecemeal approach to defining fathering. Instead of emulating one person, many men tried to piece together an image of fathering from many different sources, including extended family members, cultural figures, and friends.

Men thus draw on models from their generation of contemporary fathers and fathers from earlier eras and generations. As men become fathers, they struggle to reconcile past and present images and models of fathering behaviour with the changed historical circumstances that face modern fathers. Even if they chose to emulate their fathers, the rapid changes in our society make it difficult for current fathers to apply these lessons from the past in any simple way. The intergenerational transmission process is an active one in which the father himself plays a central role in sorting, retaining, and discarding images and guidelines from various sources. There is no single or

straightforward route to developing a father identity; there are many different paths, just as many different kinds of fathers. (Parke & Cookston, 2019).

iii. Mother as a gatekeeper

One significant development in father involvement has been identifying how the maternal attitude can influence the father-child relationship. This was evidenced by Schoppe-Sullivan and Altenburger (2019), who described how, consistent with the family systems view, maternal attitudes need to be considered a determinant of paternal participation in childcare. Doucet (2006) explained that despite advances in women's inclusion in the workplace, they might still feel ambivalent about father involvement in the caregiving of their children. This can be validated in part to the cult of maternalism explained by Duffy (1988), which stresses that mothers are indispensable, natural, and necessary; many women are reluctant to involve fathers actively and wholeheartedly in the daily routines of caregiving.

A significant advance in the conceptualisation of gatekeeping was made by Allen and Hawkins (1999, p. 200), who defined the term as follows:

"Maternal gatekeeping is a collection of beliefs and behaviours that ultimately inhibit collaboration between men and women in families by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children".

Other evidence, for example Bonney, Kelley, and Levant (1999) suggested that mothers' attitudes about the degree to which fathers should be involved in childcare were not always related to fathers' participation in childcare. Instead, they found that fathers' participation influences the mother's beliefs about the father's role. In addition, Bonney *et al.* (1999) argued that a transactional perspective best characterises this relation between maternal attitudes and father involvement. Fathers who are more involved have female partners who develop more positive attitudes about their involvement which, in turn,

increases fathers' level of participation. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine the direction of causality in this domain more definitively.

2.8 Chapter summary and research question

To conclude, this chapter has examined the relevant research into the question that underpins this study:

What do fathers think about their experience of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood?

This literature review has also sought to situate this investigation in relation to the existing body of knowledge regarding fatherhood. Despite a relatively brief recent history of serious research devoted to fathers, considerable progress has been achieved in understanding the paternal role and fathers' impact on themselves and others. However, no studies were found specifically about the experiences of fatherhood during their children's early years. Thus, this literature search suggests a lack of UK studies of fathers in general, but specifically, no research was found combining fatherhood and (a) healthy children and (b) early childhood. This is the gap, which the current study seeks to address.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to document the lived experience of fathers during the early period of parenting their first-born. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were considered. Qualitative enquiry was selected as it helps orientate the researcher to collect rich, detailed descriptions of participants narrated lived experiences.

This research is exploratory as there is a gap in existing knowledge about the phenomenon being examined. I intended to explore the under-researched area of first-time fathers' experiences in greater depth, although the literature review indicates a gap in this area of study. An exploratory investigation attempts to collect information that describes how things are instead of explaining or evaluating information (Denscombe, 2010).

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will describe my reasoning for choosing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in conjunction with my epistemological position and how this informs my methodology; in addition to other methodologies considered and rejected; and the IPA limitations encountered in this research. The second part will include the recruiting and collecting data process; the analysis method; the quality control maintained during this research; and an explanation of the ethical considerations.

3.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

I am interested in understanding the phenomenology of how fathers made sense of their experience during the early age of their children. The methodological approach of this study was based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA aims to uncover 'how' participants

perceive their lived world experiences concerning the phenomenon under investigation by standing in their shoes (insofar as this is feasible) and attempting to make meaning of their experience through the interpretative process. It involves an attempt to understand the question 'what is it like?' (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

IPA was introduced as a specific research methodology due to frustrations regarding the over-emphasis placed on the importance of quantitative approaches in psychological research (Smith, 1996). Smith also argued that a paradigm shift was needed to enhance research and deepen psychological knowledge. Smith and Osborn (2008) highlight that the focus of IPA is the in-depth exploration of personal experience and how people perceive, ascribe meaning to, and make sense of their experiences.

This premise assumes that people are actively engaged in the world and constantly reflect on their experiences to understand them (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). When I decided to adopt IPA as an approach, I considered the two main aims described by Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006). Firstly, to listen curiously to the concerns expressed by my participants in order to obtain an insider's perspective of the phenomenon under study. Secondly, attempt to interpret these accounts to understand what it means for my participants to have those concerns in that particular context. (Larkin *et al.*, 2006).

Phenomenology is congruent with my ontological standing; this research method has its meaning in understanding lived experience as it is. Philosophical perspective and in-depth qualitative analysis are some phrases that emerge when discussing phenomenological research (Dowling, 2007). Phenomenology is the study of the human experience of how objects, or phenomena, appear to people in their consciousness. The philosopher Husserl (1982) described it as an attempt to move away from mainstream scientific enquiry, which he saw as seeking absolute truths, to one where there were different interpretations of experience.

I aimed to capture the experience of fathers through a descriptive, rich, and detailed account of how the world appears and means to them. This makes my position lean towards experiential epistemology, in which knowledge means experience through a natural description and interpretation of phenomena, constructed through language and dialogue. It delves into people's experiences and clarifies the grounds of knowledge (Heron, 1988).

Experiential epistemology focuses on Husserl's method (1982) of human existence, its meaning, and the interpretation of such existence constitutes Heidegger's ontological approach to phenomenology. According to Dowling (2007), Heidegger was one of the first philosophers to integrate phenomenology with existential occurrences.

Smith *et al.*, (2009), described how for psychologists one key value of phenomenological philosophy is that it provides us with a rich source of ideas about how to examine and comprehend lived experience. Researchers using phenomenological methods aim to uncover the meaning of an individual's experience of a specified phenomenon through focusing on a concrete experiential account grounded in everyday life (Langdridge, 2007)

IPA draws from broader phenomenology, using hermeneutics to achieve a more complex understanding of lived experience. At its core is the exploration of phenomena by an individual through their detailed account of lived experience. How this experience between researcher and participant collects itself requires an open phenomenological attitude and carefully selected questions and criteria to describe phenomena in detail. (Smith, 2009).

Therefore, the data collected is a co-construction between researcher and participant during the interview. This allowed me as a researcher to understand the dialogue and gain the meaning of the text at different levels, which is also termed a 'hermeneutic circle' (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Interpretation will be expressed as “not the acknowledgement of what has been understood, but rather the development of possibilities projected in understanding” (Heidegger,

1962, p. 149). In my analysis, I aimed to interpret my participants' interpretations of their experience, in effect a double hermeneutics.

The concept of the hermeneutic circle is essential when considering IPA, as it helps a researcher consider the levels of interpretation that need to be conducted. The hermeneutic circle suggests that: "to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts" (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 28).

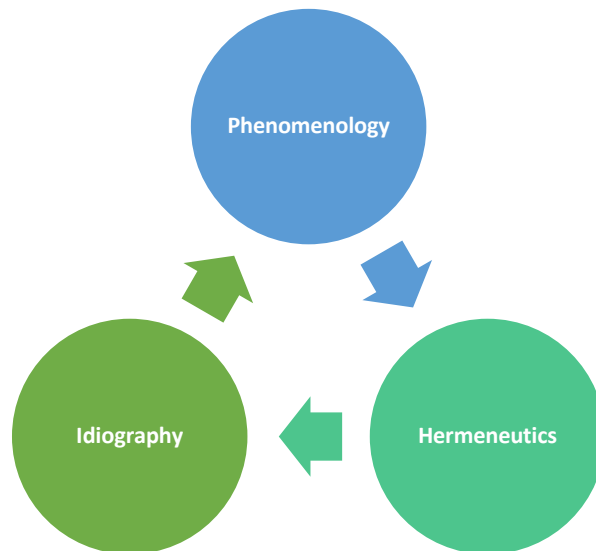


Figure 1. Three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge in IPA

I have arrived at IPA as my chosen method as it has at its core a concern with how people make sense of significant life experiences. For this reason, it is termed 'idiographic', in which people's approaches to experience can be received as detailed and deep analysis (Smith *et al.*, 2009). I focused on the relational aspect of the experience, looking for similarities and differences in how these may diverge or converge across my participants. My personal experience while using IPA, with its grounding in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography, allowed me to capture these essential

elements of experience for a rich and detailed exploration of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born.

3.2. Considering other methodologies

The focus on exploring individual experiences before moving on to tentative generalisations would allow my research questions to be explored with accuracy and depth. Having studied the philosophical underpinnings of IPA and the processes of data collection and analysis, I was confident that IPA suited my research purpose, aims and question.

As a novice qualitative researcher, I was reassured to follow a structured and established methodology, which nonetheless allowed for some flexibility of approach (Smith *et al.*, 2009). I believe that IPA is a fundamentally ethical and respectful methodology, which supports my ethical research practices.

Because of my previous quantitative experience, I initially considered this approach. However, as this describes the phenomenon by measuring the object's quantifiable character this was rejected, as the meaning of this research is to describe the phenomenon in-depth. A qualitative research methodology is one "which produces descriptive data: peoples' own written or spoken words and observable behaviour" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 4). Harper and Thompson (2012, p. 5) also define the qualitative approaches as enabling "understanding of experience and processes". Additionally, the IPA approach allows for unique explorations of the topic in question, as there is no prescribed hypothesis or theory attempting to be proven (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Thematic Analysis was considered and rejected for the following reasons. First, thematic analysis is a method, an approach that can be applied to analyse data, rather than a methodology. Second, Thematic Analysis adopts a nomothetic approach. It does not generate themes that are relevant to only one or two participants. In contrast, the idiographic approach of IPA identified

the distinct features and experiences of each person, which fitted the purpose of this research.

Another popular methodology considered was Grounded Theory. However, although this shares some similarities with IPA, such as open-ended interview questioning, data analysis, and coding, the meaning of this research was not to generate a theory. Its research aims to generate a theoretical account of a social situation or process via sampling on a large scale. These 'macro' claims aim to produce theories grounded in the data (Smith *et al.*, 2009). These are developed to study basic social processes, whereas IPA is a specific psychological research method. Instead, this research is aiming to be as close to the phenomenon as possible to uncover the essence of the experience of fathers.

Furthermore, Grounded Theory has its roots in a positivist epistemology, which does not give accountability for researcher reflexivity (Willig, 2008). This reflexivity was a precious aspect of my analysis. IPA as a method aims to capture the individual experience on a microscale rather than with a large population sample. The researcher role is a crucial part of how my interviews, data, and knowledge are co-constructed. Additionally, the precise steps and structure in IPA were appealing to my research, to enhance validity.

Another approach initially considered was Narrative Analysis. This focuses on how people formulate and tell stories to interpret and make meaning of their world; it has its roots in the social constructionist approach. Narrative analysis is concerned with stories rather than separating them into themes or abstracting them into discourses (Murray, 2003; Riessman, 2008). However, it was not seen to provide sufficient scope to elicit the 'what is there' element that was sought, especially around the relevance of the parts previously explained in the hermeneutic circle. As a result, it was not deemed an appropriate methodology for the current research.

Therefore, because of these previously explained reasons, using IPA was the best method to answer my research question.

3.3. Limitations of IPA

Although being convinced that IPA fits with my research, as expected, it has its limitations.

IPA relies on language to capture individual thoughts, feelings, and memories (Willig, 2008). However, in reality, some people may not articulate their feelings, or they can feel uncomfortable with opening up emotionally about their experiences. During the pre-selection and interviews, I made clear to my participants that they could feel comfortable reflecting on and discussing their experiences in detail. I reiterated this through the initial contact via email or text message at the selection stage, pre-interview telephone call, consent form, information sheet, and during the interview.

I found IPA to be a time-consuming research method. As explained, I am glad I had a whole week to immerse myself in the data analysis. However, once I finished this first stage, I had to detach myself for a period of time until I felt the energy again to start writing up the findings.

IPA is not replicable, as the results reflect a particular experience between two people recounted at that moment. Therefore, another researcher asking similar questions may collect different data; this can even be influenced by the settings or approach of the researcher. As Smith (2009) described, I followed the steps as closely as possible – this is explained below and illustrated with examples from evidenced appendices.

3.4. Method

i. Design

This research was carried out with a small, purposive, and homogenous sample, following the principles of IPA (McLeod, 2003). A homogenous sample was necessary for this study as the small number of participants shared the

experience of being the father of a child between 1 and 6 years old.

Inclusion criteria

- Are >18 years old,
- Are fluent in the English language.
- Residents of the UK
- Have a child between the age of 1 and 6 years old.

Exclusion criteria

- Previously diagnosed with any mental or physical health condition
- Fathers of foster children and stepchildren.

Phenomenology makes use of purposive homogeneous sampling using small numbers of participants selected for their capacity to illuminate the research question (Smith & Osborn, 2003). An initial telephone interview (approximately ten minutes) was made to assess the participant's suitability. One pilot interview was conducted to secure quality in question and formulation.

A commonly used way to gather data in an IPA study is through a semi-structured interview; this was used in this study, with open-ended questions to focus on the quality of each participant's experience of fatherhood. It enables the researcher to engage with the participants and have the flexibility to probe interesting areas that emerge during the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

ii. Recruitment

Initially, the recruitment process was going to be made through posters printed and distributed in GP surgeries, libraries, and public places, but this was not possible because of the limitations of the pandemic. Recruitment was made via social media, contact via peers in different areas of the county (see Appendix B). However, the reality was that most of the participants were

recruited via word-of-mouth techniques and snowball sampling, one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, central to which are the characteristics of networking and referral. The researchers usually start with a small number of initial contacts (seeds) who fit the research criteria and are invited to participate in the research. The suitable participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research criteria and who potentially might also be willing participants, who then, in turn, recommend other potential participants, and so on. Researchers, therefore, use their social networks to establish initial links, with sampling momentum developing from these, capturing an increasing chain of participants. (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019).

At the beginning of the recruitment process, when I started using social media and had no direct response from fathers, I found myself worried about getting enough participants for this study. This is explained by Macfadyen, Swallow, Santacroce, and Lambert (2011) who discuss some of the difficulties of recruiting fathers for research. They recommend that it is made clear that fathers' views are valued in the research, as fathers: "may not appreciate that their views are valued, and they can assume that the mothers' opinions may be more relevant" (p.217). Once I had the opportunity to explain more about the research to peers and colleagues and consequently to the fathers, they showed more interest and commitment to the research. At this point, I also sent them the Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix C), so they could have detailed information regarding the project.

iii. Sample

Eight participants were recruited for the study through the recruitment method detailed above, but seven were interviewed. After the initial screening, only one participant was declined as his wife was pregnant and due to give birth around the interview date.

Specific details have been changed or generalised to help preserve anonymity for the participants.

iv. Participant characteristics

There were seven participants in this study. A detailed description is shown below in Table 1. Participants' ages ranged from 32 to 41 years, with a mean age of 34.1. All participants were professionals and two had master's degrees. All were employed, working full-time and living with the mother of the child. Six were married and one living in a partnership.

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Relationship Status
FATHERP1	Mateo	34	Bachelor	Auditor	Married
FATHERP2	Edward	33	Bachelor	Teacher	Married
FATHERP3	Bill	34	Bachelor	Manager	Married
FATHERP4	Andres	41	Masters	Teacher	Married
FATHERP5	Anthony	33	Bachelor	Engineer	Married
FATHERP6	Fred	32	Bachelor	Contract Manager	Living partner
FATHERP7	Jacob	32	Masters	Financial advisor	Married

Table 1: Participant Information

In Table 2, regarding the ethnicity of the participants, this was more varied. Four were white British, one British/Asian, one Spanish and one Venezuelan. It is important to note that even though English was the second language for FATHER1 and FATHER4, they were fluent English speakers. The religiosity was also varied, as three were Catholic, one agnostic and one participant Church of England. The fact that most interviews were conducted online was an advantage in enabling a diverse location of participants. Finally, regarding

their children, four had girls, and three had boys between the ages of 1 and 4 with a mean age of 2.5.

Participant	Ethnicity	Religiosity	Location	Child gender	Child age
FATHERP1	Spanish	Catholic	Horley	Female	1 year old
FATHERP2	White British	None	Newcastle	Male	2 years old
FATHERP3	White British	Agnostic	Kent	Male	2 years old
FATHERP4	Venezuelan	Catholic	Purley	Female	3 years old
FATHERP5	White British	Church of England	Horsham	Female	4 years old
FATHERP6	White British	None	Horley	Female	2 years old
FATHERP7	British/Asian	Catholic	London	Male	4 years old

Table 2: Participant Information (continued)

v. Interviews

The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Being a researcher was my primary role during the interviews. To aid this process, I attempted to adopt a phenomenological attitude (Smith *et al.*, 2009), characterised by displaying openness, active attention, restraining pre-understanding, and a taken-for-granted attitude (Finlay, 2008).

From the start of the interview, I had with me the interview schedule (Appendix D), with semi-structured interviews, the investigator will have a set of questions (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Interviews were conducted in a conversational style, and participants were explicitly told that they could talk about anything which they felt pertained to their experience of being a father. I tended to use prompts and probes more frequently than structured questions, as I noticed that participants tended to naturally cover all of my topics and more throughout the conversation.

I therefore focused on reflecting back empathetically my understanding of the participants' experience and questioning their experience to help them describe their experience of power with their clients.

Furthermore, the interview questions will allow new topics to emerge and include a summary at the end of the interview to enable the participant to include additional points (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This is to ensure that the interviews will generate rich data and allow for an inductive analysis.

One interview per participant was planned, with a period of one hour set aside for each interview to get as much depth of truth as possible (See Appendix D - interview schedule). Each interview lasted between 45-70 minutes. This allowed a deep exploration of each participant's experience.

Before starting the interview, the participants were given the consent form, which they were asked to read carefully and sign. The recording began after they signed the consent form (see Appendix E) and agreed to be recorded. They were also informed that they could opt-out of the study at any point if they wished to.

Six interviews were conducted online using a platform called Zoom, this ensured diversity of location and culture and allowed the interviews to be digitally recorded. Only one was face-to-face, at Horley Psychology, the private practice location of the researcher (see Appendix F Independent Field/Location Work Risk Assessment). This face-to-face interview was only audio recorded. The interview recordings were then transcribed into written documents for the process of analysis.

The interviews took place over a year, from June 2020 to October 2020. Each interview took place two weeks apart to maintain individual focus while respecting IPA's systematic, idiographic process.

The interviews started with the personal details of the participants. The

interview consisted of two parts, one general where they were asked: What motivated you to be part of this research? What is it like to be a father? Then a second part with more specific questions. After the interview, they had an open opportunity to say anything they thought was significant or forgot to say.

vi. Data analysis

In this study, the data was analysed with the IPA method. In an IPA, the researcher should completely immerse themselves in the data and make an effort to view it from the perspective of the interviewee as much as possible. The objective of this method is to provide evidence of the participants' meaning of the phenomena as well as recording the researcher's meaning-making process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

IPA aims to explore in detail the processes through which participants make sense of their own experiences; by looking at the respondent's account of the processes they have been through and seeking to utilise an assumed existing universal inclination towards self-reflection (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Smith *et al.*, 1997). As the aim of the current study was to explore the experience of a father during the early years of their first-born, IPA was felt to be appropriate as an analytical tool.

The analysis took place once all interviews had been conducted and transcribed. The transcription of all the interviews resulted in a total of 86 pages, with a font size of 12 and line spacing of 1.5. Analysis was comprehensively, systematically, and rigorously conducted on each interview in turn by first noting exploratory comments from descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual perspective and breaking down the text by reading paragraphs backwards and out of sequence. Once this process was exhausted, emergent themes were sought, thereby observing one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle (Smith *et al.*, 2009); in the analytical shift from participant data to researcher interpretation, thereby combining the lived experience of both.

One of the main theoretical orientations in the interpretative phenomenological method is Ideography, which focuses on analysing individual cases and the perspectives of individual participants with their contexts in mind, exploring them individually before producing generic statements. In this way of analysis, presenting the analysis and findings involves the researcher including individual narratives, comparing and contrasting them to support the themes generated through analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Analysing data in IPA studies is an inductive and iterative process (Smith *et al.*, 2009). IPA data analysis is inductive in that it begins with the analyst immersing themselves in data details to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships (Patton, 2015). IPA data analysis is iterative in that it is systematic, repetitive, and recursive (Bassett, 2012).

To enable themes to emerge that best reflect the participants' experience, each transcript was analysed separately. As Smith *et al.* (2009) explain, there is no prescribed single way for working with the data in IPA studies. During my years of practice, I have undertaken several quantitative research projects. As this was my first qualitative investigation, I wanted to have some structure. Therefore, for my analysis, I followed the Smith *et al.* (2009) six-stage approach, as detailed below:



Figure 2: Data analysis six-stage process

Stage 1: Reading and re-reading

The first step of IPA analysis involves immersing oneself in some of the original data. At this stage, I had the written transcripts of each interview, started with the first participant, and read and re-read the data. As Smith *et al.* (2009) recommended, I listened to the audio-recording at least once while first reading the transcript. I imagined the voice of the participant during the subsequent reading of the transcripts. With the interviews that were video recorded I had the opportunity to re-watch them and make notes, especially around the non-verbal communication and expression of the participants.

The purpose of this initial read was to familiarise me with the data and ensure that no errors had been made when creating the transcripts. During a second reading, comments were made, and I captured my first impressions of the content in my research journal. This preliminary level of analysis created a level of familiarity with the text and enabled me to make a note of interesting

words or phrases that stood out in the text without attempting to make meaning of what was said.

Stage 2: Initial noting

This step examines semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level. As advised by Smith *et al.* (2009), I maintained an open mind and noted anything of interest within the transcript. This process ensures a growing familiarity with the transcript and begins to identify specific ways that the participants talk about, understand, and think about the issue. At this stage, I created a document with a table divided into three boxes (see Appendix P) to include the initial comments; the first box contained the emergent themes, followed by the original transcript. In the last box, the exploratory comments were written, in different coloured pens, Pink (Descriptive), Green (Linguistic) and Blue (Conceptual), as explained below:

Descriptive coding

The words and passages were underlined and included in these descriptive comments level, as described by Smith *et al.* (2009). Descriptive coding helped me identify particular words or phrases that stood out in the text due to frequency, connotation, or perceived importance to the participant or the researcher. The highlighted items added to the level of inquiry developed in the initial reading of the text and identified further areas of interest to be explored in additional readings and interpretations of the text.

Linguistic coding

The next level of coding was underlined in green, linguistic comments (as described by Smith *et al.*, 2009), which included a deeper examination of previously highlighted sections, as well as notations about frequently repeated words or phrases in the text. This level of analysis focused on specific word choices and considered the many linguistic levels of meaning that may exist in

each word and phrase, both within and outside the context of the sentence. In addition to noting specific word choices or frequency, attention is also paid to the use of metaphor or other linguistic elements that are used to describe the experience.

Conceptual coding

The linguistic coding helped set the stage for conceptual comments, the third level of coding, was underlined in blue. This level of coding moved away from the “explicit claims of the participant” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 88) and initiated a more conceptual realm of interpretation. The conceptual comments level of coding helped to elicit deeper levels of meaning within the context of the experience. It enabled the identification of emergent themes that helped to capture the essence of the participants’ experiences.

Reflective/ reflexive notes

This final stage formed part of the process of considering the double hermeneutic. I used this phase to consider the influence of my presence in the interview process and ‘wonder aloud’ about other aspects of the interview. I identified my reactions to the language, ideas and experiences conveyed and reflected upon the significance to the interviewee and interviewer. This was written in the box of the exploratory comments and my research journal.

Stage 3: Developing emergent themes

After underlining the text and writing the comments, I wrote the emergent themes in the left box. Following the stages of Smith *et al.* (2009), I looked for emergent themes and managed the data to reduce the volume of detail while maintaining complexity in mapping the interrelationships, connections, and patterns between exploratory notes.

Stage 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Smith *et al.* (2009) suggested that this step involved developing a charting, or mapping, of how I thought the themes fit together. Not all emergent themes were incorporated into this stage; some were discarded. I kept the ones that directly related to the research question.

Stage 5: Moving to the next case

This step involved moving to the next participant's transcript and repeating the process. Here it is important to treat the next case on its own terms, to do justice to its individuality. However, there is an important skill in IPA in allowing new themes to emerge with each case (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Stage 6: Looking for patterns across cases

As recommended by Smith *et al.* (2009), I looked for patterns across cases at this stage. In this case, I laid each table out on a large surface and looked across them. (See Appendix G) What connections are there across cases? How does a theme in one case help illuminate a different case? Which themes are the most potent? I was creative and open-minded at this stage to be aware of strong connections between themes in certain areas and weaker links in terms of others. In some cases, it led to a reconfiguration and labelling of themes.

By utilising an IPA methodology, the lived experience of each participant and their meaning-making was presented by how I, the researcher, made sense of the participant making sense - described as the double hermeneutic. I stayed alert to this process and placed importance on my reflexive process by understanding this.

Manual and software Nvivo analysis process

My analysis was done in a hybrid way, combining manual analysis with the NVivo (version 12) software. This was a learning experience academically and personally; I did not move into the next stage until I felt confident. The whole process has been well documented and supervised to ensure rigour and quality. The figure below describes the process:

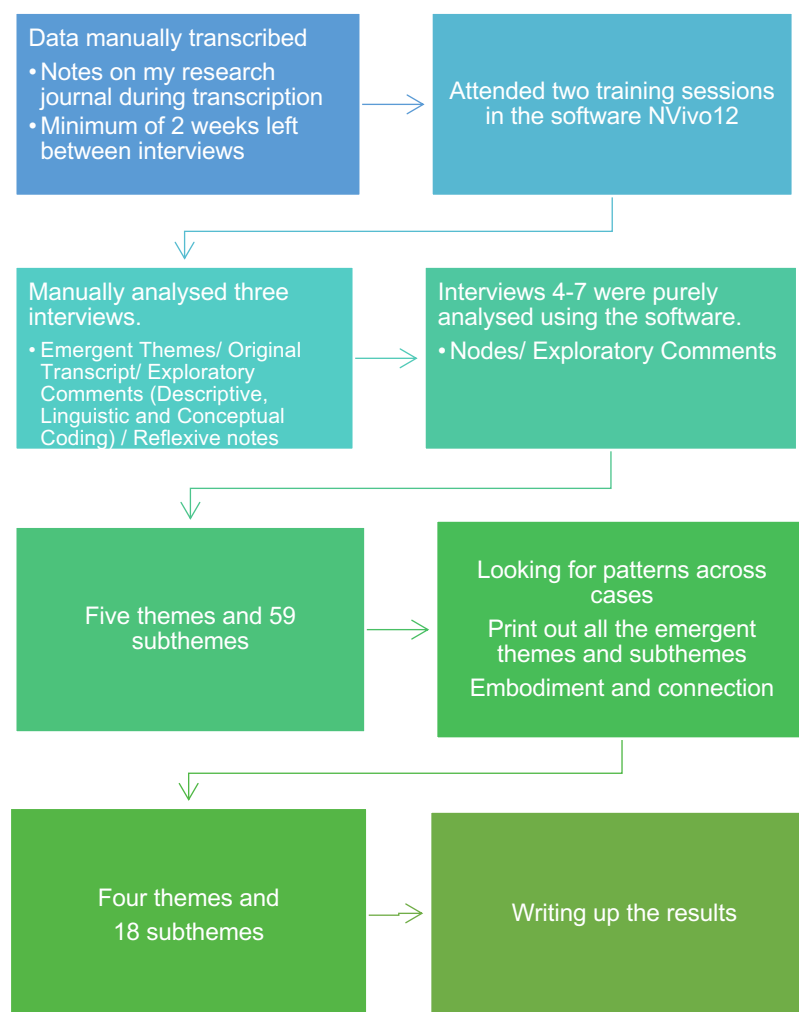


Figure 3: Manual and Software Nvivo Analysis Process

Before making this decision, I did two training sessions in the software (see Appendix H) to ensure I knew how to use the programme and felt confident. I

also had several discussions with my Academic Consultant, and in one she used an analogy that helped me decide to use this programme:

"Using NVivo or doing a manual analysis is like playing an electric guitar or acoustic guitar, in the end, you have to do the work, and you need to learn how to play it, it is just about with which one you feel more comfortable".

With this, it seems that I felt content playing both. Additionally, the intention underpinning the use of NVivo was to promote a more systematic and auditable approach to qualitative data analysis; a lack of rigour, as already noted, is a shortcoming of qualitative research in general (Fielding & Warnes, 2009).

As described previously, following transcription and anonymisation of all interviews, transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo (version 12). I found it more straightforward in the first instance to work with hard copies of the transcripts, reading, re-reading, and reflecting on these to develop my understanding of the dataset. Therefore the analysis of the first three transcripts was made manually, then after the codes were identified I transcribed them into NVivo.

Once I had developed an understanding of the dataset as a whole, I began to group the data into what NVivo calls 'nodes', but what is also referred to as 'codes' in the broader literature (Mason, 2002). So, from the fourth interview, I felt more confident in the analysis process and the use of NVivo and managed to analyse the rest of the interviews purely using the software.

Once all the interviews were coded, five themes and 59 sub-themes were identified (See Appendix I), which meant a large amount of data needed to be analysed in more detail. The data transcripts and NVivo provided me with a concrete base to undertake the messy, iterative, recursive, non-linear, and creative interpretations that characterise and are essential components of inductive analysis (Mason, 2002). The themes I constructed underpin and

remain tethered to what is written in the findings. However, I felt the process of the embodiment of the data needed to be done on paper and in pen, and manually allowed to move the data (See Appendix G). Given that embodiment is an inescapable presence in the lifeworld, it was envisaged that phenomenological research could engage with it through bodily empathy, embodied self-awareness, and embodied intersubjectivity (Finlay, 2006. p.19). Here, the challenge for the researcher was to arrive at a position where interpretations could be made about constructions that, in a sense, lie beyond articulation yet are reliant on language to reveal them (Carpenter, 2009).

I felt that the process of looking for patterns across cases required a level of embodiment and connection that I could not get in front of the computer. I decided to print out all the emergent themes and sub-themes and lay them all in a private room on a carpet, which allowed me to connect with the data for a whole week (I took time off work to focus on this stage properly). During this period, I was solely immersing myself in the data, making notes of my interpretations, moving the themes/codes around and adequately connecting with the data (see Appendix I). I then organised the data into superordinate and sub-themes by identifying patterns.

I was able to eliminate a whole theme and include the sub-theme into another superordinate theme. Some themes were in opposition, and some clustered together. Some emergent themes were considered more important if they arose frequently and were supported in the text. Superordinate themes with their corresponding emerging themes were positioned underneath one another on paper to visualise each category. Some were removed or changed around if they seemed repetitive, or a different expression supported them better. This fulfilling process allowed me to end up with four themes and 18 sub-themes as described in the Results section. In an IPA analysis, the researcher should ensure that the list of themes produced is based not only on prevalence but also on the context and emphasis with which the participant articulates the experience (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

vii. Quality control

As part of quality control, I adopted Yardley's (2000) four broad evaluative criteria to assess the quality of this project. Yardley's four evaluative criteria are:

Sensitivity to context

Yardley (2000) provided a variety of ways that a qualitative study could demonstrate sensitivity to context. For example, she stated that good qualitative research exhibits sensitivity to the following: relevant theoretical and empirical literature, the unique perspectives of each participant, and potential ethical concerns (Yardley, 2015).

As part of these criteria, I demonstrated sensitivity to context in this study in a variety of ways: situating the study within an appropriate body of literature, the data analysed with attention to the bracketing of my own assumptions and with sensitivity to what emerged from the data, rather than a pre-determined idea of what should be there. This meant remaining sensitive to relational dynamics with participants (including ongoing reflexivity and close supervision with my Academic Advisor and my Academic Consultant).

A semi-structured interview was used to be flexible to the participants' experience, and open-ended questions allowed participants to answer with as much or as little information as they wanted. I also had a critical friend, and we immersed ourselves in participant accounts during data analysis and ensuring the final report demonstrates sensitivity to raw data.

Commitment and rigour

The concept of commitment includes prolonged engagement with the study topic, competence development in methods employed, and immersion in collected data (Yardley, 2000).

Rigour has been exacted in selecting a homogenous group of participants, who were selected to match the research question. Commitment can be seen in the time and effort put into transcribing and analysing the interviews in-depth. My analysis process was thoroughly checked by my advisors, who are very knowledgeable in using IPA and supervising qualitative research. My Academic Advisor examined the analysis to ensure that it was sufficiently interpretative and that the results could be traced back to the interview data.

I was also in constant discussion with my Academic Consultant, was supervising at all stages of the analysis of one transcript and looking at the overall results concerning his knowledge of the transcript and the individual superordinate themes from each interview. I have taken steps to ensure that my data analysis has been rigorous and systematic, and I am confident in the quality of my interpretation.

Additionally, the analysis may bring out themes that are not within participants' consciousness or could be challenging to acknowledge as being visible to others in their accounts. I also view my analyses as one possible interpretation of the transcripts. Others could interpret the data differently, and each interpretation would still be valid:

"Even if another researcher or a research participant produces another version, it does not invalidate the researcher's version, it merely adds another plausible description" (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2010, p.28).

Finally, anonymised data on the computer will be password-protected, and consent forms with identifying information will be stored securely by the researcher.

Transparency and coherence

Transparency refers to how clearly the steps taken in a research project are described in the study write-up (Smith *et al.*, 2009). I have aimed to be transparent throughout this process by carefully describing and following each research and analysis stage. The reader of the research generally judges coherence. Efforts have been made to present a coherent argument for the need for this study, and clearly present the process and my interpretation.

Impact and importance

Yardley (2000) suggested that the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged is, arguably, its impact and utility. It is not sufficient to develop a sensitive, thorough and plausible analysis, if the ideas propounded by the researcher have no influence on the beliefs of anyone else. It is hoped that this research will be of use to both professionals and to the fathers themselves through acknowledgement of their roles and knowledge of the experiences of others. This is also detailed in Chapter 6 in the Products section.

3.5. Ethical considerations

As a researcher, I paid particular attention to ethical principles related to duty of care, informed consent, and confidentiality throughout the research process. From the initial stages of the investigation, all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research process at any time up to the writing up of the thesis.

After interview dates and times were agreed upon, I then emailed each participant a consent form (Appendix E). I asked them to read, sign, and return (via email) to me before the interview. When interviewing in person, I printed a hard copy of the consent. On the day of the interview, I reiterated before taping commenced that I would be protecting their anonymity and no names or identifying organisations would be linked to them for the purposes of

confidentiality. If they, for any reason, wanted the interview stopped at any time, they were free to let me know.

Additionally, I emailed them a detailed Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), which contained details of this study, and what to expect, including issues of confidentiality and anonymity in data collection, as well as researcher and supervisor contact details. A Zoom invitation was also emailed to the participants, which stated the date and time of the interview; and to the only participant that was interviewed face-to-face, we set up a date and time to meet at the location of my private practice (See Appendix F). Interviews conducted through Zoom were conducted in an isolated room to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' statements.

I stated that interviews would be digitally recorded (participants via Zoom) and audio recorded (face-to-face participants), transferred onto a USB stick and stored safely in a locked filing cabinet (Data Protection Act, 2018). Their personal details were kept confidential, with no identifying features linked to interview transcripts and published material (British Psychological Society Code of Ethics, 2018).

Furthermore, I am registered with Information Commissioners Office and comply with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation. As a psychologist, I also comply with the ethical guidelines for research of the BPS and Health and Care Professions Council. This study also has to pass an examination by the Ethics Committee at Metanoia Institute (See Appendix L).

In the case of psychological distress during or after the interview, sufficient time was allowed after each interview to provide support, and if needed two free sessions were offered. A time frame of four weeks will be set in which the researcher can be contacted if the participant feels distressed as a result of participating in the research. If that is still not satisfactory, a letter will be written to his GP to be referred to the psychological support service of the National

Health Service (NHS). None of the participants of this study required any psychological support. See Stakeholders Analysis (Appendix K).

I was also aware of any emotional activation during or after the participant's narrative, and I ensured time to debrief after interviews. I also made sure to discuss my personal experience of the interviews with the Academic Advisor and Clinical Supervisor. I kept a reflective diary and allowed time to connect with my thoughts and feelings. This provided an outlet for my expression, keeping me safe and grounded.

3.6. Chapter summary

This chapter explained why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as a methodology for this study and other methodologies considered and rejected. The IPA limitations were also explained. The method for conducting this research was explained, including the inclusion and exclusion criteria on participant selection, the recruitment process, and the participants' details.

A detailed explanation of the interview process is presented and how the data was analysed through a hybrid process, which included a manual stage and a digital stage using software called NVivo12. Finally, how quality control was maintained during this research was stated, as well as the Ethical Considerations.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the interviews with the seven fathers will be presented, which sought to answer the broad research question:

What do fathers think about their experience of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood?

The master themes and their sub-themes are explored within a narrative thematic structure, with evidence to support the themes from the interviews' verbatim transcripts. Pseudonyms and line numbers are used to enhance coherence.

The table below summarises the four group master themes and the sub-themes that combined to create them.

Master themes	Sub-themes	Participants' Pseudonym
4.1. Development of contemporary fatherhood	4.1.1. Father as a natural way of being	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.1.2 Expectation Vs Reality	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.1.3. Traditional fatherhood	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Jacob
	4.1.4. Equality in parenting and involvement as a modern father	Mateo, Bill, Andres, Fred, Jacob
1.2. Fatherhood Challenges	4.2.1. Coping with tiredness	Mateo, Edward, Andres, Fred
	4.2.2. Undesirable Feelings. "Fear, worry and uncertainty"	Mateo, Bill, Andres, Fred
	4.2.3. Struggling in fatherhood	Edward, Andres, Fred, Jacob

	4.2.4. Lack of acknowledgement	Mateo, Andres, Fred, Jacob
	4.2.5. Guilt when physically absent	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
4.3. Meaning in life	4.3.1. Identity as a father	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.3.2. Fatherhood happiness	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.3.3. Child as a priority	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.3.4. Relationship Changes	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Jacob
4.4. Father in action	4.4.1. Father as a teaching role	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred, Jacob
	4.4.2. Parental responsibility	Mateo, Bill, Anthony, Jacob
	4.4.3. Role of the father in the discipline	Edward, Bill, Andres, Jacob
	4.4.4. Father as an emotional support	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Andres, Anthony, Fred
	4.4.4. Active role of a dad through physical contact	Mateo, Edward, Bill, Anthony, Fred, Jacob

Table 3: Results of Master themes and sub-themes

4.1. Development of contemporary fatherhood

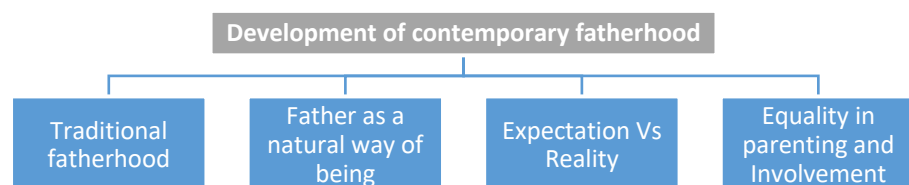


Figure 4: Master theme: Development of contemporary fatherhood and Sub-themes.

The first master theme aims to capture how contemporary fathers have developed. Four sub-themes seek to capture the father's experience through this evolution; participants described how becoming a father was a natural way of being. Besides, fathers were confronted with the differences between reality and their expectations. Another sub-theme was how fathers described traditional fatherhood, followed by compulsory equality in parenting and willingness to be involved as a modern father.

i. Father as a natural way of being

This sub-theme described how men experienced their transition to fatherhood as a natural evolution of their manhood. Most fathers mentioned that the desire to become parents was always present, *"I always wanted to be a dad"* (Mateo) *"I never conceived my life without children"* (Fred). It seems that regardless of other aspects of his life, his desire to procreate felt like a way of developing:

"So yeah, I think it's a very natural thing I've always wanted children... I would say it was a natural expectation I've always had and a desire to sort of developed and mould someone as I would like to" (Edward)

The phrase *"mould someone as I would like to"* seems to imply a meaning of the influence that he has over his child and the willingness to develop himself in a particular way.

Similarly, the expectation of having a child seemed natural as part of the relationship consolidation. Many participants linked the desire to become a father with choosing the correct partner, as mentioned by Edward: *"I married her thinking that she really wanted children, I probably wouldn't have married someone who didn't want children"*. In other cases, it was seen as an expectation of the marriage stages:

"I think it's part and parcel of marriage you know, so when you get married and when you are before the priest and you go down the aisle you say to the person you are going to give everything to the other"

person. There is nothing of you that you are not going to give. And you give them everything including your fatherhood” (Andres)

In this quote, especially when he mentioned “part and parcel”, it is clear that he is trying to come to terms with the sense of giving themselves fully as an individual to their wives and the natural expectation to have a child as part of the marriage.

Other fathers felt that besides already being married, they needed to be financially stable before having a child, which could be seen as a sense of safety, to be able to provide security for their family, As said by Mateo:

“I think we had stability, so I met my wife and then we got married, then after getting married, we decided to buy a flat, so I think we were in a moment where we both felt like it was right timing”

In this case, the word “timing” also reinforces the necessity to be financially stable and have a sense of plan and control over having a child.

ii. Expectation vs reality

The second sub-theme evident throughout the transcripts was the contradiction between what participants expect of fatherhood and the reality of the role. This might be linked with our previous subordinate theme of the natural shift, as the willingness and naturality to have a child, which might have had an impact on considering the implications of fatherhood.

This is evidenced by Bill when he was asked why he decided to become a father:

“Ehmm I guess I just always wanted to have a family and be a father ehmm. To ehmm have a next generation to some extent I guess oh gosh it's such a difficult question. I never really gave it that much thought”

It can also be seen as a sense of doubt, confusion and difficulty with answering the question, which led to an unanticipated amount of work, changes and responsibilities, Mateo also mentioned:

“You don’t know what to expect, but probably you don’t expect to be this intense”

The social comparison on social networking sites created an unrealistic expectation on fathers; this makes them believe that fatherhood was just about the connection of those “happy” moments, more than the constant demand and attention that a child requires, as manifested by Edward:

“I get quite a lot of comments from friends as well, when they see us in pictures, which is very fake as you know, it’s very easy to see Instagram, it looks all so easy”

The focus of enjoying and playing with their children seemed more prevalent than fatherhood's challenges and responsibility. When participants spoke about their expectations of being a father, it was more apparent than when they decided to have a child, they did not consider the day-to-day caring obligations, leaving them with a sense of shock and frustration as perceived in Anthony's statement:

“Ehhhm looking back on it I wasn’t expecting it to be almost what you see in the movies. Like you play with your children, and that’s it. There is no ehmm not all the other stuff, just two minutes of a movie scene of them playing together and having fun. So that was my expectancy ehmm obviously I didn’t know. I didn’t know that it was ehmm constant caring and yeah teaching and showing, mouth feeding and all of that”

There was only one father who correlated his expectation with the difficulty and challenges of fatherhood; he was noticeably more grounded and relaxed about

the challenges this was carrying: *“when having my daughter, I knew that this would probably be one of the hardest things”* (Fred).

iii. Traditional fatherhood “the relax and fun guy”

This subordinate theme revealed how participants felt about the traditional role of their fathers. They reported how their role as a father significantly differs from their fathers' position, describing their father as passive, where the mother actively took control of the child's caring:

“I think maybe in the past it was more accepted that the mum is the one that is going to be taking care of the kid and maybe the dad is more like relaxed about it” (Jacob)

It is noticeable in Jacob's quote and in the rest of the interviews, that there is a sense of acceptance and resignation of how things were in the past, as well as an appreciation of their mother's role.

On this sub-theme, a difference in the way children were disciplined in the past was evident. Participants described how their mother actively executed this role, besides a lack of consistency and guilt by their fathers if a correction was in place, as evidenced in Anthony's interview:

“Ehh you know, and if for some reason he had to tell me off he would just send me to my room, and then I would hear him creeping up the stairs and he would apologise”

Participants experienced a sense of guilt as they felt more emotionally connected with the father as "fun and relaxed" and the expectation of having to impose rules generated a feeling of *“not being as good as my father”* (Edward).

During the interviews, Fred described how he "idealised" his father and described how easy to create that relationship when you never told anyone off. This took him to a level of consciousness about the importance of putting things into perspective and considering generational changes and

confrontation about the importance of disciplining his child and reducing guilt around it.

Furthermore, most fathers showed understanding of how their parents behaved when they were younger, acknowledging that there was no expectation of having an active role in their upbringing, as fathers used to be more focused on their work. As expressed by Mateo: *“From my dad, we didn’t expect anything, he was going to work and that was it”*.

Nevertheless, resentment towards his dad being absent during his upbringing was present in Andres when he mentioned:

“he wasn’t a very good father actually, not a good father at all because he ehmm was totally absorbed in his work and he neglected all of us”.

iv. Equality in parenting and involvement as a modern father

This subordinate theme is evidenced as all the men interviewed spoke about experiencing equality in the way they are parenting nowadays, not only as an expectation but as a willingness to have an active role in the children's upbringing. Mateo clearly acknowledges this in the following quote:

“it’s expected that mum and dad are both responsible and they need to look after the baby on equal foot”.

The phrase *“on equal foot”* reinforces his meaning and expectation to be at the same level as the mother and bring up the child together. Similarly, another exciting development in fatherhood has been acknowledging the different roles of themselves as a team and as a person, considering and appreciating individual time, jobs, or leisure. As mentioned by the following participants:

Bill: *“For my wife and I, rather than always having to be a team on it perhaps we could look after our son on our own once in a while to give*

the other person a bit of time with their friends or family or whatever on our own if that works”

Jacob: *“You are working, your wife is working, how is it fair that she does more than you. I think yeah realistically that role has changed”*

When participants spoke about their equality in parenting, they remarked on the importance of being involved and providing not only physical but emotional security. They described a willingness to be there for emotional support, and they experienced a sense of satisfaction and meaning in their active role as a father in that way. The feeling of being available to their children connected them to provide in an integral way to the children altogether. This can be seen in these participant comments:

“I am trying to install it in her now that if she has something she needs to talk about she can come to daddy or mummy. So yeah whereas when I was younger I would always go with problems to mum”. (Fred)

“Our scenario it’s 50/50 shared. So, if she is ill, she knows we are both there, she can choose to who to come, I’m busy and my wife is free, my wife is busy then I’m free, it is like that. In that sense it is ehmm a bit more shared between us” (Jacob)

Participants experienced a willingness to be involved in their children's upbringing; they also described pleasure in their active role as a father, which developed a sense of belonging in the family. This was present in Mateo when he experienced a switch in the way he used to enjoy himself. As a father, he connects more with his family's gratification than the activity per se.

“I have also learned to enjoy things that before I didn’t even think about. For me, enjoying going to the movies or for a drink, now I get excited to go to the park or to the zoo because we are going as a family” (Mateo).

4.2 Fatherhood challenges

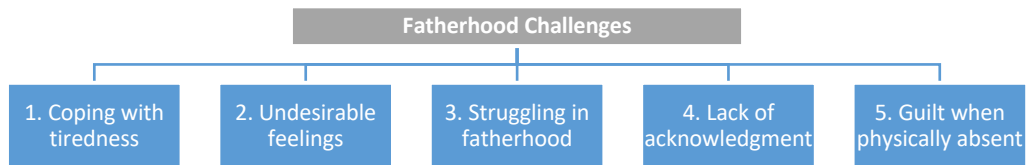


Figure 5: Master theme: Fatherhood challenges and sub-themes.

The second master theme describes the challenges faced by fathers. First, it represented how fathers cope with tiredness, followed by undesirable feelings, including fear, worry, and uncertainty. After this, it was noticeable that fathers lacked acknowledgement and the shame that goes with it. Finally, all participants experienced guilt when they were not physically present for their children.

i. Coping with tiredness

This sub-theme represents fathers' experiences of tiredness. Lack of sleep and constant demands of the children led to a feeling of exhaustion; this was explained in diverse forms by many of the participants:

"It's tiring as well, I am not going to lie, it's tiring, ehmm mmmm, because for example there are many days when my daughter wakes up at 4:30 am" (Mateo)

In this quote from Mateo, specifically when he says, *"I am not going to lie"*, it seems to be implied that he feels the need to hide or cover the way he was feeling regarding his expected tiredness, which is associated with his lack of

sleep. This could also be linked to the lack of fathers' expectancy about having an active role and therefore not experience tiredness.

In the same line of ideas, even before they were a parent men were trying to be empathetic to their peers. It seemed unexpected in some participants to feel these levels of exhaustion, as expressed by Edward:

"I think understanding of you know, families and people who are parents, ehh and how tough it can be, I remember when colleagues that were parents were telling me that they were tired, I was like yeah, but now I know it's pretty extreme"

On the other hand, Andres identified the lack of sleep as the most difficult, above other challenges that may arise as a parent:

"I do think that there have been really difficult times you know mainly when there is a lack of sleep"

Another relevant aspect of tiredness was how participants experienced that when they were feeling tired, this could have a negative impact on their day-to-day activities:

"Some days you feel like, I am tired, or things are not good in general"
(Mateo)

Participants showed tiredness when being asked by their child to engage in repetitive activities:

"So tiring and I think mum ehhm my wife is much better at that, having that patience, she has so good patience to do endless role play with my daughter. But for me it's really hard to do like endless role play, I'd rather build a tower" (Andres)

This quote also implies that Andres feels forced to do what his child is asking him to do, when he would prefer to engage with her in a different activity that he could enjoy more.

ii. Undesirable feelings (fear, worry, and uncertainty)

Participants reported protecting their children as natural and innate. However, with this, a feeling of fear may arise, especially around child safety, as Mateo explained: *“And I guess that maybe, the fear that you have that something bad can happen to her”*. This fear was also seen as transferable to other life experiences where children were involved, as mentioned by Fred:

“So yeah I guess that part of me sort of being more considered but also I cannot watch any film with a child getting hurt”

Participants also experienced the fear of the responsibility of guiding their children's future, including the positive or negative influence that, as a parent, they could have over them, as expressed by Andres: *“fear that you can't influence them for good to guide them in a good direction”*. This same participant extrapolated the fear of the influence that society and other entities could have on his child, which could also be seen as a sense of realisation not to have absolute control over their children's upbringing and how society has a weight on it as well:

“the fear of other people influencing them or the state and the state has no right to kind of you know ehmm have that role” (Andres)

Participants reported difficulties dealing with the uncertainty around the well-being of their children, mostly when they were at an age where they could not openly express their pain or discomfort. This was evident in Mateo's statement:

“ehhh in this case I was also worried of course, because I didn't know

what was wrong, it could be that she had some pain or something like was making her feel unwell, so we were worried that if she just had a sore throat or if it's something else"

On the other hand, when Bill was asked if he could advise himself before becoming a father, he mentioned: *"And also thinking about it, I think the other bit of advice I would give myself is not to worry so much"*, which gives a sense of a cost involved on time that he used in worrying, which could have been invested in more meaningful tasks.

iii. Struggling in fatherhood

This superordinate theme captures the father's struggle and the feelings that get triggered by this. Some participants acknowledge the frustration carried when an unexpected situation arises. However, at the same time, they experienced difficulty around emotional self-control, which could lead from justifying that struggle to feeling ashamed by it:

"It's just that I'm not being in control of my emotions, not like I've done anything, actually I think I have been incredibly patient but just that feeling of frustration like I don't want to feel that, I understand that it's completely natural, it's like if he is in the middle of the street and he pooped his pants for the third time that day it's pretty frustrating, I don't know I just feel like I should be getting so wound up but it's just really hard not to". (Edward)

In addition, few participants showed acceptance of the challenges around the decision to have a child; as Fred clearly stated:

"Everyone was saying, and it is correct, that it is one of the hardest things you will ever do. Ehhm there was a programme on the other day and they said, particular parents and the way they were parenting, that

if you wanted an easy life, you should have got a hamster”

The metaphor he used can also implicate the acceptance of difficulty and the responsibility of being a father.

This acceptance was also seen in Jacob’s statement:

“Ehhhm I think it’s a lack of having a life maybe and I think it’s the ehhm sacrifices that you have to make...I think everyone has to make some kind of sacrifice for children, right?”

Nevertheless, in his quote there is a sense of being defeated, as being demoralised and to have to overcome the adversity of having a child.

However, instead of acceptance, some participants showed shame of the struggle. This is implied in the sense of doubt showed by Mateo when he was asked about the difficulties as a father, he said:

“Uhhmm (long pause) I don’t think there are many bad things, but ehhh I would say, ehhh, maybe, I don’t know, its really difficult at times”

In other fathers, a sense of polarised emotions could be seen, from acknowledging the struggle but as well appreciative of the positives of having a child and the fulfilment that brings to their life, as experienced by Fred:

“So yeah on the one hand it is absolutely amazing from an emotional perspective and having a child is like nothing else like it but ehmmm on the other hand it’s kind of like yeah it’s also one of the most stressful things you could ever do” (Fred)

iv. Lack of acknowledgement

All participants describe situations that provoke feelings of not being acknowledged about the fatherhood role by society, partners or even their child. As manifested by Andres:

“I think the society that we live in the role of the father is probably under the plate, isn't it?”

Using the expression “under the plate” can imply a sense of his role as a father being unnoticed; he seemed very firm on this thought, to the point of seeking validation of his righteousness.

Some participants described a sense of having to earn their children's love; they identified a difference with the mum's role. They experience a more natural way of developing a natural bond with the mother, but feel they have to develop this bond continuously:

“As a father you kind of always feels that you have to kind of win the approval a little bit, whereas with the mum it just happens so much more naturally, that's hard you know... that's hard to take a little bit, you try to kind of win your child over a bit and you gotta get used to lots of sacrifices” (Andres)

In this participant's case, it can be seen as a sense of struggle with it, especially around the continuing effort he seems to have to put into their bond. This was validated by Mateo's experience in which his child needed emotional support. She would rather be supported by her mother than by him, which in this quote feelings of frustration and annoyance can be seen:

“There was one day that my daughter was crying and asking for her mum and I was thinking...Why isn't what I can offer enough?”

Participants experienced a lack of emotional care for the father by the health care professions, as expressed by Fred:

“if they are really interested in having a child ehhm it’s kind of like: how do I feel in all of this? It is almost like: oh, where is the father? Yeah so I kind of think it is dismissed. So yeah that is something I have definitely learned as a father, you are almost like a second class citizen in the aspect of the medical world then what a lot of people think. So, the thing that could be changed would be that, you know, quite a lot of us do actually want to have children”

In this statement, Fred seems to be experiencing the frustration of not being acknowledged and a willingness to belong in his child's life. This is evident, especially when he mentioned: "like a second right citizen", which could be interpreted as a sense of discrimination of his fatherhood role, probably not only by his family but also by society in general.

Besides just the health care system, Fred also mentioned having felt unnoticed by society:

“a lot of people ask the question to the mother like: how are you doing? and that sort of thing but I do find that a lot of the time you don’t get asked a lot of questions about how you are doing...I just feel at times like that person in a corner”

His expression, *“that person in a corner”* also reinforces his meaning of being unnoticed, especially as in this quote there seems to be the lack of emotional acknowledgement of him as a human being.

v. Guilt when physically absent

The majority of the participants show significant guilt when they could not be present in their children's lives. This was experienced when being absent from

their children's daily routine and when they were not physically present for their wives. This feeling is evident in Jacob's quote:

"I think guilty, I feel guilty giving so much to my work sometimes, so I am exhausted, or I am impatient when I get home...and you know, also quite often I have to work late because I had to run an event and then my wife is there on her own"

The guilt was not only experienced when absent because of work; it was also present when having leisure time:

"I think I feel guilt of that and then if I do want to do something for myself like play football or golf, I then also have the guilt that I am not with them, with my family. I usually feel guilt or tired" (Edward)

This statement from Edward seems to imply frustration related to wanting to fulfil other roles in his life; it seems that the guilt when doing any other activity is always present if he is not acting in his father's role. This feeling can be also validated by Andres' experience:

"I think the thing I find so sad is that my job is somehow robbing me of my relationship because mum gets all the time with the daughter, she can build that important relationship but, in my case, because I have all this work I come home and still have all this work to do its I feel this sense that I really want to I really want to spend some time with her and sometimes this is not possible. That's heart-breaking for a father".

The phrase "That's heart-breaking for a father" reinforces his guilt and sadness when not actively present, which leaves him with a feeling that other areas of his life are taking over his willingness to have a more active role as a father.

4.3. Meaning in life

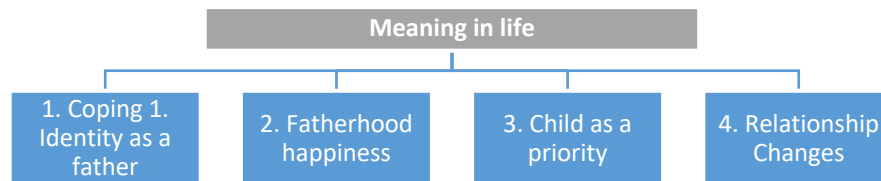


Figure 6: Master theme: Meaning in life and Sub-themes.

This third master theme explains how fathers experienced meaning in their life since becoming parents. It starts by describing how their identity evolves during their fatherhood, followed by the happiness that the child brought to their lives. Additionally, it seemed that the child became their priority, and as part of this, there were challenges in their relationships that, when well-managed, gave meaning to their lives.

i. Identity as a father

This sub-theme describes how the experience of fatherhood developed a new identity in a man's life. Most participants explained how their lives changed after becoming parents and how they had to adapt their daily routine to fulfil the family's necessities:

“Ehhhm I think it is life changing. I think it completely changes who you are you know...I think for me it's kind of, when we had my son I was 27-28 so maybe maturity wise, you have to ehghm mature. You have to be aware of the situations around you”. (Jacob)

This quote seems to imply a sense of obligation to change when becoming a father, especially when the participant mentioned: *“you have to ehghm mature”* together with: *“You have to be aware of the situations around you”*.

This could also mean the sense of individuality he had before becoming a father, and how now his identity is not only around his needs but also the needs of his child.

Additionally, many participants explained how since becoming fathers they could not conceive their life without their children, especially around their day-to-day meaning, as mentioned by Mateo:

"I couldn't see my life without having my daughter now, without having the baby. It makes me feel happy, it's like when I wake up in the morning, I know there is my daughter to look forward to"

This participant also emphasised how fatherhood brought personal meaning, especially around their life fulfilment and direction. Additionally, the joy of parenting could also have a positive effect on society:

"I think the baby can change everything in a positive and a general way. But it's a very positive thing and it can also motivate people that have not focus in life and then they can have a baby and they can change I guess their approach to life and make them better people in general" (Mateo)

Many participants, after becoming fathers, noticed that they developed a sense of contribution through their experiences. This can be noted in Bill's quote:

"I'm always eager in trying to help so scientific research in any way I can. This particular thing is obviously important to me as a new father and ehhm things are changing a lot in the world, in all aspects in the world but also in fatherhood as well so ehhm the research is very valuable"

In Bill's quote, he directly refers to this research and how he believes it's "very valuable". In addition to this, Mateo expressed: *"I was happy to share my experience as a new dad and to help others"*, which inferred a sense of supporting other fathers, and through this action finding meaning in his fatherhood role.

One participant explained how he experiences fulfilment through his fatherhood role, not only in the present moment but also about leaving his contribution to the world through his child:

“I wanted to leave something in this world. Something good I guess ehmmmm I don’t know, like ehmm when I leave this world I want to leave something behind me, because I’m caring after someone and yeah I’m trying to leave something good in this world. So I’m proud of that and that ehmm makes me happy I guess” (Anthony)

Other participants realised that they want to make the most of their lives, as their father role seemed to have made them realise that life is not timeless. In addition, to connect with his child in a meaningful way, including having a positive impact on his offspring's life. As evidenced by Fred:

“I have done probably more in the last few years than I did before having my daughter, having a child it put kind of her age aspect on to me like: life is quite short, let’s get onto it, let’s get cracking. If you want to advance you’d better get on with it. Ehmm and yeah it’s kind of making sure that she can look up to me and say: “oh dad did that”

Another aspect that seemed to have developed through parenting was self-confidence, as expressed by Edward:

“I think you have to give less care about what people think of you and what you are doing, and I think that’s actually helped me, because I spent most of my life really worrying about what every single individual is thinking about me at that time. Whereas now you know when I’m changing his nappy in the middle of the street, I can’t worry about that. And you know, if he wants to dance, I always kind of struggle to dance in front of people, but if he now wants to dance, I’m not bothered about what other people think, I would want to make him happy. So, it has given me a lot of confidence, which is good”

In addition to the increased self-confidence, it seems that he is experiencing a sense of freedom, especially when he mentioned: *“if he now wants to dance, I’m not bothered about what other people think”*, which, in combination with his fatherhood, seems to have made his life more meaningful.

ii. Fatherhood happiness

The happiness experienced through fatherhood was present in all participants:

“I also feel joy of seeing him all the time, because he has a very happy soul, you know seeing playing or jumping while I am doing some work, and then in between he says something funny and give me a cuddle. It’s just seeing how happy he is really, like just sort of messing around with him and watching him laugh. It’s just watching this brilliant person that you are creating just really happy with life, it’s just really powerful”
(Edward)

This quote from Edward shows his positivity, which goes from observing his child to physical contact, but it seems clear that the happiness comes from being present and connecting with his child. Bill also validates the intensity of this feeling:

“ So yeah ehmm definitely happy is the overriding emotion. Ehmmm he is just a lot of fun, playing with his car, just cuddles every time. Like keep walking down the street and he is like: hello to everyone, which is like embarrassing but also hilarious. I mean the amount of laughter I get from him as well is just wonderful. Oh, incredibly happy. Especially when he is so interactive with like members of the public walking around and you know he is like: hello hello. You kind of feel pride that he is confident”

Another emotion that is associated with happiness is the pride that Bill

described in his quote: *"You kind of feel pride that he is confident"* which also shows a sense of happiness in his child's development.

Additionally, as evidenced by Anthony: *"you get a lot of satisfaction from seeing your own child growing and learning, and I don't think ehhm that can be replaced easily by anything"*, it seems implied unique happiness that he is experiencing or discovering through his parenting role.

However, at times, some participants described it could feel as a polarised experience, as mentioned by Edward *"Ehhhm it's amazing it's like definitely the best thing ever, but it's also the hardest thing ever"*, which it can imply frustration when things are not as planned, or even when other activities outside the father role need to be performed as evidenced by Fred:

"I get to do music is when she is in bed so I will, which also can have an adverse effect on ehhm that sort of thing as well so trying to achieve something that I have always wanted to do ehhhm then I have to do that outside of her hours so that I don't impact on my time with her"

Another way that fathers described experiencing happiness was through the connection with his extended families.

"I mean they love it; they absolutely love having a grandson and my granddad and my stepdad, that has been quite amazing actually because my stepdad has always been like: hate children, you know ehhm kind of person. But really, he absolutely loves him, you would just see him with him and it's just lovely" (Bill)

This quote seems evident that Bill was not expecting a positive reaction from his parents, observing how they connected with his child brings his happiness through that bond. Which was also evident in Mateo's quote:

"the relationship with my family that's it, it was good enough, but that"

changed because maybe I used to talk with them once a week because, I mean I can tell them when I've done in the week and that's it but maybe now because of my daughter then we speak every day and we are more in contact because of that. I also have more contact with my extended family, my aunts and uncle, because they are constantly asking how she is, and I have more close relationship with them as well" (Mateo)

This quote inferred a sense of fulfilment on the family closeness thanks to his child, which seems that the participant is willing and enjoying this change in the contact frequency.

iii. Child as a priority

Another sub-theme that was experienced by all participants, was the sense of their child as a priority, in comparison with other areas of their lives. As expressed by Jacob:

"I think those are the key things, being selfless, being involved in ehhm every aspect of their livelihood is what it is like. I mean you don't really have any time for yourself, I mean you put yourself on the back row and do the best for them. Also, the mentality has probably changed as well, before it was meeting friends and things like that first whereas now it's everything to do with the child has to come first and things like that"

The phrase *"being selfless, being involved"* reinforces the meaning of being present in every aspect of his life, and the child is the primary focus of attention. Also, Mateo said: *"So of course, you need to take that into consideration for everything that you do"*, which reinforces a difficulty in the disconnection of his father's role, and the impact when wanting to plan other areas of his life how the child needs to be considered.

Similarly, Fred seems to consider that besides having his child as a priority,

the balance of the different role as a man is also relevant:

“some people treat parenthood as: everything you had before has stopped, that is the end. It’s all about the children, which it is, but it doesn’t mean the other stuff has to stop. You just have to, you know, be dynamic in your life”

It seems however that through putting the child as a priority, the discovery of new enjoyments has arisen, as mentioned by Mateo:

“maybe before the thought of going to the park to sit on the grass with a friend it sounded boring but now it’s very exciting to go to the park, so I think my lifestyle has changed, it’s totally different”

In addition, there is a realisation of a sense of a companion for life, as evidenced by Bill: *“yeah just someone to help grow and share life with”*.

Another meaningful aspect for the father was to have the opportunity to share their experiences with other fathers in similar conditions:

“Ehhhm just to say that it is great that there are a lot of fathers like me now so it is not that people talk about, you know dads talk to other dads and they say pride in it you know. Whether it is at a BBQ with everyone around and all the blokes huddle together, not just talking about cars or whatever but it is also talking about their kids and the funny thing their daughter did the other day”

His expression *“not just about cars or whatever”* can be noticed in a dismissive tone, emphasising the importance and enjoyment when talking about his child.

iv. Relationship changes

As much as this research focuses directly on the father, certain changes in the parent's relationship are predictable, as influenced by a new family member. This was evidenced by most of the participants.

Participants described that the time and attention that a child requires had affected their communication, as experienced by Mateo: *"I don't have time to talk with my wife as we did before, all the attention goes to the child"*. Unfortunately, in some cases, this has also impacted the relationship negatively, leading to a lack of emotional and physical openness and manifested by Edward: *"we don't have much time to talk about feelings, and we have less intimacy"*.

Some participants described a positive impact on the relationship, as mentioned by Mateo:

"It's important to know that having a baby will change your life, you are a couple and then another person will change everything but if the people are committed and they are looking forward to it, I think the baby can change everything in a positive and a general way".

This quote shows consciousness of the challenges and the necessity of commitment to the relationship. Additionally, it shows the possibility that when these difficulties are overcome, this can develop in the sense of fulfilment.

This is also evident in Jacob's interview when he mentioned:

"It has helped me to be happy as part of the family and being involved has really helped ehhm because now I understand what I need and what she needs as well. But before I would just assume that she is ok, she is at home and that is the wrong mentality to have ehhhm because even then it is really difficult. I think I'm growing in understanding those points. I have also learned that deep down with my wife it made us grow closer, kind of clinched us to another level where we weren't sure we had"

In this quote, especially when he mentioned: *"it made us grow closer"*, he seems to emphasise the importance of communicating their need while acknowledging the difficulties that this carries, which impacted their relationship positively when they managed that level of understanding.

Another change in the relationship was how fathers tried to fulfil their wife's

expectations, this could be evidenced by Bill's quote when he mentioned:

"I have learned to cooperate, to work as a team with my wife, eh-hmm to put her first so they can see us as a role model. I still feel that you can say that in general fathers probably lean more towards what their wife thinks and that would be helpful to the relationship".

In his quote, he also emphasised "to work as a team", this mutual collaboration was also stated by most participants, as a way of their father role but also as a way of maintaining a healthy relationship with their wives, as manifested by Andre:

"There are many ways of doing parenting but what's important, in whatever way people choose to do parenting what's important is that husband and wife work together as a team. And the work together as a team as family and they do a good job".

In his quote he is showing respect over other ways of parenting but emphasising the involvement of both parents as a way of succeeding in their role.

4.4 Father in action

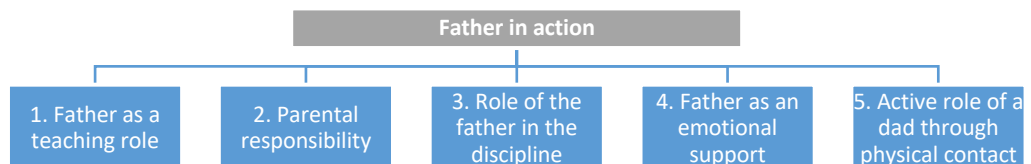


Figure 7: Master theme: Father in action and Sub-themes.

This last master theme explores how fathers actively experienced their

fatherhood. First, they seemed to have based their role on teaching and developing their children. Second, participants described a sense of responsibility for the children even when they are not physically present. Third, it seemed evident that most felt that they had a more active role in their children's discipline than their partners. Fourth, another sub-theme was how fathers were willing to be an emotional support to their children. Fifth, it was how fathers described how significant it was for them to be actively involved in their children's lives through physical contact.

i. Father as a teaching role

This sub-theme describes how all participants experienced their role as a father based on teaching their children. It seems that this goes beyond the practicality of teaching but more about the responsibility of moulding a human being, as expressed by Edward: *"I've always had and a desire to sort of developed and mould someone as I would like to"*. This participant also expressed how this duty makes him feel:

"And now having the opportunity to do that from day one is pretty exciting and a bit scary at the same time, you can do everything, and anything can happen"

This quote shows how this participant experienced fear related to the long-term impact that he is having in his child's life, which lead to an unpredictable future. This can also be evident in Anthony when he mentioned: *"sort of adventure or project or what ever you call it, this part of life that you have taken, it makes it worth it. A 100 per cent"*.

Another participant that described the uniqueness of the parenting impact on child development was Fred, when he stated:

"having a child that is something you create, that is something completely unique to you and the person you have the child with"

Another participant showed how besides the direct impact that a father can

have on this child, it seemed relevant to him to allow the child the freedom to choose his pathway:

“I would love for him to do is to not to do something I want him to do but to for him to have those core skills which I think are so important and just be a good human and be a benefit to society. I think that of it is something for me is one of the best things of being a father” (Jacob)

On the other hand, it seemed significant to most participants to be a role model to their children, as expressed by Mateo:

“Ehh I think like discovering lots of new things every day and the surprise of, I don’t know that you repeat everything that you do, and they copy you on everything that you do, and see, you are like the image that she looks into and she probably will behave according to what you teach her”

In this quote, it seems Mateo feels secure in how he can teach his daughter in the present moment *“she repeats everything that you do”*, but also appears to be uncertain about the development of the child in the future when he mentioned: *“probably will behave according to what you teach her”*.

Another participant that clearly states the importance of being a role model to his child was Fred: *“And also you want to be proud of your children, but you also want your children to be proud of you”*, which reinforces the meaning of his child to look up to him as a human being.

Furthermore, most fathers mainly focused on the practical way of teaching their children, as expressed by Bill:

“I’m very pleased with the kind of things that I do with my son, the intellectually stimulating stuff, the games, reading and all of that. So I’m going into practical things but a lot of raising children is just practical, practical”

Bill seemed to emphasise that the parenting priority is being active and doing

things with the children, where other caring aspects could have been dismissed.

ii. Parental responsibility

One aspect that seemed to have significantly developed in the men in this study was the sense of responsibility after they became parents, as expressed by Mateo:

“I think ehh I feel more like responsibility on my shoulders. Beforehand, if I had lost a job maybe it was ok, I would just say, I can find another one, and it should be fine, but I guess now, you know that if you have the baby you have to, you need to have an income, because you need to be able to provide for your family”.

In his quote, it seemed clear the impact of having a child has on this participant, especially when he mentioned, *“you have to, you need to”*. It appears that his sense of responsibility is not optional, it is seen as an obligation, in this case especially around financially providing for his family.

Anthony emphasised the importance of providing financially for his family and how his sense of responsibility developed after having his child:

“More responsible, money aware as well. How to spend your money, where to spend it. This is a reflection of what I’m seeing now. And that all happened after we had our daughter, saving money, buying a house, getting your stuff together” (Anthony)

Another way that the fathers experienced the responsibility in this study was by realising the after having a child; there is an incapacity to emotionally disconnect from them, even when they are not present:

“ even when my son is just at nursery or whatever, you still know, you still have that responsibility and everything like that and I guess I recognise that I thought it would be the case of having to be incredibly responsible. The fact that it is just that responsibility and it’s always

there” (Bill)

The sense of responsibility also was described as way of including the father in the day-to-day planning, which also led a way of being more active, as mentioned by Anthony:

“I think I became more responsible, more awareness about where is the danger. I was probably less active before than I am right now. And that’s a good one and more organised as well. As in having more sort of ehmm scheduling and organisation about how do you go on in your life”

Besides, it seems that the planning was not only around the present moment but also as a way of planning for the future:

“I think even lifestyle you would think, it’s silly things like that when you think in 10 years time I would like to be healthy for this reason and they are ehmm a massive part of that” (Jacob)

The phrase *“healthy for this reason”* also reinforces the importance of being physically and emotionally present for his child, which seemed meaningful to him as a father.

iii. Role of the father in discipline

This sub-theme describes how most fathers felt they were more in charge of the discipline than their partners. This could be evident in:

“Then on the other hand I can feel very frustrated when he is pushing the boundaries, sometimes I can feel that he is always pushing them, it’s difficult. I think I am the more sort of in charge of behaviour, I am the one who does that in our family” (Edward)

This quote seemed to imply a sense of frustration and loneliness of having to be the only one in charge of the discipline, which could lead him to think that his child is constantly pushing the boundaries if he is covering this role. On

the other hand, it is relevant to note that this same participant when asked how his wife would describe him, stated:

“mmm and I think my wife would probably use something among the lines like strict almost, as with my son there are very clear line that he does not cross and I raise my voice if I need to, but as a teacher that is very rare, which is interesting” (Edward)

The way of disciplining his child is around clear boundaries, but at the same time, a sense of guilt and ambivalence was noted while doing this.

Another participant that mentioned relevance around setting limits, and feeling quite lonely in the process of doing this was Andres, when he mentioned:

“And I don’t want her to have loads and loads of unhealthy food. Every person has their own little thing that they want and so we try our best you know. My wife maybe is not as strict in that sense. She is a bit more kind of ehmm she allows kind of my daughter to have this or that”

But on the other hand, he also mentioned how his wife could take over a more caring role than disciplining their child:

“My wife is very, you know she is very ehmm caring, very caring and very sensitive and all of that is very good for my daughter. I’m very, I’m a little bit ehmm kind of, what’s the word, I believe in character, the importance of character. And character building” (Andres)

He shows a sense of acceptance in the difference of the roles, as it seems that when he mentioned *“I believe in character”*, he experiences a clarity around that being his role as a father.

iv. Father as an emotional support

This sub-theme represents how participants experienced being an emotional support to their children and how this felt meaningful to them:

“It's really lovely and I think it has like sort of a special relationship with him, that other fathers don't have, he comes to me when he is with his hurt or upset which is really nice, my wife finds it hard, but that's really special to me” (Edward)

Edwards quote seems to assume that other fathers are not as close to their children as him, but in this research, that was not the case as most participants described how they emotionally supported their children. Additionally, he mentioned, *“my wife finds it hard”*, which seemed unexpected, that her child is seeking that support from her husband instead of her.

This support provided by fathers was also described as a *“paternal instinct”* by Fred when he stated:

“It made me a lot more focused and ehmm I almost feel supernatural things where I can see into the future when you look at your child and go: don't do that or an accident will happen, and then bang it goes. It's the paternal instinct as well, you want to protect them. You don't want them to hurt themselves”

This quote seems to imply the development of a capacity to predict when his child might be hurt, which led him to a need to protect his child from avoiding him getting injured.

Another way participants described providing emotional support to their children was to protect them and be available when the child needed it:

“There are many good things ehmm I like the idea that my daughter looks up to me and when there is a dog in the park ehmm she wants the protection that I offer and I like that. I like to be the one who's sort of providing and protecting” (Andres)

Besides, the sense of being available to their children could at times be beyond their own needs as a father including, in the case of Mateo, his work or sleep:

"It's tiring, eh hh mmmm, because for example there are many days when my daughter wakes up at 4:30 AM so of course it is tiring because you need to be here playing with her and at the same time then I have to go to work and to need to be 100 per cent focus on work, but at the same time of course I am feeling tired and also be aware of what she is doing"

It also appeared evident that providing emotional support was a natural way of developing through their fatherhood; it was a willingness to be there for their children, which created that bonding through the care of them. As shown by Bill:

"Ehhhm yeah and that created that real bond from very early on and especially right at the beginning in the hospital you know my wife is asleep and I'm sort of not going to sleep obviously when you kind of have a 4-hour old baby. So just holding him when my wife was asleep was quite powerful I think. I think from then on it just, it was always where I was going to be a hands-on you know emotionally connected dad. Definitely".

There was only one participant that did not seem as emotionally connected to his child at this stage of his parenting:

"I've always envisaged that; you know taking my son to my football, playing golf with him, playing sports with him, and spending time just messing around swimming pools and things like that. Rather than the bit until now really, the baby face, which is you know, where they just take, take, take they don't get give a lot back". (Edward)

When he mentioned *"take, take, take"*, it seemed to imply a sense of being

emotionally drained by having to be available to his child's needs.

v. Active role of a dad through physical contact

This sub-theme reveals how fathers found meaning and felt active towards their children's development through physical contact. Most participants experienced this, and the fulfilment of being physical could be seen in day-to-day activities. As stated by Edward: *"said its daytime, and he came and gave me a cuddle, and we had some breakfast together"* or when the child needed emotional support: *"So when my son hurt himself or something, you know as kids do, ehmmm whoever is nearest he will just come and cuddle"* as mentioned by Bill.

Bill also described a sense of feeling loved through physical contact with his child and being *"wonderful"* which implies that this affection gives meaning to the participant:

"Eehmm so I think it's that emotional and tactile love that you get from a child, just clearly as a parent we are like: he is everything. Which is wonderful" (Bill)

Furthermore, participants experienced how physical contact with their children could serve as a way of guiding the emotional development of their children, including building their self-confidence:

"And it is funny the small things do ehmm make a massive difference. Just, especially interacting with my son, being hands-on, being cuddly you know. There are some things that you read that say that with boys don't be like to overly cuddly and that kind of thing, that's like total rubbish obviously. Ehmm the more love you give them the better and more confident they are" (Bill)

It also seemed that this emotional development through physical contact was evidenced in not only the children but also in the fathers:

“Once I know what I had to do for him, and especially the cuddles that my child gave me, I think that really has helped mental health as well”
(Jacob)

Finally, some fathers also described how they managed to get to know their children through physical contact and how this gave value to their lives:

“I can play with her, I can do lots of things, and now she kind of values more my time with her. I love the holidays now because I can cuddle my daughter, I can get to know her more” (Andres)

In this quote, it can also be seen how his values in other areas of life have increased because he can spend time with his daughter.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored participants' reflections on the father experience during the early childhood of their first-born, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the interviews with seven fathers of their first-born produced four master themes and 18 sub-themes.

The first master theme aimed to capture how the contemporary fathers have developed, followed by the second master theme which described the challenges faced by fathers. The third explained how fathers experienced meaning in their life since becoming parents. And the last explored how fathers actively experienced their fatherhood.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Specifically, it provides a synopsis of the research question, discussion of the themes, implications for practice, limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Fathers' experiences during their first-born have been scarcely acknowledged within the literature, despite the growing involvement of fathers during the last years. This research, which was intended to fill the gap in the existing literature, created new data on the lived experiences.

The participants in this study were allowed to use their voices to share their authentic and lived experiences.

Chapter 4 outlined the study's findings, highlighting the four themes that emerged from the data analysis process. Each theme is discussed in further detail, elaborating on its meaning related to the father's lived experiences and connection to the relevant literature. In addition, limitations and recommendations as a result of the findings are discussed.

The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the reflexivity/role of the researcher and suggestions for future research. This research aspired to answer the broad research question:

What do fathers think about their experience of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood?

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the interviews with seven fathers of their first-born produced four master themes describing the fathers' experiences:

- Development of contemporary fatherhood

- Fatherhood Challenges
- Meaning in Life
- Father in Action

With a further reflection of the analysis, it could be argued that the themes influence each other. It seemed that a central theme was the development of contemporary fatherhood and how these changes generated challenges in their role, an increase in their meaning in life, and an expectation and willingness to be active in their children's lives.

5.1 Development of contemporary fatherhood

This research has served as a way to explain how contemporary fathers have developed. Four sub-themes captured the father's experience through this evolution; participants described how becoming a father was a natural way of being, seeing their desire to procreate as a way of developing as a human being. Besides, fathers were confronted with the differences between reality and their expectations. Lastly, fathers described their experience on traditional fatherhood, including the perception of their own fathers, followed by compulsory equality in parenting and willingness to be involved as a modern father.

Father as a natural way of being

This research demonstrates that fathers experience their transition to fatherhood as a natural evolution of their manhood, seeing their desire to procreate as a way of developing as human beings. This view is reflected in contemporary approaches to fatherhood, and the range of fatherhood discourses outlined by Lupton and Barclay (1997) more than 20 years ago remain relevant to exploring the experience of fatherhood today, seeing fatherhood as a logical step and as 'natural part of adult masculinity.

Knoester and Eggebeen (2006) indicated that men have naturally increased their involvement to include more caregiving and parenting activities; it seems

reasonable therefore to suggest that fatherhood's experience has a transforming effect on men.

Additionally, it was seen that the expectation of having a child seemed natural as part of the relationship consolidation, the sense of giving themselves entirely as an individual to their wives, and the natural expectation to have a child as part of the marriage. These findings support those by Strier (2014), who found that in many western societies, there is increasingly a contemporary notion of a father who is both sensitive to, and actively involved in, the nurturing of his children within a relationship (with his children's mother) founded on expectations of equal co-parenting and in acknowledgement of the cultural context in which his paternal role is accomplished (Strier, 2014).

Besides the evolution of contemporary fathers, it was seen that some fathers still showed the necessity of financial stability, as well as a sense of planning before having a child. This could be seen as a sense of safety, to be able to provide security for their family as seen by Doherty *et al.* (2006), who asserted that there is an emphasis given to new fathers' economic provider role, and that there is a socially constructed consensus that fathers should have a specific concern about the financial security of their families. First, a modelling hypothesis comes from the social learning theory (Bandura, 1989) that suggests that men model themselves after their fathers. This modelling process will be enhanced if their fathers are nurturing and accessible. Second, a compensatory or reworking hypothesis argues that fathers tend to compensate or make up for deficiencies in their childhood relationships with their fathers, by being better and more involved when assuming this role (Roy & Smith, 2013).

Expectation vs reality

The contradiction between what participants expect of fatherhood and the reality of the role was present in this research. As explained by the participants, this could be caused by several reasons:

- As explained in the previous subordinate theme of the natural shift, the willingness and naturality to have a child might have impacted considering the implications of fatherhood.
- The comparison on social networking sites created an unreal expectation on fathers; this makes them believe that fatherhood was just about the connection of those 'happy' moments, more than the constant demand and attention that a child requires. This finding correlates with Stepanikova, Nie, and He (2010), who described how the direction of the relationship between internet use and psychological well-being might be positive or negative, depending on how internet use influences the social processes that contribute to mental health.
- The focus of enjoying and playing with their children seemed more prevalent than fatherhood's challenges and responsibility. When participants spoke about their expectations of being a father, it was apparent that they did not consider the day-to-day caring obligations when they decided to have a child, leaving them with a sense of shock and frustration. This finding correlates with the explanation of Pleck (1997), explaining that changes in the responsibilities of men and women create a new set of expectations, beliefs, and attitudes about what men and women should do in the context of family. The ideal of coparent represents a significant shift because it obliterates a gender division of labour in domestic and breadwinning responsibilities.

Traditional fatherhood "the relax and fun guy"

This research identified how the father role has significantly differed from their fathers' position, describing their father as passive, where the mother actively took control of the child's caring. Silverstein *et al.* (2002) described this in their definition of a conventional father, being someone who maintains emotional distance from his children, focusing more on discipline than affection. Because a real man must avoid sissy stuff, and childcare has traditionally been defined

as women's work, a traditional father limits his involvement in childcare. He might babysit if his wife has to be away, but he does not actively manage the children.

Most participants showed an understanding of how their parents behaved when they were younger, acknowledging that there was no expectation of having an active role in their upbringing, as fathers used to be more focused on their work. Different levels of acceptance regarding fathers being absent from their upbringing were seen in this research. In most participants, the passive role of their father translated as a sense of acceptance and resignation of how things were in the past, as well as an appreciation of their mother's role. These findings give support to those of Knoester and Eggebeen (2006), who identified that in contemporary society men have naturally increased their involvement to include more caregiving and parenting activities.

Nevertheless, resentment towards his dad being absent during his upbringing was present in one of the participants. This also fits with Knoester and Eggebeen's (2006) claims that fatherhood is not as appreciated as a transforming event in adults' lives as motherhood. Parenthood presents significant developmental challenges to adults and can lead to personal reorganisation and growth, openness to learning, new coping strategies, increased differentiation and integration, maturity, and a prime generative encounter (Palkovitz, 2002; Snarey, 1993; cited in Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006).

Another relevant aspect was a difference in the way children were disciplined in the past. It was perceived that mothers actively executed this role; participants also described their fathers' lack of consistency and guilt if a correction was in place. This finding is consistent with Silverstein *et al.* (2002) who described the traditional father as the 'patriarchal' father, indicating his family's dominant power position. There are many positive aspects to the rules

of masculinity for the traditional father. They prescribe being a responsible provider, a disciplinarian who instils a sense of morality in his children, and a role model who is physically strong and remains calm in the face of danger.

This has led to an idealisation of the father role and a realisation of how easy it is to create that relationship when you never discipline anyone. These took participants to a level of consciousness about the importance of putting things into perspective, considering generational changes, including the willingness to be part of the discipline of his children while acknowledging the guilt they can experience, which is mainly related to their experience of having had traditional fathers. These findings highlight how the fatherhood construct has changed and developed during the last two decades, showing greater demands and expectations of fathers' participation than before. 'Good fathering' is no longer defined by a man's ability to protect, provide, and implement discipline within the family. Instead, contemporary western fathering is increasingly egalitarian, with men more actively involved in domestic and infant care responsibilities (Dunlop & Mletzko, 2011; Fischer & Anderson, 2012).

Equality in parenting and involvement as a modern father

This sub-theme showed the importance for fathers to experience equality in the way they are parenting nowadays, not only as an expectation but as a willingness to have an active role in the children's upbringing; be at the same level as the mother; and bring up the child together. These findings highlight how changes in the responsibilities of men and women are creating a new set of expectations, beliefs, and attitudes about what men and women should do in the family context. The ideal of coparent represents a significant shift as it obliterates a "gender division of labour in domestic and breadwinning responsibilities" (Pleck, 1997, p. 48)

Another exciting development in fatherhood has been acknowledging their different roles in a team and as a person, considering and appreciating

individual time, jobs, or leisure. When participants spoke about equality in parenting, they remarked on the importance of being involved and providing physical and emotional security. They described a willingness to be there as emotional support, and that they experienced a sense of satisfaction and meaning in their active role as a father in that way. The feeling of being available to their children connected them to provide in an integral way to the children altogether. The finding supports those of Hudson *et al.* (2001), who found that the changes in paternal involvement positively impact men, as paternal engagement is strongly associated with greater parenting satisfaction and the partnered relationship for mothers and fathers alike.

Besides the willingness experienced by the fathers of this study to be involved in their children's upbringing, they also described pleasure in their active role as a father, which developed a sense of belonging in the family. Previous research validates this, describing that fathers often spend time with their children through active, physical involvement, and these experiences can promote opportunities for emotional connections (Coyle-Shepherd & Newland, 2013).

5.2 Fatherhood challenges

During this research, it was evident how fathers experienced challenges related to their role. It will be explained how fathers coped with tiredness, followed by undesirable feelings, including fear, worry, and uncertainty; how it is noticeable that fathers lacked acknowledgement and the shame that goes with it. Finally, how all participants experienced guilt when they were not physically present for their children. These findings correlate with Petrassi (2012), who described that it was visible that the increasingly female workforce has created more demands on fathers.

Several pieces of research have described how fatherhood demands can cause mental health disorders. A recent systematic review reported that the prevalence rates for any anxiety disorder in men ranged between 4.1 and 16.0

per cent during their partners' pregnancy, and between 2.4 and 18.0 per cent during the postnatal period (Leach *et al.*, 2016). Prevalence rates of antenatal and postnatal depression in fathers in a systematic review of 20 studies ranged from 1.2 to 25.5 per cent (Goodman, 2004)

Coping with tiredness

Fathers experience tiredness due to the lack of sleep and the constant demands of children leading to a feeling of exhaustion; this was explained in diverse forms by many participants. Additionally, fathers experienced shame and the necessity to hide or cover their feelings regarding their expected tiredness, which was associated with their lack of sleep. This could be linked to the lack of fathers' expectancy about having an active role and therefore, not experiencing tiredness. This was also evident in Stingley and Edwards (2015) research, who found that adjusting to parenthood can be a tumultuous time in the lives of some men, fraught with the increased stress of caring for a new-born, decreased sleep, and role strain and gender role conflict.

It was apparent how tiredness impacted their day-to-day activities, significantly affecting their concentration at work. As Maquet (2001) explained, sleep is considered important to body restitution, like energy conservation, thermoregulation, and tissue recovery. In addition, sleep is essential for cognitive performance, especially memory consolidation (Maquet 2001; Stickgold, 2005).

Undesirable feelings (Fear, Worry and Uncertainty)

Participants reported protecting their children as natural and innate. However, with this a feeling of fear may arise, especially around child safety, but also about the responsibility of guiding their children's future, including the positive or negative influence that, as a parent, they could have over them. This was explained by Chin *et al.*'s (2011) research which found that as with mothers, fathers can be overwhelmed and experience an array of emotions - confusion,

love, a sense of great responsibility, uncertainty, and frustration - as they manage their new role's demands and expectations (Chin *et al.*, 2011).

Participants also fear the influence that schools and other entities could have on their children, which could also be seen as a sense of realisation not to have absolute control over their children's upbringing and how society has a bearing on it. These findings highlight Mollborn and Lawrence (2018), who identified that healthy lifestyles are multidimensional and dynamic, and children demonstrate distinct combinations of risks and protections. Family factors, such as resources and parenting, shape earlier health lifestyles, which influence later lifestyles. Results show that development and contexts drive changes in healthy lifestyles, as family factors decrease with age while some school and peer influences emerge.

Additionally, participants reported difficulties dealing with the uncertainty around the well-being of their children, mostly when they were at an age where they could not openly express their pain or discomfort. On the other hand, when one participant was asked if he could give himself advice before becoming a father, he mentioned: "And also thinking about it, I think the other bit of advice I would give myself is not to worry so much", which gives a sense of a cost involved in time that he used in worrying, when it could have been invested in more meaningful tasks. This was confirmed in Baldwin *et al.*'s (2019) research; they reported experiencing at least some parenting-related negative thoughts; this indicates that some degree of postnatal negative thoughts may be functional and representative of a non-clinical parenting transition. For example, parenting concerns such as fear for an infant's safety or worries about understanding infant communication may encourage parents to be more diligent and attentive to meeting and understanding their needs, positively influencing parenting confidence and behaviours.

Struggling in fatherhood

As part of the fatherhood role, the experience of struggle seemed to be immersed in fathers' lives, mainly when an unexpected situation arises, leading to the difficulty around emotional self-control, which triggered a necessity to justify the struggle and feel ashamed by it. This finding supports the argument of Strauss and Goldberg (1999), who explored the notion of selves and possible selves during and after the transition to fatherhood. They postulated that a man's psychological well-being might be adversely affected if there is a discrepancy between a father's authentic and ideal self. Feelings of failure or incompetence in the new role of parent can lead to a poor fatherhood adjustment.

In addition, some fathers showed acceptance of the challenges around the decision to have a child. In others, a sense of polarised emotions could be seen, from acknowledging the struggle and being appreciative of the positives of having a child and the fulfilment that brings to their life. This finding is consistent with a recent qualitative study of first-time fathers; it was identified the necessity of preparation for fatherhood, rollercoaster feelings of excitement and apprehension, a new identity with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth, physical and emotional challenges, changed relationship with a partner, coping and support from family and friends, health professionals and services provision and support, barriers to accessing support, and men's perceived needs of more information on the physical and emotional demands of parenthood (Baldwin *et al.*, 2019).

Lack of acknowledgement

All participants described a sense of his role as a father being unnoticed, and specifically a lack of emotional care for the father by the health care professions. This finding fits with the perspective of Giurgescu and Templin (2015), that as fathers' involvement is vital during pregnancy, nurses should

encourage fathers to participate in prenatal visits, ask questions, and educate fathers on the pregnancy process and procedures during prenatal care. Nevertheless, there are more demands on them, without an understanding of how they feel or providing increased emotional resources.

Fathers put significant emphasis on their feelings of being unnoticed, including a lack of emotional acknowledgement of them as a human being. This finding supports the argument of Gregory and Milner (2011), who enlighten the social construction of fatherhood; they agree that the new agenda of new fatherhood is riven with tensions. On the one hand, a pessimistic public discourse of new fatherhood emphasises the negative effect on children and wider society of lack of paternal presence, which stigmatises fathering behaviours, particularly in certain socio-economic and racial groups. On the other hand, the progressive gender equality agenda is based on optimistic assumptions of change in men's gender role attitudes and practices that have not yet proved valid.

Some participants described a sense of having to earn their children's love, identifying a difference with the mother's role. They experience the children showing a natural way of developing a natural bond with the mother, while they had to develop this bond continuously. Additionally, frustration and annoyance arise when fathers feel that they can not provide emotional support for their child's needs, and the mother supports the infant. These findings are consistent with the family systems view, where maternal attitudes need to be considered a determinant of paternal participation in childcare (Schoppe-Sullivan & Altenburger, 2019). Despite advances in women's participation in the workplace, many women still feel ambivalent about father involvement in domestic issues (Doucet, 2006). Due, in part, to the cult of maternalism (Duffy, 1988) which stresses the notion that mothers are indispensable, natural, and necessary, many women are reluctant to involve fathers actively and wholeheartedly in the daily routines of caregiving.

Guilt when physically absent

Fathers experienced guilt when, at times, they could not be physically present in their children's lives. This absence could be from their children's daily routine to when they were not physically present for their wives. This findings fits with Lamb (2004), who described that fathers' play tends to be more physical, and their games more vigorous, state-disrupting, idiosyncratic, and unpredictable. In contrast, mothers' play involves more visual stimulation and predictable activities (Lamb, 2004).

Moreover, the guilt was experienced not only when absent because of work but also when having leisure time. This could let fathers feel frustrated about wanting to fulfil other roles in his life; it seems that the guilt when doing any other activity is always present if he is not acting in his father's role. This finding supports Marsiglio *et al.* (2005), who claims that the new father ideology has gained currency in popular culture in the form of the good dad/bad dad dichotomy. The media portrays positive images of involved fathers while absent, uninvolved fathers are portrayed negatively, and Marsiglio *et al.* (2005), (2005) contend that the stereotypes thus created, both positive and negative, are "likely to arouse feelings and expectations, among both fathers and those associated with them."

5.3 Meaning in life

In this research, it was apparent how the experience of men in becoming fathers had developed their meaning in life around their family. This was seen in how their men's identity evolved during their fatherhood and the happiness their children brought to their lives. Additionally, it seemed that the child became their priority, and as part of this, there were challenges in their relationships that when well managed gave meaning to their lives. These findings on the influence of the child on his father were also explained by Cabrera *et al.* (2000), they mentioned that men do not father in a social vacuum; we need to consider the bi-directionality of the father-child

relationship in determining the development of fatherhood. As the child grows and develops, displaying a new set of developmental assets (as well as liabilities), the father is also developing and changing.

Identity as a father

The experience of fatherhood developed a new identity in a man's life. Most participants explained how their lives changed after becoming parents and how they had to adapt their daily routine to fulfil the family's necessities. Fathers felt the obligation to mature when becoming a father, and to adapt their identity around their and their child's needs. This finding is consistent with Solberg and Glavin (2018), who remarked that growth in the father's positive engagement depends on a sense of mastery, meaningfulness, control, and manageability concerning his child, his partner, and his new everyday life. Identified factors facilitate or inhibit the development of a positive fatherhood role.

Additionally, it was seen that fathers could not conceive their life without their children, especially around their day-to-day meaning. The fatherhood experience developed them positively, especially around their life fulfilment and direction, but also about leaving his contribution to the world through his child. This finding supports the argument of the seminal work on the social construction of fatherhood; Lupton and Barclay (1997) note that fatherhood is a site of competing discourses and desires that can never be thoroughly and neatly shaped into a single identity and that the meaning of fatherhood is dependent on current discourses used to represent it.

The experience of fatherhood served as a way for men to realise that life is not timeless and that through their active role, they want to be a positive and meaningful example to their children. This view is reflected in contemporary approaches to fatherhood. This experience is evident in Lupton and Barclay p.143 (1997) who described fatherhood as a logical step, a 'natural part of adult masculinity; fatherhood as an enterprise, something that needs to be worked

at; fatherhood as a major responsibility; father as protector/provider; fatherhood as demanding, a source of stress and strain; 'good' fatherhood as close involvement with one's child; 'good' fatherhood as 'being there'; fatherhood as a source of fulfilment, joy.

Another aspect that seemed to have developed through parenting was self-confidence and a sense of freedom, especially around an adaptation of his life to his child and even to his own inner child, which led them to find meaning in the experience with their children. However, after having a child, fathers noticed that they developed a sense of contribution through their experiences, especially around the support of other fathers. Similarly, Eskandari *et al.* (2016), in their phenomenological study with fathers, who had experienced fathering for the first time, revealed how the father's role has a significant demand on them as a father is a good-tempered, faithful, patient, and hardworking man with essential knowledge and proficiency; besides, a father should accept his role as the father. He is also expected to actively deal with family daily issues, value and promote his children's health and well-being, and have self-management and self-care skills.

Fatherhood happiness

The happiness experienced through fatherhood was evident in this research. This feeling comes from being present and connecting with his child. Fathers also described a sense of pride in their children learning and development. This finding fits with Parke (1981) who noted that the father-child relationship is a two-way process, and children influence their fathers just as fathers alter their children's development. Additionally, Smeaton (2006) explained that it seems that the traditional image of the patriarchal father, breadwinner and gender role model is perceived to be outdated and that fathers today are expected to be much more involved in their children's lives and take more responsibility for their development.

Another way that fathers described experiencing happiness was through the connection with their extended families, described as a sense of fulfilment in the family closeness, thanks to their children. This finding is supported by Knoester and Eggebeen (2006), who described a transformative perspective that proposes that fatherhood experiences change men's well-being, connections with family, social interactions, and attachments to the labour force; they suggested that it is expected that fatherhood leads to altered feelings of well-being, increased interactions with extended family, involvement in more service-orientated activities and greater attachment to the labour force.

Child as a priority

In this research, fathers described their children as being the priority in life, above other areas. Fathers found meaning in being present in every aspect of their child's life and being the primary focus of their attention. However, it seems that by putting the child as a priority, the discovery of new enjoyments has arisen and the realisation of a child's sense as a companion for life. These findings are congruent with the development of the acceptance of nurturing, explained in the Equal Opportunities Commission (2007), which described that the involved fathering ideal means that a father is expected to be intimately involved in the day-to-day lives of his children. He should take an interest in the pregnancy, attend the birth, change the nappies, share in the daily household chores, and spend quality time with his children, forming lasting emotional relationships with them; and evidence also suggests that doing so is beneficial to children's development.

At the same time, this has led to emotional struggle when seen as a difficulty on disconnection of his father's role and the impact when wanting to plan other areas of his life as to how the child needs to be considered. Nevertheless, it was also seen that when fathers managed to think and practice other roles as a man, this developed a sense of balance. These

findings fit with one case study described by Powell (2006), who tells the story of a man who tries to do just that, but finds he is met with resistance. He believes he is perceived as less of a man because he is not doggedly pursuing a career. He has concerns that his partner might not feel as attracted to him now that he is less than traditionally masculine. It seems, then, that there are many barriers to living up to the new ideal of fatherhood. These barriers are constructed both in economic terms and in terms of being perceived as a threat to a man's sense of masculinity.

Relationship changes

As much as this research focuses directly on the father, specific changes in the parent's relationship are predictable, as influenced by a new family member. The time and attention required by a child had affected the communication and negatively impacted the relationship, leading to a lack of emotional and physical openness between the parents. These results reinforced how new parents will face many personal, parental, marital, and family challenges. A growing body of evidence suggests that fathers' challenges during this transition can result in anxiety, distress, and an increased risk of depression (Kumar et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, in some cases, a positive impact on the relationship was described. It seemed that, in these cases, fathers were conscious of the challenges and the necessity of commitment to the relationship. Additionally, it shows the possibility that when these difficulties are overcome, they can develop a sense of fulfilment. As experienced when fathers emphasise the importance of communicating their needs while acknowledging the difficulties that this carries, it impacted their relationship positively when they managed that level of understanding. These findings support the conclusions of Kim *et al.* (2014), where fathers reporting more negative thoughts were significantly more invested in caregiving practices and expressed more positive emotions about their infant and their own parenting experience. Furthermore, it gave valuable insight that negative experience of paternal negative thoughts,

related to interpersonal relationship changes, understanding infant communication, and negotiating family and professional commitments (Wroe *et al.*, 2019).

Another change in the relationship was in how fathers tried to fulfil their wives' expectations by doing things their children needed and gaining her approval. This finding fits the transactional perspective described by Bonney *et al.* (1999); they claimed that the relationship between maternal attitudes and father involvement in which fathers who are more involved have female partners who develop more positive attitudes about their involvement which, in turn, increases fathers' level of participation. Traditionally then, a man's status as a parent was defined in terms of his relationship with the child's mother, and more specifically, marriage has been a key element in our understanding of what it means to be a father (Pickford, 1999).

Additionally, the necessity 'to work as a team' was evident in this research, mutual collaboration as a way of performing their father role and maintaining a healthy relationship with their wife. This was evident as a way of showing respect over other parenting methods but emphasising both parents' involvement as a way of succeeding in their role. This finding emphasises those by Larson and Richards (1994), who described that mothers and fathers initiated interactions with children with equal frequency when both parents and children were together. Children's initiations toward each parent were similar.

Some research indicates that increased father involvement can have positive consequences for the marriage. For example, Snarey (1993) found that fathers who were involved in their children's lives were significantly more likely to enjoy a stable marriage at midlife (father involvement accounted for 25 per cent of the variance in the father's midlife marital success.) Other researchers have found a similar relationship between competent fathering behaviours and increased marital satisfaction and marital stability in later life (Belsky, 1984; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983). Thus, overall, there is more evidence that paternal involvement has positive

consequences for marriage than negative consequences (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Men are more likely to understand their role of being a father and a husband as a 'package deal' - one contingent upon the other (Townsend, 2002). Therefore, if marital conflict is high, fathers have a much more difficult time being involved with their children, weakening the father-child relationship (Coiro & Emery, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998).

5.4. Father in action

In this study, it was seen that men experienced their fatherhood as an active role; first, they seemed to have based their role on teaching and developing their children. Second, participants described a sense of responsibility for the children even when they were not physically present. Third, it seemed evident that most felt that they had a more active role in their children's discipline than their partners. Fourth, one sub-theme was how fathers were willing as emotional support to their children. Fifth, it was how fathers described how significant it was for them to be actively involved in their children's lives through physical contact. These findings correlate with the literature during the last 40 years which demonstrates that perceptions of fatherhood (in westernised societies) and contemporary ideals of fathering practice have shifted in response to the social, economic, and demographic factors outlined above and in response to changing ideas about gender roles and masculinity. Perceptions of fatherhood have altered to embrace a more actively involved, nurturing paternal role (Gillies, 2009; Wall & Arnold, 2007) with expectations of accessibility, participation and emotional engagement (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009; Williams, 2008).

Additionally, maternal employment is a significant influence of paternal involvement, which has increased considerably over the last half-century (Pleck, 2010). Working women decrease their time devoted to housework, but they still spend time on childcare, especially in children under 6 (Bianchi, 2009). Women who do not work outside the home continue to significantly

share childcare with their husbands (Coltrane & Adams, 2008).

Fatherhood as a teaching role

The relevance of teaching children was evident in fathers. It seems that this goes beyond the practicality of teaching but is more about the responsibility of moulding a human being. In this research, fathers experience security around teaching their children in the present moment. However, it was also seen an uncertain feeling about the development of the child in the future. Similarly, it was also seen as fear related to the long-term impact that fathers have in their children's lives, which leads to an unpredictable future as well as the uniqueness of the parenting impact on the child development. This finding relates to the definition of a father as developmental support, as explained by Craig (2006), being a friend and developing strong emotional bonds. It involves, simply, being there. Developmental support involves ensuring that the child develops appropriately, is educated, and is prepared for the outside world.

Furthermore, fathers realised that besides the direct impact that a father can have on his child, it seemed relevant to allow the child the freedom to choose his pathway. However, it seemed significant to fathers to be a role models to their children, which reinforced the importance of how his child looked up to him as a human being. Craig (2006) described seeing the father as a teacher, a moral exemplar, a gender role model, and a disciplinarian. Children of involved fathers are more likely to have higher levels of economic and educational achievement, career success, occupational competency, better educational outcomes, higher educational expectations, higher educational attainment, and psychological well-being (Flouri, 2005; Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Snarey, 1993).

Most fathers focused on the practical way of teaching their children; it seemed to emphasise that the parenting priority is around being active and doing things with the children, where other caring aspects could have been

dismissed. This finding relates to those of Hossain and Roopnarine (1994), who identified that the quality of play across mothers and fathers differs too. Among young infants, older infants, and toddlers, a fathers' hallmark interaction style is physical play with characteristic degrees of arousal, excitement, and unpredictability in terms of the interaction's pace. In contrast, mothers' playful interactive style is characterised by a more modulated and less arousing tempo. Moreover, mothers play more conventional motor games or toy-mediated activities and are more verbal and didactic (Parke, 1996).

Parental responsibility

One aspect that seemed to have significantly developed in the men in this study was the sense of responsibility after they became parents. It appeared that this sense of responsibility is not optional, and it has been seen as an obligation, especially around financially providing for his family. This finding is reinforced by Doherty *et al.* (2006), who asserted that there is an emphasis given to new fathers' economic provider role, and that there is a socially constructed consensus that fathers should have a specific concern about the financial security of their families. This expectation could pressure the father to conform to these expectations; this pressure could negatively affect psychological effects. In fact, one of the areas of paternal involvement that has received considerable scholarly and policy attention is the father's financial contribution to the child and the mother of the child (Gavin *et al.*, 2002). Finally, Snarey (1993) found that when compared with men who are not fathers, fathers exhibit a greater attachment to the labour force and career out of a sense of responsibility to provide for their children.

Another way the fathers experienced the responsibility in this study was by realising that after having a child, there is an incapacity to emotionally disconnect from them, even when they are not present. Additionally, the sense of responsibility was also described as a way of including fatherhood in the day-to-day planning, which also led to being more active. Besides, it

seems that the planning was around the present moment, and as a way of planning for the future. These findings correlate with the results described by Nettle (2008) that high-quality father involvement during childhood promotes higher employment rates, healthier relationships, and other favourable life qualities for the child well into adulthood. Furthermore, high father involvement was also associated with increased children's feelings of paternal acceptance, a factor that plays a role in the development of self-concept and esteem (Culp, Schadle, Robinson, & Culp, 2000).

In this research, responsibility was also seen as a way of self-care, reinforcing the importance of being physically and emotionally present for their children. More recently, another cognitive mediator between father behaviour and children's outcomes has received attention, namely, 'father mattering'. This aspect of the parent-child relationship is the children's appraisal of how much they 'matter' to their parents (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1979). Beliefs that one is important to one's parent may give children and adolescents a sense of security in their relatedness and connectedness to others, which may have important implications for their mental health (Elliot, 2009).

Role of the father in discipline

In this research it was noticeable how most fathers felt they were more in charge of the discipline than their partners. This finding may be influenced by the increase of women into the workforce as described by Petrassi (2012), who aimed to discover some of the discourses available to professional English women when constructing the contributions of the father at home. Petrassi found that men have greater involvement in childcare than before, as most mothers go out to work. Maternal employment is a significant influence of paternal involvement, which has increased considerably over the last half-century (Pleck, 2010).

Moreover, fathers showed frustration and loneliness when being the only one in charge of the discipline, which could lead them to think that their child is constantly pushing the boundaries if he is covering this role. The way of

disciplining the child is around clear boundaries, but at the same time, it was noticed a sense of guilt and ambivalence in his experience while doing this. This finding fits into the conclusions of Pleck (2010), who identified that the father's male gender might function as a moderator of the child's perceptions of her father's parenting; that is, the same parental behaviour may be perceived differently by the child depending on the parent's gender. For example, discipline on the part of fathers may have stronger effects than when mothers show the same behaviour (Pleck, 2010).

However, it was described how their partner could take over a more caring role than disciplining their child. This was also experienced by other men showing a sense of acceptance in the difference of the roles. This finding fits with what Lewis and Warin (2001) suggest, that practical concerns about financial stability, and the fact that in many cases, men can earn a higher wage than women, results in men 'caring about' their children rather than 'taking care of them'.

Father as an emotional support

In this research the relevance for a father to be an emotional support to their children and how meaningful this was to them was evident. Fathers described a sense of having developed a *paternal instinct*, which implied the development of a capacity to predict when his child might be hurt, which led to a need to protect his child to avoid him getting injured. This finding was also evident in the research by Seifritz *et al.* 2003, who identified that brain imaging reveals that mothers and fathers, compared with nonparents, exhibited more pronounced neural responses in the right amygdala (an area involved in emotional processing) in response to infant crying than infant laughter. Evidence for differences in neural responses to the emotional responses of children suggests parents may experience a cry as an emotionally important signal, which requires their attention and demonstrates that the emotion areas of the brain may be involved in fathers and mothers

listening/responding to babies' distress signals (Seifritz *et al.*, 2003). Fathers and mothers show higher activity levels in the brain's emotional processing areas when exposed to infant cries than nonparents (Swain, 2008; Swain *et al.*, 2011). Other brain imaging studies found that men respond neurologically more to their infants' cries than to the distress signals of unrelated infants (Swain *et al.*, 2007).

Another way of providing emotional support to their children was by protecting them and being available when they needed it. Besides, the sense of being available to their children could at times be beyond their own needs as a father. This finding is consistent with Strier (2014), who described how in many western societies there is increasingly a contemporary notion of a father who is both sensitive to and actively involved in, the nurturing of his children within a relationship (with his children's mother) founded on expectations of equal co-parenting and in acknowledgement of the cultural context in which his paternal role is accomplished.

Testosterone levels were lower in the early postnatal period, which corresponds to their infants' first interaction. Hormonal levels and changes were linked with a variety of social stimuli as well. Men with lower testosterone held test baby dolls longer and were more responsive to infant cues (crying) than men with higher testosterone. Men who reported a more significant drop in testosterone also reported more pregnancy or couvade symptoms. Together, these findings suggest that lower testosterone in the postnatal period may increase paternal responsiveness, in part, by reducing competitive non-nurturing behaviour (Storey *et al.*, 2000).

It also appeared evident that providing emotional support was a natural way of developing throughout their fatherhood; it was a willingness to be there for their children, which created that bonding through their care. This finding supports the argument of Wall and Arnold (2007), they described a conceptual reconfiguration was for some time (particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s) referred to as 'new fatherhood'. Today's 'new fathers' are ideally more

nurturing, develop closer emotional relationships with their children, and share the joys and work of caregiving with mothers.

Besides the relevance of this connection, in this research it could also lead to a sense of being emotionally drained by having to be continuously available to their children's needs. The present ideology of fatherhood entails that a father is not perceived to be meeting his responsibilities if he is not, in some way, involved in nurturing and caring for his children. Thus, simply being the breadwinner or disciplinarian is no longer sufficient, and a man is not a good father unless he is caring for his children on a day-to-day basis. This image is reinforced to some extent by recent scholarship, which focuses on the father's role in child development. It is now widely accepted that fathers do have a salient role to play in child development (Equal Opportunities Commission 2007; Lamb 1997; Lewis & Warin 2001; Parke 1996),

Active role of a father through physical contact

This study has highlighted how fathers found meaning and felt active towards their children development through physical contact. This finding could be related to the way fathers connect with their children through play. The quality of play in mothers and fathers differs too. Among young infants, older infants, and toddlers, a fathers' hallmark interaction style is physical play with characteristic degrees of arousal, excitement, and unpredictability in terms of the interaction's pace. In contrast, mothers' playful interactive style is characterised by a more modulated and less arousing tempo.

Moreover, mothers were more involved in caregiving, household tasks, reading, toy play, and arts and crafts. Fathers are tactile and physical, and mothers tend to be verbal, didactic, and toy-mediated in their play. Infants and young children experience qualitatively different stimulatory patterns from mothers and fathers (Ross, Parke, & Cookston, 2019).

The fulfilment of being physical as a way of feeling active in their fatherhood

role could be seen in day-to-day activities and when the child needed emotional support. It was also described as a sense of feeling loved through physical contact with his child, which implies that this affection gives meaning to the participant. This finding correlates with the conclusions of Lamb *et al.* (1985); after years of investigation of father involvement, they described three components of parental involvement, and the way father feels active in the fatherhood role through physical contact correlates with her description of engagement: the first and most restrictive type of paternal involvement involves time spent in actual one-on-one interaction with the child (Lamb *et al.*, 1985).

Furthermore, physical contact could serve as a way of guiding the emotional development of their children, including building their self-confidence. This finding correlates with the conclusion of Parke *et al.* (1992), who described how children who interact with a physically playful father learn how to recognise and send emotional signals during these play interactions. Several studies reveal a link between children's emotional encoding and decoding abilities that are presumably acquired in part in these playful interchanges and children's social adaptation to peers.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a discussion from the findings of this research, including the four master themes and 18 sub-themes. Relevant literature and the researcher's reflection were used to better inform and discuss the results of this research.

CHAPTER 6

LIMITATIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, PRODUCTS, AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Limitations of the research.

Limitations of IPA as an approach have been considered and discussed in the methodology chapter. This section will extend that discussion to outline some potential limitations that appear pertinent to this study.

The first limitation was a small sample size. There were only seven participants in this study. However, it is common to have a relatively small sample size in any qualitative study, which means that the findings cannot be generalised facts. Nevertheless, the advantage is that more information can be gathered more subjectively and profoundly, which might not be possible in a quantitative study.

Secondly, the snowballing method of sampling should also be considered when discussing the potential limitations of the research. Most participants were directly asked if they were willing to take part in this study. In this case, I may have interviewed fathers who are more engaged with their role and more motivated in fulfilling their responsibilities. This is something that should therefore be recognised when considering the possible transferability of the findings. Another limitation related to the sample was the possibility that participants may tell me what they wanted me to hear, which I was aware of during the interviews and tried to use prompts to get to the true experience of the fathers.

Thirdly, the interviews were semi-structured; in a phenomenological study, the interview should contain as few questions as possible, allowing the participant to express their views freely. Even though the participant had the freedom to express all they wanted to in this study, at the time, it was guided by specific

questions. This semi-structured interview helped me keep the conversation on track and not get diverted with other topics. Also, to avoid the risk of the participants not being able to open up or reflect deeply about their experiences. While the semi-structured model made the interview focused, it might or might not have limited the possibility of the participants expressing other parts of the experience different from these aspects. Moreover, the guiding questions may also have influenced the length of the interview.

Moreover, followed the guidelines explained by Smith *et al.* (2009) as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is explicit that homogenous samples work best in conjunction with its philosophical foundations and analytical processes (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I limited the study to English speakers living in the UK, there was a risk of cultural diversity. Therefore, my sample of participants was relatively homogenous and similar in social identity and background, with only three participants not being white British. Nevertheless, this allowed cultural diversity in the sample, which could be considered a study's strength.

In addition, it seems relevant to highlight that all participants of this study were professionals and working full time, which could have impacted their involvement and commitment to their role as a father. This could have been caused by the recruitment method, as initially, the intention was to recruit participants via libraries, Gp practices and public places, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic, participants were recruited via a snowballing method of sampling.

Another limitation that I kept in mind was the possibility that participants may withdraw or refrain from participating. Fortunately, this was not the case, and every participant who decides to take part in the study has made no further contact, which means they are still happy to be part of this study.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider a potential bias, which could be exacerbated as an insider researcher position. As the researcher is

intentionally related to the research object, the truth claim does not refer to objective reality as such but to the specific meaning of the research object as it appears to the researcher (Sandberg, 2005, p.56). As I took an active role in the research process and interpreted the findings, I recognised that I could not completely bracket my preconceptions. However, I have aimed to adopt a reflective and reflexive approach to the research. Transparency has also been aimed for by identifying my positionality, outlining the procedures, and presenting transcript extracts to allow the reader to reflect on my interpretations and consider possible alternatives. In this study, I took care to acknowledge the reflective nature of the analysis and my interpretations, possibly affecting my experience and perceptions of fathers.

Finally, as mentioned in the literature review, there is a lack of previous studies in the research area. This made it challenging to find enough data to compare and discuss the findings, but most importantly, this research serves as a way to add to the body of knowledge and awareness about the experience of fathers.

6.2. Suggestions for further research

The findings of this thesis provide the foundation for further research into fatherhood to expand further into new areas of study. For example, it would be relevant to identify if there is a difference in the experience of fathers depending on the gender of their children. In this research, this aspect was not considered, by coincidence it was relatively equal as four of the children were female and three males. Fathers did not directly mention any information related to their children's gender, and as this was not the meaning of this research, no specific questions were asked.

Another relevant area to examine could be fathers' experiences with more than one child; this research focused only on the first-born because of homogeneity. It may be interesting to understand in-depth the changes and experiences of

fathers after having more children and even compare this with this study's results.

This study set the age of the participants between 1-6; it would be valuable to study the experience of fathers with older children or even teenagers. It can be relevant to consider the children develop and how this might affect fathers, and to understand how they are coping. This could serve as a way to develop specific strategies targeted to different age groups of their children.

Furthermore, the experience of gay and transgendered fathers is another fascinating topic; for example, understanding the challenges when parents have the same gender and how they cope with this could be an exciting way of validating their experiences.

It would also be beneficial to explore the experiences of a sample of more ethnically and culturally diverse fathers, which might also lead to some migrant parents, for example, it would be valuable to consider the upbringing differences, but also the lack of physical support with the children if the extended families live abroad.

Finally, a comparative study of the experiences of fathers and mothers would further complement the findings and conclusions of this study. It would increase the body of knowledge of how parents nowadays may have a different and more active role than their father, making it valuable to know the view of the female participants.

6.3 Products

One of the aims of this research is the growth in knowledge and awareness; having a better understanding of the lived experience of fathers offers an opportunity to understand better the way they are feeling and support men psychologically during this stage. Additionally, it is hoped that society will develop a greater understanding of how demands have changed over time. This may then act as a preventative measure towards developing other mental

health issues and be the starting point of developing specific programmes that can strengthen their psychological well-being.

When writing the learning agreement for this project, I proposed different products, and to now look back and realise that I managed to obtain all these and even more, feels very fulfilling. I have enjoyed each of my products. I consider I covered different levels as the results were spread to health care professionals (from presenting in national conferences and webinars to an international congress) and to the general public, including fathers.

Below are the products organised in chronological order; there is an explanation of goals and learning outcomes. Additionally, I included my experience during the development and facilitation of these.

- i. Interview. "Talking about the contemporary father". Programme called: Salud es Vida (Health is life). Mariangel Delgado. 21st June 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Jnml80bE2U&list=PLZ4IfTN1kLlaa2vHk6CPLCnvX0ebBFAXs&index=52> (See Appendix N)
- ii. Male psychology section. Conferences and Poster invitation. (See Appendix O)
- iii. Welldoing website. Article *Let's not forget about fathers*. Published on the 5th of August 2020.
<https://welldoing.org/article/lets-not-forget-about-fathers>. (Appendix P).
- iv. Division of Clinical Psychology DCP. Annual Conference 2021: *Doing What Matters: Value-Driven Clinical Psychology*. British Psychological Society. 2-3 March 2021. (See Appendix Q)

- v. Two-hour webinar. *Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting father's psychological needs*. British Psychological Society. 11th of June 2021 (See Appendix R)
- vi. Middlesex student conference. *Research in a changing world*. Award as an Outstanding Oral Presentation. 23rd June 2021 (Appendix S)
- vii. XIX International and XIV National Congress of Clinical Psychology. Spain. Modality virtual. Applied Session. *Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting fathers' psychological needs*. 13th November 2021. Book Chapter. (Appendix T)
- viii. ShineEQ. Emotional Intelligence programme for children and parents. <https://www.shineeq.co.uk>. To be developed.

**i. Interview. *Talking about the contemporary father*.
Programme called: Salud es Vida (Health is life). Mariangel Delgado. 21st June 2020**

It has been fascinating that people started treating me like an expert when they knew I was doing my doctorate and research on fathers. At this point, I felt doubtful of my knowledge as I thought I was just starting with the interviews of this dissertation. However, the reality is that up to that date, I had done research on parenting, trained in relationship therapy, had seen many couples and men as clients (for more than 13 years), but most importantly, had also read many books and literature to be at that point of my research. However, it was the invitation to this interview that allowed me to appreciate my knowledge and journey.

This interview was online, recorded and published on the interviewer's social media and on her YouTube channel, where she has more than 200 interviews. We discussed the evolution of fatherhood and how contemporary fathers feel the need to be there for their children during this conversation. Additionally,

this interview was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic; we discussed in detail the benefit of the father-child relationship, as the lockdown (the UK was the first one out of three that we have been in) had some advantage as the amount of time that father has been physically present in the life of the children had increased. This has had in some fathers significant consequences especially around their independence and balance in other areas of their life. I believe that the best way to learn is through teaching, so at the end of the interview I was amazed how I was allowed to recall my knowledge and experience in the area during that hour.

Nevertheless, it was challenging to express my ideas clearly in my first language (Spanish), which was unexpected. This made me realise that my clinical practice and the literature that I have read has been in English for the last nine years of my life, and I found myself translating information in my mind more than being naturally fluent.

This is the YouTube link to the interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Jnml80bE2U>

ii. Male psychology section

After realising how little support was provided to fathers, I thought one way to get to know more about what was being done here in the UK and to spread my acquired knowledge in fatherhood through this research was to join the male psychology section. This could also serve as a way to get to know people in the area and maybe ideas around the type of products that could be delivered.

As part of this initial exploration, I decided to attend the BPS Male Psychology Section Mini-Conference on 11th December 2020. To my surprise and validation as female practitioners, we were only four women in a group of 38 participants; this leads with the reasoning on my introduction around how naturally people of the same gender will support each other. Actually, in one

of the conferences, it was mentioned that women researching about men felt that they were betraying their gender. In my case, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to offer a different lens about men's mental health from the women's perspective, which links the meaning of this research, to offer acknowledgement and support to fathers' psychological struggles.

There were only five presentations during this conference, and most of them related to the men in their fatherhood role; from this experience, I took several aspects to reflect on. However, there was one conference around male infertility and the importance of considering: what is the role of men when they are childless? How do they feel? What is their role in society? This was an aspect that I had never considered before, and it can be an exciting topic to consider when seeing male clients. Similarly, there was a discussion around fathers who are in prison and have long sentences; here, I was confronted with the relevance of considering a man in a different role. Of course, there are many areas to contemplate, but depending on the circumstances, how important mental health can be in reidentifying the fatherhood role under new conditions.

Another conference was around parental alienation and male experiences of domestic violence and abuse, which reinforced my knowledge in this area and especially in how much fathers need psychological support to maintain their well-being during this challenging process. This links with the last conference which were was raising the good male. One of the keys to this that the facilitator mentioned was, "An optimal male is the one that belongs, but the environment does not help the belonging; it pulls us in different directions". This links with the relevance of researching how men feel as a way for society to know more about their experience to acknowledge and validate their feelings.

I also attended a webinar called "Men's Experiences exploring barriers to men talking about their mental health and future directions", on 25th of January

2021. During this webinar was no mention of fatherhood; they emphasised the importance of prevention before men needed that support. That you are struggling does not make you less like a man, 'it is ok to struggle'. To see this male validation between specialists and patients reinforced how the validation of negative emotions is part of the healing process.

I also attended a workshop called: Male-friendly therapy, on 6th of May 2021, which was very detailed and exciting. This was not directly targeted as supporting fathers, but part of the relevant learning was to identify the way mental health services are set up to be female-friendly, the shame around men attending therapy, and how important it is as a psychologist to be aware of male needs. Additionally, it seems that we just assume the child is better with the mother as a society. However, it is essential not to assume that men have different ways of expressing their depression, including not wanting to talk. Men tend to focus on problem-solving rather than exploring their feelings. This seems important to consider when interviewing during research and therapy. We need to learn to read the male language to understand their way of thinking and build up a therapeutic relationship where they feel understood and not emotionally pressured.

After attending three events in the male psychology section, I decided to submit my main project to the Male Psychology Virtual Conference 2021, "Men's mental health and well-being", which was accepted in the format of a poster. Unfortunately, this clashed with my final project presentation to the peer group, one of the requirements before submitting my project, so for the time being I had to decline this opportunity. However, I am grateful and proud that they consider the fatherhood topic relevant to men's mental health and well-being. This should have been on 22nd October 2021.

- iii. **Well-doing website. Article: Let's not forget about fathers. Published 5th August 2020 <https://welldoing.org/article/lets-not-forget-about-fathers>.**

During the recruitment of my participants, I was contacted by the Well-doing website, a platform I use to advertise my private practice. They asked me if I could write an article about any topic I desired. I used this as an opportunity to advertise my research, but mainly to promote in the psychotherapeutic world the importance of considering father necessities when seeing men in therapy. This article was distributed online to all their therapists, and it stayed permanently on my profile, which can be consulted by different specialists searching about fathers. I described how men's demands have changed over time and the importance of supporting fathers during different stages.

- iv. **Division of Clinical Psychology DCP. Annual Conference 2021: Doing What Matters: Value-Driven Clinical Psychology. British Psychological Society, 2-3 March 2021.**

After I analysed the responses of my participants regarding their COVID-19 experience, it felt pertinent to submit it to a conference to disseminate these exciting results. I called this presentation: Let's talk about Dads: They Matter Too. Exploration of the lived experience of full-time working fathers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since moving to the UK, I have attended several seminars and training at the British Psychological Society but never presented anything myself. To have the opportunity to deliver this oral presentation felt like a personal achievement.

Part of the promotion of this conference was:

It has been a year like no other. The global pandemic has brought incredible challenges across health, education, public life, industry and all sectors of society. It has brought into sharper focus the inequalities that have long existed. The virus itself is affecting some communities more than others.

Lockdowns and going back-to-basics have meant for many people being thrust into poverty, poor health, isolation and situations of less choice, more uncertainty and increased distress. For workers in specific sectors, it has meant being exposed to physical and psychological harm. For others, it has brought the almost welcome requirement to step away from the rat race, allowing getting back in touch with the meaningful stuff in life, such as getting fit, developing new skills and enhancing essential relationships.

This meant that my presentation was very pertinent for this event, as a way of showing understanding and highlighting the positive aspect that the pandemic has brought. Especially around the father's physical presence for unexpected, prolonged periods, but with this also the challenges that have been brought when trying to manage their work and fatherhood role. My presentation was the only orientated to fathers or even to couples, which made people receptive during the presentation and who asked questions related to the topic. I personally enjoy the congresses and conferences environment. I have a passion for teaching, so this meant I connected with this process from the moment they accepted my proposal, prepared the slides, and explained the findings of the analysis.

v. Two-hour webinar: Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting a father's psychological needs. British Psychological Society. 11th June 2021

The previous oral presentation in the conference gave me the confidence to propose a two-hour webinar. I wanted to do something beyond submitting my research to a journal or a conference as well as have the opportunity to voice the amazing fatherhood world and adapt ways of psychological treatment to fathers, especially around the findings of this project.

The first step was to write up the proposal (see Appendix R), and this was accepted within two weeks with minimal changes; one of the examiners just wanted me to touch a bit more on parental alienation. I had only attended a

few training sessions with this topic included and had seen few clients affected by alienation. I had given support in this instance but did not feel I had the necessary expertise in the topic. Regardless, I knew I still had three months to prepare and decided to take the risk, an exciting learning experience that helped to widen my professional knowledge in the area.

The final learning outcomes were:

- To understand the evolution of fatherhood
- To recognise the role of contemporary fathers
- To understand the social perceptions of fathers
- To comprehend the concept of parental alienation in fathers
- To acknowledge and validate how the experiences of men has changed and the way to support them
- To learn specific psychological strategies targeted to support fathers

I had a fantastic response to this webinar; thirty-two practitioners attended. I met before the event with the administration department of the British Psychological Society to discuss the final details, and when they told me the number of participants I remember feeling shocked and excited to see the interest of health professionals in this area, but also nervous as I wanted to make sure I was delivering a good quality webinar where I could transmit my knowledge but also my passion on the topic.

I planned this webinar to be as interactive as possible, and one of the activities I used was asking participants to complete the sentence 'A father is someone who is...' (see below) and used a programme called Mentimeter, in which the word that the participants repeated is more prominent than the ones used less. Very clearly, the words caring, loving, supports, important, and safe were the most powerful words, so we reflected on our perceptions of a father.

Complete the sentence. A father is someone who is....



Figure 8. Initial activity in the fatherhood seminar

The rest of the webinar was mostly theory, using some videos for reflections, and participants were also allowed to ask questions. In the end, I asked participants to give their feedback using the same programme previously mentioned (see below); this helped me significantly. I never felt an impostor syndrome so significantly as when I finished this webinar; I think several aspects contributed to this.

Firstly, it was delivered online, and all participants except two had their cameras off, which made me feel relatively isolated in the delivery process. I could not have any verbal or non-verbal reassurance if they were enjoying or understanding the webinar. Secondly, as much as I tried to ask questions, only 3-4 participants answered these, and left me wondering what the rest of the participants were thinking.

Finally, as with any online event, the webinar finished by just pressing the 'end' button, and I was just on my own in front of the computer, without any possibility of closure or reassurance. All these reasons made me self-doubt, but I connected with the positive outcomes once I opened the feedback. Not

all participants responded, but I am grateful for the ones that took the time to do this, and I am glad I asked for this as it served as a way to have closure and reconnect with the meaning of this activity.

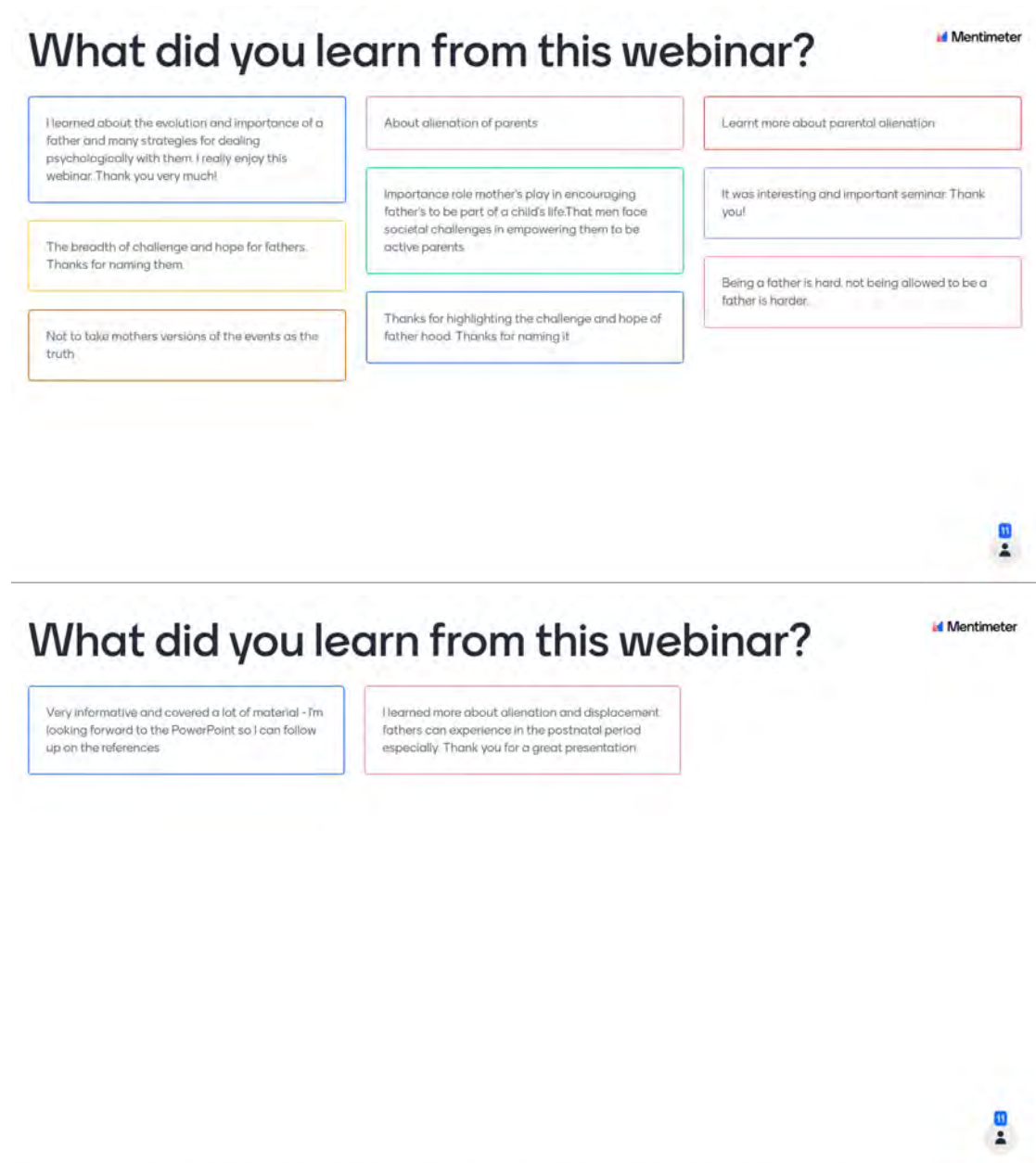


Figure 9. Final activity on the fatherhood seminar

vi. Middlesex student conference. “Research in a changing world” Award as an Outstanding Oral Presentation, 23rd June 2021

At this conference I presented my dissertation: “The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born”. Another product that I felt proud of is to have attended this event. Not just because of the opportunity to present my project, but also because my doctorate degree is part of Metanoia and Middlesex University, but all seminars (when they were face-to-face) were in the Metanoia installations; I actually never been in the Middlesex University buildings. So, this activity served as an opportunity to experience a sense of belonging to Middlesex University.

This conference was for students of different degrees, which made me wonder if people of other backgrounds would be interested in my topic. Once again, I felt flattered by the interest in my presentation and the excitement of people asking about the results and the future research of the topic.

There were nearly 100 presentations, and another fulfilling surprise was when I checked my email the day after the conference to find that I was awarded an Outstanding Oral Presentation award. I could not explain in words how happy this made me, this felt like a positive reinforcement of all the effort and love I have put into this project. To know that the passion and the professionalism were transmitted through my presentation was definitely a confidence boost, but especially to know that I was on the right path and that there was interest to support fathers, and to understand how they feel, can be present in different professions.

vii. XIX International and XIV National Congress of Clinical Psychology, Spain. Modality virtual. Applied Session. Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting fathers' psychological needs. 13th November 2021. Book Chapter.

At this point, I felt that I had taken my research to different levels of expertise, from student to professionals. However, a part of me felt the need to spread my knowledge internationally. I started searching online for different congresses that could provide me with this opportunity. I chose the XIX International and XIV National Congress of Clinical Psychology as I could submit the proposal for an applied session, which I felt could give me more time to explain this research's findings in a more relaxed and complete way.

My session was entitled Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting fathers' psychological needs. Once I made the preliminary submission in May 2021, it was accepted after two weeks, which filled me with joy. As this congress was in November 2021, I knew that I had other events and the write up of my dissertation before that. However, to my surprise at the beginning of October, I received an email asking for the recording of my 45-60 minutes presentation that needed to be sent within 5 days, including the audio and video of my presenting it.

Initially, I was in shock as I really enjoy presenting and interacting with people. However, I decided to prioritise this, and in the end I managed to enjoy doing the recording; I just 'imagined' the people watching the video. I asked them to reflect on their own experience or used some practical examples; I ended up feeling glad about the end product and this was actually very useful as on the day of the event I was on the second day of my COVID symptoms, and as much as I attended, I was glad I did not have to present live.

Additionally, to my surprise, there were two ways of presenting at the congress: an on-demand presentation with more than 200 presentations and the main hall, which were 22 but could only be watched at the time stated in the

programme. Mine was chosen to be in the main hall, which filled me with joy and pride.

Finally, as part of this applied session, I sent a chapter for a book. The chapters accepted by the Expert Committee will be published in an e-book entitled "International Handbook of Clinical Psychology" by the editorial Thomson Reuters, indexed in SPI (Ranking: Scholarly Publishers Indicators) Category: Foreign editorials. Position: Q1. The maximum length of the text was 1,900 words - after writing a dissertation of 65,000 words, to reduce the number of words to that required asked but feel that I was still showing the impact and importance of my research were very challenging. (See Appendix T).

viii. ShineEQ. Emotional Intelligence programme for children and parents. <https://www.shineeq.co.uk>

I want to start this section by explaining what ShineEQ is and why it is one of the products of my dissertation. ShineEQ is a project that started at the beginning of this year with a colleague from my doctorate cohort; we identified that we had similar professional interests and ways of working from the beginning of this journey. In Venezuela, I deliver several Emotional Intelligence Programmes, and after COVID-19 started I saw many children and families struggling with the changes this pandemic brought to their lives.

After identifying that I had disseminated the results of my research and learnings during these years, at National and International levels, I realised that I also wanted to share the results of my studies with the general public. As my final product, I will develop a section on the ShineEQ website with detailed information about fatherhood, including the findings of my project and specific psychological strategies to support men in different stages of their fatherhood.

Moreover, we aim to develop a programme specifically for fathers in the near future, where men can openly express themselves.

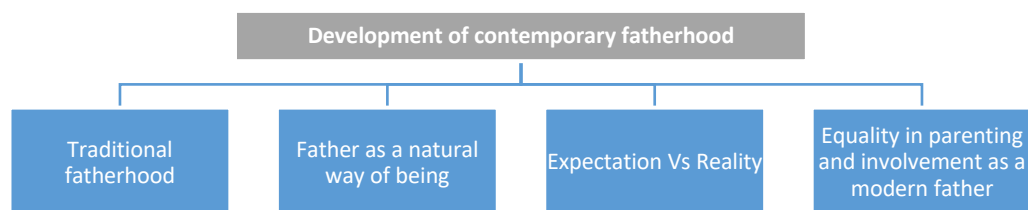
6.4 Clinical implications

As part of the products of my research, I consider it relevant that, as practitioners, we acknowledge the relevance to explore the impact and meaning of fatherhood. As described in the results, male clients do not always identify that their father role carries challenges and pleasures, which means that considering this in therapy could positively impact the client.

This chapter has been the most enjoyable, as besides positioning myself as a researcher, I can combine it with my position as a psychologist. This way, I see the positive impact of the results of this research in a practical way.

The clinical implications are based on the themes of this research. The diagrams are there for the reader to visualise the sub-themes.

Development of contemporary fatherhood



Nowadays, most fathers have a different role to their own fathers and understanding how this has developed will guide therapists to know how to support fathers' needs. Regarding the finding of the traditional fatherhood sub-theme, it is relevant to explore feelings regarding their own fathers, how this can affect their well-being and role as fathers. As seen in this sub-theme, these differences can develop in acceptance, but they can also evolve into resentment feelings. Additionally, the validation of these differences can

acknowledge natural changes over time in the fatherhood role.

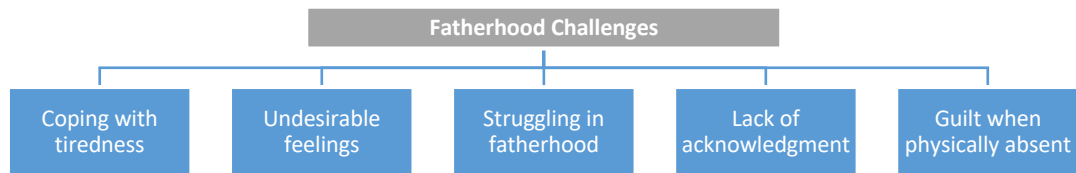
Taking into consideration most participants in this research saw their experience of being a father as a natural way of being, as a mental health practitioner it seems relevant to understand the evolution of fatherhood, considering that all participants wanted to be a father even before conception. What about men who cannot have children? Is this acknowledged or questioned in a therapeutic session?

Along the same lines, it is essential to understand how fatherhood has changed over time and how their role as fathers differs significantly from their father's role. In this study, we saw fathers struggling with resentment and emotional conflict because of these differences, especially around how active there are now as parents. Do we consider during the therapy, how do they feel about this?

In this research, only one father was aware of the expectation of fatherhood challenges; it seems relevant to consider the importance of psycho-education of men about the responsibility of fatherhood, which can reduce the frustration and shock when fathers confront themselves with the changes after having a child. Moreover, it seems relevant to work on their self-compassion when these natural challenges arise.

Concerning the relevance regarding the equality in parenting and involvement as a modern father, as a therapist it seems pertinent to acknowledge how important it is nowadays for men to be involved in their children's upbringing, not only physically but also emotionally. Do they have the opportunity through their family to develop this? Has their willingness been acknowledged and supported? Because of different circumstances (for example, divorce or sickness), how do men feel when they do not have the opportunity to be emotionally present in the life of their children?

Fatherhood challenges



Many challenges arise as part of the fatherhood role, according to the participants of this research; some of them expected these difficulties, and others were unexpected. As practitioners, understanding the complex emotions that can arise would help us better understand our clients, emotionally validate their feelings, and support them in the best possible way.

Regarding the way fathers cope with tiredness, it is essential to emotionally support the levels of exhaustion. As seen in this study, it seemed that some participants did not expect these high levels of tiredness and did not seek the support they needed, which triggered feelings of lack of support by others. As it was also seen that being tired could impact their day-to-day activities, it is relevant to develop psychological strategies to support them.

Additionally, when feelings such as fear, worry, and uncertainty arise, therapists must validate the naturality of these unpleasant feelings, especially as a man where they have been trained not to show their emotions, or even told to 'man up'. Furthermore, it seems to reinforce that these undesirable feelings are expected due to the uncertainty that parenting brings. Parents also express how much time they spend worrying about things that never happen, and so validating this feeling in fathers could be beneficial.

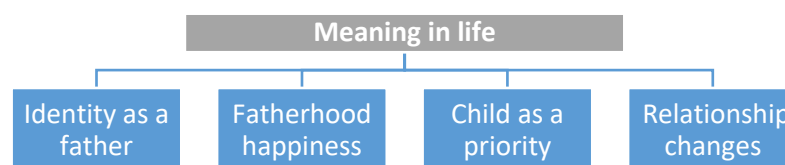
In this study, it was clear that fathers struggle at times. As a therapist, being conscious of this can help us understand how they are feeling, especially around the responsibility of fatherhood. Fathers also showed shame about the

struggle, reinforcing that this expected feeling could emotionally help them.

The meaning of this research is to acknowledge and support fathers, and it was evident that participants described feelings of not being acknowledged about the fatherhood role by society, partners, or even their child. As therapists, we could work on this theme on different levels. Not just directly with the father, but also to reinforce the importance of the fatherhood role in society. This work could be directed to the medical professions to promote father inclusion throughout the pregnancy and the children's early years.

Finally, fathers felt guilty when they could not be physically present during their children's day-to-day activities due to work or leisure. Once again, as a practitioner, it would be relevant to validate this emotion, which was seen in most of the participants. Moreover, a helpful strategy to psychologically reinforce in fathers could be to work towards the quality of time with their children, and the importance of being fully present when undertaking activities with them. Also, it can be relevant to explore how, as a family, they manage the physical absence of the father and positively reinforce the importance of the different areas of a human being.

Meaning in life



As therapists, we need to explore how becoming a father develops the father's identity. Regarding the results of this research, it seems relevant to ask clients how they have changed after becoming a father, and how they have adapted to these changes. At the same time, it is relevant to keep in mind (as seen in this research) how fathers have described their identity as contributing to

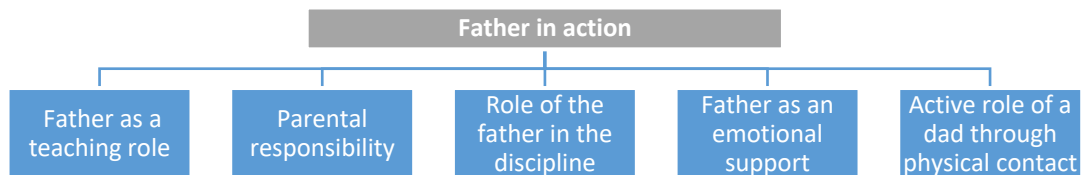
support of other fathers, and to developing self-confidence through their fatherhood role.

There was no doubt in this research that children brought happiness to all fathers. This was particularly seen when being present and through the connection with their children, which seems relevant to reinforce as a therapist. It also appeared that this was around their personal happiness but could also be extended to their family and the connection with them through their children.

Participants described how their child had become their priority above other areas of their lives, which once again is relevant to reinforce the importance of these other areas. As therapists, it is essential to explore if fathers are experiencing a lack of emotional connection with their children and, if that is the case, how they are managing this? Additionally, it seemed meaningful for some participants to connect with other fathers and share their experiences, which seems essential to reinforce to the client when talking about their parenting.

A new family member directly changes a relationship, which needs to be explored in a consultation. It is crucial to explore the communication between the parents, including how much time they have for each other. In this research, all participants were married or in a partnership. It was evident that besides the difficulties in their relationship, having a child had brought them closer, which can also be used as an example if a client is going through a difficult period. Participants also explained that sharing responsibilities to maintain a healthy relationship also seems appropriate to explore.

Father in action



Having an active role in their children's upbringing was essential to all participants in this study. Fathers described meaning while teaching new things to their children, but this also carried a fear related to the long-term impact and unpredictable future. It seems necessary as a therapist to consider how fathers fulfil this teaching role, and how this responsibility has impacted them. Another aspect was the impact of being a role model for their children, which seems very important to consider when interviewing a father. Finally, it was also seen that the father emphasised the teaching over other caring aspects, which as a therapist could be essential to incentivise fathers to be more active in their role in different ways.

Fathers are active towards their children through responsibility, financially and emotionally; it seems relevant to consider how this has psychologically impacted fathers and how they have managed this. Moreover, participants also showed a sense of responsibility towards their own health as a way to be physically present for their children in the future; this can be an exciting area to explore with clients about their self-care.

Participants in this research explained how they felt that a big part of their role was disciplining their child. At times they felt lonely in this function, as their partner was not as active towards discipline, which seems relevant to explore when seeing a client. How have these roles been implemented? Moreover, how do they feel about this? Do they need more discipline strategies? Are there other strategies that can be provided?

Another way fathers fulfilled their role was by emotionally supporting their children. However, in this research, it was also seen that fathers could feel emotionally drained by being available for their children. It seems relevant to explore and even consider how fathers have been supporting themselves emotionally.

Finally, it was seen that fathers found meaning and felt active towards their children's development through physical contact, which also positively impacted their children's self-confidence. As therapists, it seems important to encourage the relevance of affection and explore how this has been expressed throughout their children's upbringing.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter described the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. Additionally, an explanation of the products of this research is presented, as well as a section called clinical implications, directed to health care professionals, more specifically in the psychotherapeutic field, with the purpose to tackle different questions and areas to explore when seeing a father.

CHAPTER 7

COVID-19 AND FATHERS

As mentioned in the Introduction, the interviews from this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, more specifically during the first lockdown. After discussing the situation with my Academic Advisor, we considered that it was wise to add to the interview a question related to the experience of a father during these unprecedented times.

All the participants of my main project were asked the same question: “Could you describe how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your role as a father?”

The analysis of this question and prompts were analysed separately and treated as a different project. To enable themes to emerge that best reflected the participants' experience, each transcript was coded separately, using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software called Nvivo12. As Smith *et al.* (2009) explain, there is no prescribed single way for working with the data in IPA studies. And for this analysis, the Smith *et al.* (2009) six-stage approach was followed during the analysis process.

After doing the analysis it felt that I had a mini-research project, and I felt the necessity of undertaking a literature search, included below in conjunction with the results.

7.1 COVID-19 and fatherhood

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a global pandemic that fundamentally affects everyday life. The direct health implications of the pandemic, declared on the 23rd March 2020, are profound: millions have tested positive for COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020). The

significant morbidity and rapid spread of the virus have led to the activation of various levels of public health measures. In the UK, the March 2020 lockdown included social distancing measures (physical distancing) to prevent transmission, banning of public gatherings, closure of schools and all nonessential shops, workplaces and services, and the recommendation of keeping a distance of >2 metres apart from others (NHS, 2020). All these measures have resulted in an unprecedented impact on social interactions, employment, and the world economy. While the impact of the pandemic, and associated management, on mental health is not yet fully known, the potential for psychological distress is significant due to the effects of social isolation, economic fallout, grief, and trauma for survivors (Reger, Stanley, & Joiner, 2020).

In addition to the physical, emotional, and financial demands that parents have, COVID-19 has put the additional pressure of caregiving responsibilities, especially for those with children living at home. Working parents are simultaneously juggling paid work with caregiving demands, but we know very little about how families manage these incompatible tasks at this unprecedented time. For men working from home, the invisible labour of childcare and housework may be newly noticeable. Fathers cannot easily ignore childcare demands when nurseries and schools are closed, and one's temporary office also serves as children's play space and virtual classroom. These families often had little or no experience of protracted home-schooling (Central Statistics Office, 2020).

While the pandemic's impact on the psychological well-being of families is presently unknown, one-third of families have reported anxiety and stress resulting from COVID-19 (Prime, Wade, & Browne, 2020). These stresses include feeling threats to family health, reduced social support, changes in work roles, and the added burden to meet the social and educational needs of children due to the closure of schools (Prime *et al.*, 2020).

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, family-friendly employment provision such as flexible working and parental leave, has expanded globally, particularly in Europe (International Labour Office, 2014). Among those who remain employed during the pandemic, this may lead to greater equality in work hours. The increased visibility and the heightened childcare demands of school and day-care closures may lead men to make more significant contributions to family labour, particularly among those who can telecommute. Anecdotally, couples describe tackling childcare workloads in shifts to allow each parent uninterrupted paid work time (Miller, 2020; Schulte, 2020).

However, if fathers do not increase their household contributions, the pandemic may further exacerbate gender gaps in childcare and housework at the cost of women's work commitments. Previous research has shown that women and men equally perceive domestic tasks needing to be done, but men are more likely to ignore these responsibilities, leaving them to be done by women partners (Thébaud, Kornrich, & Ruppner, 2019). From this perspective, the increased visibility of care work and housework may do little to motivate men's contributions to family labour. Instead, the loss of childcare support through day-care and school may increase women's unpaid domestic labour, causing further disruptions to their jobs and work life.

While there have been reports on the psychological impact of the pandemic on the general public, patients, medical staff, and older adults (Liu *et al.*, 2020), there has been little examination of the impact of COVID-19 and home-schooling on family dynamics and the psychological functioning of families. This article assesses how dual-earner, heterosexual married couples with children have adjusted their work time during the pandemic. This question is vital as these couples must negotiate how to allocate childcare, home-schooling, the increase in housework, and the demands of their employers. Furthermore, this research is particularly relevant and acknowledges how men are experiencing these challenging times, which is a significant contribution to

the psychotherapy world to validate and understand the way these men are feeling.

7.2 Results

A total of seven fathers were interviewed. The father's ages ranged between 32 and 41, with a mean age of 34.6, all were first-time fathers, and the children's ages ranged between one and six, with a mean age of 3.5. All participants were living in the UK, in full-time employment and working remotely, as well as their partners or wives. The analysis of the data revealed these themes: (a) Dealing with constant demand, (b) Stronger bond with their children (c) Personal development.

i. Dealing with constant demand

All participants were employed full-time, which meant that the sudden restriction of having to work from home was unexpected. This generated feelings of stress and frustration, as fathers had to rapidly adapt to the necessary changes to keep themselves and their families afloat.

Flexible/remote working may lead couples to share more housework and care responsibilities. All fathers described a sense of difficulty identifying the boundaries between work and family life, the feeling of being in demand continuously, and a significant lack of time for themselves individually.

Several participants experienced feelings of guilt and contradiction, besides spending more time during the day in the same physical space as their child. This created blurred boundaries between work and family life, which led to a feeling of not thoroughly enjoying or connecting with any of their roles:

“So, you know sometimes I have meetings and it can be a bit challenging because maybe I can hear my daughter shouting or things like that.” FP1

“On the other hand, it brings those questions to light ehhm and that's probably one thing I have learned from the COVID situation although I have

enjoyed being around sometimes, it is not quality time that you want either. Sometimes it is not quality time because you are trying to do so many different things, you are not doing either thing properly I guess.” FP3.

“I feel I am in a constant feeling of rush, between childcare and work... This is very intense” FP5.

“Ehmm so lockdown was hell, I’m not going to lie. That was just ehmm survival mode” FP6.

The absence of separation between the functional role and the fatherhood role led some fathers to develop a sense of lack of identity and disconnection, which might be linked with the incapability to develop each role properly because of the continuous demand:

“I like to go to the office and do things and be with my baby but not the whole day every day” FP1.

“So, it was kind of getting to work and that sort of break, yeah I suppose I mean having to work all day in the same house that you live in and then having my daughter there for the whole day, there was no break” FP4.

“It’s not like a normal day-to-day life... You are just dealing with the urgent” FP3.

As much as it might sound ideal - the possibility to work from home - the fathers participating in this study felt obligated to have an active role in caregiving of their children without any other option or choice, which led to the frustration of the amount of time and commitment:

“I was forced to be here four months with her, I like it but it was not my choice” FP1.

“I consider myself being an involved father, but never this much on a day-to-day basis, this is an unprecedented amount of time” FP8.

“I have been more with my daughter I would rather be in the office; I like to be with her but not every day the whole day” FP3.

Some fathers showed a sense of jealousy, because for their other male friends or colleagues without children, the opportunity to work remotely allowed them to be more productive and develop in other areas of their life.

“Other friends with no kids developed other talents or even get bored...” FP5.

“I have other friends that are complaining because they are bored... Of course, they have no kids” FP7.

ii. Stronger bond with their children

While some fathers acknowledged the challenges of being on their own with their children; others saw this as an opportunity to develop a stronger bond with their children. As now, they have the opportunity to have time with their children daily, which might have been nearly absent before the pandemic. Few fathers described a sense of feeling like a single parent. However, besides the challenge that this could offer, most participants seemed more appreciative of developing their self-confidence. Also, their children's bond appeared stronger, leading to the child feeling comfortable being only with their father.

“What that meant is that ehhm there was a lot of ehhm I spent a hell of a lot more time with my son on my own than I had ever done previously. Ehhhm which was wonderful you know that was a real happy trade off. But it was quite difficult coming out of activities all the time with things to do or walks, long walks I went on just to have something to do ehhhm that again is great” FP8.

“...could almost, sounds horrible to say, get a taste of what it is like to be a single parent. And challenging obviously, very difficult” FP2.

“It is something that I would have never experienced without the COVID situation and my bond with my son is stronger because of it. He is much happier being with one of us than he would have been before. Previously he would have preferred just my wife or my wife and me even though I am a hands-on dad whereas now it is very much like he doesn't mind if it is one or both of us you know” FP5.

On the other hand, some fathers also appreciate the opportunity to see their child's development, as in normal circumstances this would never have happened. This situation also led fathers to notice and learn about the challenges of their children's day-to-day needs, which allowed them to get to know their children better and a positive feeling of having had the opportunity to be part of their development.

"It was an opportunity to be more active as a father. For example, on my paternal leave when my daughter was born, I only had two weeks, now I have the chance to have seen her grow during this four months" FP4.

"I know they say that children are sponges but having her around all day and her picking up absolutely everything and she still remembers several weeks or months down the line and you think: well, ok" FP4.

"I think ehhm again it's probably much more hands-on". FP3.

Due to the sample's composition, most of the participants' children had not yet come into contact with the formal education system as they are not of school age. In this case, most fathers showed more concern about general development than just education.

Other fathers saw pressure on doing something meaningful with their children, which may be linked to knowing that the child was not attending nursery or preschool and wanted their children to learn new skills and develop productivity during their working hours. Although, this also led fathers to have a lack of rest and breaks during the day:

"you just ehhm want to sit at home and relax but yeah now you are thinking we could do something else a bit more educational and fun" FP6.

"Whereas now it's a bit more stressful when you are at home because you are thinking: I need to do this work and you kind of put them secondary or they're watching too much tv or they are not developing". FP3.

iii. Personal development

Although faced with stress and endless challenges, the fathers also expressed hope and optimism. This experience served as an opportunity for personal development and meaning in their lives. Some fathers developed to be more focus-orientated to deal with the daily demands, especially generating ideas around the family schedule which led to a sense of communication and problem-solving for the benefit of all. This means that while undoubtedly there have been negative consequences of the virus, they have served as a possibility to develop and find creative solutions.

“It also made me a lot more focused. Getting stuff done a lot quicker” FP5.

“So trying to create some structure. And I think that has been a positive in some respect on the weekends, rather than ehhm we were never sitting around and that sort of thing, but you do think: maybe we should do something or kind of help her and learn something new or do something different” FP8.

Other fathers described how they developed a positive meaning from the situation and found a more balanced life; other fathers expressed that the pandemic helped them identify other priorities beyond just being a financial provider:

“But a lot of people having this break from work you kind of realise your priorities as well. And ehhm not everything is about work and money so yeah” FP3.

“Ehhm I think I have learned that I am a lot more resilient than I thought I was” FP7.

Fathers also expressed a capacity for adaptability; this means that the crisis has shown that we can make significant changes to our ways of functioning, leading to increased resilience and coping with the stress.

7.3 Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, the sample was drawn from a small, principally homogeneous group; all participants were fathers based in

the UK. The generalisability of findings might be limited; other countries might have had different restrictions, as the severity of the COVID-19 crisis was different between countries and might not be comparable. The researchers recognise this was a qualitative study and that the research cannot, and does not, seek to generalise. Lincoln and Guba (1988) proposed transferability as an alternative to external validity in recognition that not all qualitative studies can be generalised. Second, all fathers were working-class and employed during the pandemic, which does not make it generalisable to parents that have lost their jobs and have any financial pressure. Third, there is a lack of previous studies in the research area, which create scope for further development in the study, perhaps including unemployed fathers, or parents with children in full-time home-schooling education.

7.4 Overview and summary

This short study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore full-time working fathers' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three themes were revealed: dealing with constant demand, a stronger bond with their children, and personal development. Analysis of the data revealed that the father's role during the pandemic had to change and adapt to the current demands, especially around home-schooling and caregiving responsibilities. In this particular study, participants reported emotions ranging from stress and anxiety to frustration because of the constant demands. These stresses include feeling threat to family health, reduced social support, changes in work roles, and the added burden to meet the social and educational needs of children due to the closure of schools (Prime *et al.*, 2020).

Nevertheless, the extra responsibilities also allow the father to have one-to-one time with their offspring, which led to a stronger bond and self-confidence in being part of their children's learning development. Studies have shown that the amount of quality time fathers spend with their children is one of the most

important factors that improve the father-children relationship. Spending time with the children is necessary to know the children's needs, feelings, and thoughts (Jessee & Adamsons, 2018). Although faced with stress and endless challenges, the fathers also expressed hope and optimism. This experience served as an opportunity for personal development and meaning in their lives.

These theoretical pathways provide a useful framework to explore the potential impact of COVID-19 and its management on fathers working full-time and who at the same time need to be involved with childcare demands. There seems to be little literature based on the lived experience of fatherhood.

There are increasing calls for researchers to understand the psychological, social and neuroscientific effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in collaboration with those with lived experience (Holmes et al., 2020). The aim of this short study was to contribute to this growing body of work by exploring fathers' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK as a way to validate and understand the way these men are feeling.

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Appendices

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Appendix A. Description by my eldest daughter of what a father is to her.



Appendix B. Recruitment Literature

Information to be posted on Social Media

Nowadays, the active role of fathers has increased, and these males are not given much acknowledgement. There is a necessity of understanding what their experience is, to be able to offer the help they need.

Do you consider your experience to be important and would you like it to be heard?

My name is Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor, I am a Practitioner Chartered Psychologist. I am currently working on a formal supervised research based on the lived experience of fathers. This my dissertation project, and this is one requirement for the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies, Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University.

I am looking to interview eight fathers who are over 18 years old, speak fluent English, live in the United Kingdom and be first-time father of or a have a child under the age of 8 years old. The interview will take place remotely or in the town of Horley.

If you are interested in being part of this project, please do not hesitate in contacting me. My email address: margarita.fuenmayor@metanoia.ac.uk or call on 07803280892

Thank you for your support,

Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor

Appendix C.

Metanoia Institute



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PIS)

Participant ID Code:.....

SECTION 1

1. Study title

The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study will aim to have a detailed explanation of the lived experience of fathers. There has been a substantial rise in fathers struggling with their role, and they are showing high levels of anxiety regarding the mentally and physical demands concerning the wellbeing of their children. In addition to this reasoning, it has been noticed there is a lack of information and acknowledgement of how the demands of fathers have changed over the last decades and how they seem to be struggling. It seems reasonable to assume that specialists in the psychotherapy world, who work with fathers would benefit from literature that validates and explains their experiences.

4. Why have I been chosen?

It is important that we assess as many participants as possible, and you have indicated that you are interested in taking part in this study.

This study is about the lived experience of fatherhood. In total eight participants are required. You fulfil the requirements to be part of this study, because:

- ❖ You are >18 years old,
- ❖ You are fluent in English language.
- ❖ You live in the United Kingdom.
- ❖ You have a child younger than 8 years old.

- ❖ You have never been diagnosed with any mental or physical health condition



5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you do decide to withdraw from the study then please inform the researcher as soon as possible, and they will facilitate your withdrawal. If, for any reason, you wish to withdraw your data please contact the researcher within a month of your participation. After this date it may not be possible to withdraw your individual data as the results may have already been published. However, as all data are anonymised, your individual data will not be identifiable in any way.

6. What will I have to do?

We will set up a time to meet for one interview. It will last around 1 hour.

In the first part of the interview, I will ask you about your experience as a dad and the psychological challenges you have faced, and I may then ask questions about what you have said. After that, the second part of the interview will have the same structure but in a more specific way. After the interview, you will have an opportunity to say anything you think is important or you forgot to say.

Please note that in order to ensure quality assurance and equity this project may be selected for audit by a designated member of the committee. This means that the designated member can request to see signed consent forms. However, if this is the case your signed consent form will only be accessed by the designated auditor or member of the audit team.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We hope that participating in the study will help you, as you will be talking about your experience. However, this cannot be guaranteed. The information we get from this study may lead to a better understanding about your experience as fathers, what will lead on the development of future treatments for fathers of young children.

8. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The research team has put a number of procedures in place to protect the confidentiality of participants. You will be allocated a participant code that will always be used to identify any data you provide. Your name or other personal details will not be associated with your data, for example, the consent form

that you sign will be kept separate from your data. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only to the research team, and all electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer. All information you provide will be treated in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act.



9. What will happen to the results of the research study?

With the intention of widening the professional field, including academic and professional audiences, this research will be written as a scientific article to be published in peer review journals like British Journal of Psychology or British Journal of Guidance and Counselling.

In addition, it will be published in professional magazines like the Psychologist. Before this happens, you will have the opportunity to review such publications in advance and I will seek permission for this separately. However, the data will only be used by members of the research team and at no point will your personal information or data be revealed.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has received full ethical clearance from the Metanoia Institute Research Ethics Committee (MREC) who reviewed the study.

11. Contact for further information

If you require further information, have any questions or would like to withdraw your data then please contact:

Name and Contact Details of Researcher: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor.

Email: margarita.fuenmayor@metanoia.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of Supervisor: Dr. Alistair McBeath

Email:alistair.mcbeath@metanoia.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in this study. You should keep this participant information sheet as it contains your participant code, important information and the research teams contact details

SECTION 2

Metanoia Institute Guide to Research Privacy Notices

Privacy notices need to be presented whenever data is collected and should be understandable and accessible. Privacy notices must explain the type and source of data that will be processed. They will also set out the processing purpose, data retention schedules and data sharing. Privacy notices must include details of the subject's rights and who the subject can complain to.



Metanoia Institute Privacy Notice for Research Participants

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) protects the rights of individuals by setting out certain rules as to what organisation can and cannot do with information about people. A key element to this is the principle to process individuals' data lawfully and fairly. This means we need to provide information on how we process personal data.

The Institute takes its obligation under the GDPR very seriously and will always ensure personal data is collected, handled, stored and shared in a secure manner. The Institute's Data Protection Policy can be accessed here:

<http://metanoia.ac.uk/media/2363/privacy-policy-metanoia-institute.pdf>

The following statements will outline what personal data we collect, how we use it and who we share it with. It will also provide guidance on your individual rights and how to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO), the regulator for data protection in the UK.

Why are we collecting your personal data?

We undertake research as part of our function and in our capacity as a teaching and research institution to advance education and learning. The specific purpose for data collection on this occasion is to have a better understanding of the lived experience of fathers. There have been a substantial rise in fathers struggling with their role, and they are showing high levels of anxiety regarding the mentally and physical demands concerning the wellbeing of their children. In addition to this reasoning, it has been noticed there is a lack of information and acknowledgement of how the demands of fathers have changed over the last decades and how they seem to be struggling. It seems reasonable to assume that specialists in the psychotherapy world, who work with fathers would benefit from literature that validates and explains their experiences.

The legal basis for processing your personal data under GDPR on this occasion is Article 6(1a) consent of the data subject.

Transferring data outside Europe

In the majority of instances your data will be processed by Metanoia Institute researchers only or in collaboration with researchers at other UK or European institutions so will stay inside the EU and be protected by the requirements of the GDPR.

In any instances in which your data might be used as part of a collaboration with researchers based outside the EU all the necessary safeguards that are required under the GDPR for transferring data outside of the EU will be put in place. You will be informed if this is relevant for the specific study you are a participant of.



Your rights under data protection

Under the GDPR and the DPA you have the following rights:

- to obtain access to, and copies of, the personal data that we hold about you;
- to require that we cease processing your personal data if the processing is causing you damage or distress;
- to require us to correct the personal data we hold about you if it is incorrect;
- to require us to erase your personal data;
- to require us to restrict our data processing activities;
- to receive from us the personal data we hold about you which you have provided to us, in a reasonable format specified by you, including for the purpose of you transmitting that personal data to another data controller;
- to object, on grounds relating to your particular situation, to any of our particular processing activities where you feel this has a disproportionate impact on your rights.

Where personal information is processed as part of a research project, the extent to which these rights apply varies under the GDPR and the DPA. In particular, your rights to access, change, or move your information may be limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we may not be able to remove the information that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible. The Participant Information Sheet will detail up to what point in the study data can be withdrawn.

If you submit a data protection rights request to the Institute, you will be informed of the decision within one month. If it is considered necessary to refuse to comply with any of your data protection rights, you also have the right to complain about our decision to the UK supervisory authority for data protection, the Information Commissioner's Office.

None of the above precludes your right to withdraw consent from participating in the research study at any time.



Collecting and using personal data

We will set up a time to meet for one interview. It will last around 1 hour. In the first part of the interview, I will ask you about your experience as a dad and the psychological challenges you have faced, and I may then ask questions about what you have said. After that, the second part of the interview will have the same structure but in a more specific way. After the interview, you will have an opportunity to say anything you think is important or you forgot to say.

With the intention of widening the professional field, including academic and professional audiences, this research will be written as a scientific article to be published in peer review journals like British Journal of Psychology or British Journal of Guidance and Counselling.

In addition, it will be published in professional magazines like the Psychologist. Before this happens, you will have the opportunity to review such publications in advance and I will seek permission for this separately. However, the data will only be used by members of the research team and at no point will your personal information or data be revealed.

Data sharing

Your information will usually be shared within the research team conducting the project you are participating in, mainly so that they can identify you as a participant and contact you about the research project.

Responsible members of the Institute may also be given access to personal data used in a research project for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your records. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

If we are working with other organisations and information is shared about you, we will inform you in the Participant Information Sheet. Information shared will be on a 'need to know' basis relative to achieving the research project's objectives, and with all appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the security of your information.

Storage and security

The Institute takes a robust approach to protecting the information it holds with its encrypted server and controlled access.

Retention

Under the GDPR and DPA personal data collected for research purposes can be kept indefinitely, providing there is no impact to you outside the parameters of the study you have consented to take part in.

Having stated the above, the length of time for which we keep your data will depend on a number of factors including the importance of the data, the funding requirements, the nature of the study, and the requirements of the publisher. Details will be given in the information sheet for each project.

Contact us

The Principal Investigator leading this research is Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor.

70 Whittaker Drive. RH6 9TN

07803280892

margarita.fuenmayor@metanoia.ac.uk

In case you have concerns about this project you can contact:

Data Protection Officer

Metanoia Institute

W5 2QB

Tel: +44 (0)20 8579 2505

Email: dataprotection@metanoia.ac.uk

Appendix D. Interview schedule

The interview will have two phases. Two generalised questions to begin will be:

- ❖ What motivated you to be part of this research?
- ❖ What is it like to be a father?

And the second phase with more specific questions like:

1. Why did you decide to become a father?
2. What did you expect father life to be like?
3. What has changed since you became a father?
4. How do those changes make you feel?
5. For you, what is the best thing about being a father?
6. For you, what is the worst thing about being a father?
7. Could you describe a typical easy day for you as a father? How do you feel during a day like this?
8. Could you describe a typical difficult day for you as a father? How do you feel during a day like this?
9. How does your family feel about your role as a father?
10. Do you think that your experience as a father changed you in any way?
If yes: Could you explain these changes a bit more in detail?
11. What have you learnt since you became a father?
12. In which way these challenges have had a positive impact in your life?
13. In which way these challenges have had a negative impact in your life?
14. Could you describe how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your role as a father?

Prompts:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What is that like?
- Could you describe that more for me?

Appendix E.



Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

Name of Researcher: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet datedfor the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without penalty.
3. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.
4. I agree that my non-identifiable research data may be stored in National Archives and be used anonymously by others for future research. I am assured that the confidentiality of my data will be upheld through the removal of any personal identifiers.
5. I understand that my interview may be recorded and subsequently transcribed.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent Date _____
(if different from researcher)

Researcher Date _____
Signature

Appendix F. Independent Field/Location Work Risk Assessment

FIELDWORK DETAILS

Name of person carrying out fieldwork: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor

Name of research supervisor: Dr. Alistair McBeath

Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident	FIELDWORK NEXT OF KIN Name: Dennis Buunk (Husband) Phone: 07803292560
Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed fieldwork	No
Any health problems (full details) which may be relevant to proposed fieldwork activity in case of emergencies.	No
Locality (Country and Region)	Horley, Surrey. United Kingdom
Travel arrangements	n/a
Dates of travel and fieldwork	n/a

List the localities to be visited or specify routes to be followed (**Col. 1**). For each locality, enter the potential hazards that may be identified beyond those accepted in everyday life. Add details giving cause for concern (**Col. 2**).

Examples of Potential Hazards :

- Adverse weather: exposure (heat, sunburn, lightening, wind, hypothermia).
- Terrain: rugged, unstable, fall, slip, trip, debris, and remoteness. Traffic: pollution.
- Demolition/building sites, assault, getting lost, animals, disease.
- Working on/near water: drowning, swept away, disease (Weil's disease, hepatitis, malaria, etc.), parasites', flooding, tides, and range.
- Lone working: difficult to summon help, alone or in isolation, lone interviews.
- Dealing with the public: personal attack, causing offence/intrusion, misinterpreted, political, ethnic, cultural,
- socio-economic differences/problems. Known or suspected criminal offenders.

- Safety Standards (other work organisations, transport, hotels, etc.), working at night, areas of high crime.
- Ill health: personal considerations or vulnerabilities, pre-determined medical conditions (asthma, allergies, fitting) general fitness, disabilities, persons suited to task.
- Articles and equipment: inappropriate type and/or use, failure of equipment, insufficient training for use and repair, injury.
- Substances (chemicals, plants, bio- hazards, waste): ill health - poisoning, infection, irritation, burns, cuts, eye- damage.
- Manual handling: lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy items, physical unsuitability for task

If no hazard can be identified beyond those of everyday life, enter 'NONE'.

1. LOCALITY/ROUTE	2. POTENTIAL HAZARDS
Horley, Surrey.	NONE

For each hazard identified (**Col 2**), list the precautions/control measures in place or that will be taken (**Col 3**) to "**reduce the risk to acceptable levels**", and the safety equipment (**Col 5**) that will be employed.

Assuming the safety precautions/control methods that will be adopted (**Col. 3**), categorise the fieldwork risk for each location/route as negligible, low, moderate, or high (**Col. 4**).

Risk increases with both the increasing likelihood of an accident and the increasing severity of the consequences of an accident.

An acceptable level of risk is: a risk which can be safely controlled by person taking part in the activity using the precautions and control measures noted including the necessary instructions, information and training relevant to that risk. The resultant risk should not be significantly higher than that encountered in everyday life.

Examples of control measures/precautions:

Providing adequate training, information & instructions on fieldwork tasks and the safe and correct use of any equipment, substances, and personal protective equipment. Inspection and safety check of any equipment prior to use. Assessing individuals fitness and suitability to environment and tasks involved. Appropriate clothing, environmental information consulted and advice followed (weather conditions, tide times etc.). Seek advice on harmful plants, animals & substances that may be encountered, including information and instruction on safe procedures for handling hazardous substances. First aid provisions, inoculations, individual medical requirements, logging of location, route and expected return times of lone workers. Establish emergency procedures (means of raising an alarm, back up

arrangements). Working with colleagues (pairs). **Lone working is not permitted where the risk of physical or verbal violence is a realistic possibility.** Training in interview techniques and avoiding /defusing conflict, following advice from local organisations, wearing of clothing unlikely to cause offence or unwanted attention. Interviews in neutral locations. Checks on Health and Safety standards & welfare facilities of travel, accommodation, and outside organisations. Seek information on social/cultural/political status of fieldwork area.

Examples of Safety Equipment: Hardhats, goggles, gloves, harness, waders, whistles, boots, mobile phone, ear protectors, bright fluorescent clothing (for roadside work), dust mask, etc.


If a proposed locality has not been visited previously, give your authority for the risk assessment stated or indicate that your visit will be preceded by a thorough risk assessment.

3.PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	4.RISK ASSESSMENT (low, moderate, high)	5. SAFETY/EQUIPMENT
N/A		

DECLARATION: The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.

NB: Risk should be constantly reassessed during the fieldwork period and additional precautions taken or fieldwork discontinued if the risk is seen to be unacceptable.

Signature of Fieldworker  Date...21/02/2020
(Candidate/Staff)

Signature of candidate's ...  Date...21/02/2020.
Research Supervisor

APPROVAL:
Signature of ResearchDate.....
Co-ordinator or
Faculty Head.

FIELDWORK CHECK LIST

1. Ensure that all members of the field party possess the following attributes (where relevant) at a level appropriate to the proposed activity and likely field conditions:

- Safety knowledge and training?
- Awareness of cultural, social, and political differences?
- Physical and psychological fitness and disease immunity, protection, and awareness?
- Personal clothing and safety equipment?
- Suitability of fieldworkers to proposed tasks?

2. Have all the necessary arrangements been made and information/instruction gained, and have the relevant authorities been consulted or informed with regard to:

- Visa, permits?
- Legal access to sites and/or persons?
- Political or military sensitivity of the proposed topic, its method or location?
- Weather conditions, tide times and ranges?
- Vaccinations and other health precautions?
- Civil unrest and terrorism?
- Arrival times after journeys?
- Safety equipment and protective clothing?
- Financial and insurance implications?
- Crime risk?
- Health insurance arrangements?
- Emergency procedures?
- Transport use?
- Travel and accommodation arrangements?

Important information for retaining evidence of completed risk assessments:

Once the risk assessment is completed and approval gained the research supervisor should retain this form and issue a copy of it to the fieldworker participating on the fieldwork. In addition the **approver** must keep a copy of this risk assessment in an appropriate Health and Safety file.

Appendix G. Manual Analysis.

Participant Code: FATHERP1
Date: 07/07/2020

Descriptive
Linguistic
Conceptual

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
<p>A sense of contribution</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Natural way</p> <p>understanding</p> <p>challenges/ diff. cultures</p> <p>Double messages? shame?</p>	<p>❖ What motivated you to be part of this research</p> <p>Um, well, we have met each other because you know Andrea and I was happy to share my experience as a new dad and to help others</p> <p>❖ What is it like for you to be a father?</p> <p>Oh, I think it's very rewarding. I think I couldn't see my life without having Emma now, without having the baby. It's challenging especially because of the situation right now. So, I'm working at the same time Emma is at home, so you know sometimes I have meetings and can be a bit challenging because maybe can hear Emma shouting or things like that. I think in this particular occasion is more difficult. But I think for me is a very good experience and I want to be open, but I think for me being a dad right</p>	<p>It's that & usually expected as a father to help others?</p> <p>Rewarding experience</p> <p>Challenging - he went more into the Corona-virus experience</p> <p>It started paragraph in a positive and finished the same way</p> <p>Is there a bit of resistance and I need to only show "positive" or being judge?</p> <p>How eh-h-hesitant feeling judge?</p> <p>went off topic and was a bit hesitant when had to go back to it.</p> <p>"Rikult Queenon"</p>

do you have to let her know that maybe

Participant Code: FATHERP1

Date: 07/07/2020

the or maybe

things

Father as a teaching role

Opening other
happiness
his child
through
extended
happiness

now is teaching Emma how to behave or if she has a tantrum you have to teach her that she should not be doing that or teaching her new words or how to walk because she is just learning how to walk. To teach her how to go up the step and move. I think all in all is a very good experience and also I think it's good for for not just for us but also for for the family like for example my parents even though they have not seen her for a very long time now, they are very excited when they see her on the screen when we talk on FaceTime so they are very happy and I think that makes their day and also for example Andrea's sister said that in the lockdown seeing Emma every day on the phone or iPad was making her day as well, so I think it's good for everyone, is just like happiness

❖ Why did you decide to become a father?

I think we had stability, so I met Andrea and then we we got married, then after

Father as a Teacher

How maybe influence of his (sons)?
How to describe it?

And active role.

Hearing to the family

↳ happiness ↳ Everyone.

↳ the continue one of I think could hear he is retracing a little bit from the emotion and more when is expected.

↳ Father as a natural way of being "Good twins"

<p>Expectation vs reality</p>	<p>getting married, we decided to buy a flat so I think we were in a moment where we both felt like it was right timing because we have been together for a while now and we knew each other, we were happy and also we felt like economically we were settle, we had our own place and it was good timing to have a baby or so I guess in this case Andrea was very excited to have a baby, I also was excited, but I think Andrea was even more and she was really looking forward to it, so yeah I think those was the main reason. I also wanted to be a dad, I always had in my mind that I wanted to do to have a baby, so I think we knew it was the right and correct timing</p>	<p>this answer went more fluent than the previous.</p> <p>→ Because the wife wanted? to use the whole process more because it was expected? → sometimes I think -1</p>
<p>Expectation vs reality</p>	<p>❖ What did you expect a father life to be?</p> <p>Ehhh I think probably not like this, probably I thought it was easier. Ehh I thought that the, you don't think how difficult it is because it's the first time. You don't know what to expect, but probably</p>	<p>Different expectation lining this with the previous question was there really an expectation? the sounded just delightful and compared with the idea of what he expected</p>

<p>work hours demand</p> <p>Paternal bond</p>	<p>you don't expect to be this intense. Because you are a dad 24 hours, so it's not like you can be a dad for a couple of hours and then you can't forget that you have a baby, you have to be 24 hours. Emmm yes looking after the baby, so probably I didn't imagine the amount of work, or maybe I could not imagine eh. I don't know maybe like, I could not imagine how proud I would feel about having a baby, because I think for the dad is different, so I I I think I was excited when Andrea was pregnant but I think for the mother is different because she could already have a bond with her even before the baby being born, for me I think it was different because I could like feel that bond from the minute that you see the baby, was when I felt different, eh. I think before she was born it was very difficult for me to imagine how it was going to be. If I really think about it I think it was very different than how it really is</p>	<p><u>Intense</u> :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant attention and demand. Indefatigable experience. Amount of work. once again the necessity to reinforce the positive but with doubts. maybe, maybe, maybe Was there any expectations? Emotional bond. Started when the baby was born ↓ Consequences of the responsibility?
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<p>Sense of responsibility # Commitment # Be a provider ↓ Expectation: ↓ Development or Reinforce # Starts or priorities? ↓ Show ↓ Self-doubt</p>	<p>❖ What has changed since you became a father? 26:00 I think eh I feel more like responsibility on my shoulders because beforehand, if I had lost a job maybe it was ok, I would just said, I can find another one, and it should be fine, but I guess now, you know that if you have the baby you have to, you need to have an income, because you need to be able to provide for your family. Eh I think, I mmm I need to be more patient, because you need to be very patient when you have a baby, you have to probably. I don't know, I can't not imagine I was going to be watching the same song over and over again just because she likes it that song and watch it 300 times every day, so probably I have to be very patience.</p>	<p>Sense of commitment "you have to" "I need to" Provider Was there a twist on his sense of responsibility? How #1 has changed? It is also not expected. I need to → you have to I don't know Is there a shift of expectations or of personalities? Priorities? Was it difficult for him to actually express his emotions? or to connect with the changes? Was he only trying to connect with the positives changes?</p>
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<p>Lack of attention to the father as an individual + More connection with other because of the father role</p>	<p>with them once a week because, I mean I I can tell them when I've done in the week and that's it but maybe now because of Emma then we speak every day and we are more in contact because of that. I also have more contact with my extended family, my aunts and uncle, because they are constantly asking how she is, and I have more close relationship with them as well. Eh, it has also change like for example, you know, my freedom, I could just finish work and say, let's go to the cinema, let's go for a drink tonight or different plans, but now you cannot do because you know at 7:00 PM Emma needs to go to sleep so you cannot really maybe go out for dinner or other plans we use to do. Eh, now they are very different, there are few things that maybe you could do but now the plans are just to maybe go to a park, maybe before the thought of going to the park to sit on the grass with a friend it sounded boring but now it's very exciting to go to the park, so I think my life style has changed, it's totally different you have to always</p>	<p>He has found other ways to connect with his family & closeness Has the attention of the family only around the baby? Is there a lack of attention of the father as an individual? or the child has brought more topics to raise about? He tends to party and show himself very shy when he is going to say something negative Is this a change of priorities or a new way of life enjoyment?</p>
<p>Loss of Freedom</p>	<p>with them once a week because, I mean I I can tell them when I've done in the week and that's it but maybe now because of Emma then we speak every day and we are more in contact because of that. I also have more contact with my extended family, my aunts and uncle, because they are constantly asking how she is, and I have more close relationship with them as well. Eh, it has also change like for example, you know, my freedom, I could just finish work and say, let's go to the cinema, let's go for a drink tonight or different plans, but now you cannot do because you know at 7:00 PM Emma needs to go to sleep so you cannot really maybe go out for dinner or other plans we use to do. Eh, now they are very different, there are few things that maybe you could do but now the plans are just to maybe go to a park, maybe before the thought of going to the park to sit on the grass with a friend it sounded boring but now it's very exciting to go to the park, so I think my life style has changed, it's totally different you have to always</p>	<p>He has found other ways to connect with his family & closeness Has the attention of the family only around the baby? Is there a lack of attention of the father as an individual? or the child has brought more topics to raise about? He tends to party and show himself very shy when he is going to say something negative Is this a change of priorities or a new way of life enjoyment?</p>
<p>New ways of enjoyment + changes in life style</p>	<p>with them once a week because, I mean I I can tell them when I've done in the week and that's it but maybe now because of Emma then we speak every day and we are more in contact because of that. I also have more contact with my extended family, my aunts and uncle, because they are constantly asking how she is, and I have more close relationship with them as well. Eh, it has also change like for example, you know, my freedom, I could just finish work and say, let's go to the cinema, let's go for a drink tonight or different plans, but now you cannot do because you know at 7:00 PM Emma needs to go to sleep so you cannot really maybe go out for dinner or other plans we use to do. Eh, now they are very different, there are few things that maybe you could do but now the plans are just to maybe go to a park, maybe before the thought of going to the park to sit on the grass with a friend it sounded boring but now it's very exciting to go to the park, so I think my life style has changed, it's totally different you have to always</p>	<p>He has found other ways to connect with his family & closeness Has the attention of the family only around the baby? Is there a lack of attention of the father as an individual? or the child has brought more topics to raise about? He tends to party and show himself very shy when he is going to say something negative Is this a change of priorities or a new way of life enjoyment?</p>

<p>Loss of own self + Abandon of own needs</p> <p>Emotions during fatherhood</p> <p>Sense of responsibility</p> <p>Shame of struggle / Learning awareness</p> <p>Multitasking dad</p> <p>Lack of understanding from others</p>	<p>thinking about what to do, everything is around the baby.</p> <p>❖ How those changes make you feel?</p> <p>um proud because I am I'm proud of having the baby, and I think it makes me feel happy, its like when I wake up in the morning I know there is Emma to look forward to.</p> <p>I think it makes feel more responsible person in general. Its tiring as well, I am not going to lie, there are many days when Emma wakes up at 4:30 AM so of course it is tiring because you you need to be here playing with her and at the same time then I have to go to work and to need to be 100% focus on work, but at the same time of course I am feeling tired and also be aware of what she is doing.</p> <p>I also work with other people, that they don't have a baby, and they can not understand the situation, so sometimes it is tiring as well. Ummm so yeah that's it!</p>
<p>Is this a loss of sense / independence? what about his own needs?</p> <p>It seems once again challenging for him to confront with the difficulties of the fatherhood</p> <p>It would thus be like with the lack of acknowledgment of his struggles?</p> <p>Shame of the struggle</p> <p>Emotions → Proud → Tired → affects concentration → Guilt. → Fear</p> <p>Is this a sense of achievement that he managed to articulate the way he was feeling.</p>	<p>It seems once again challenging for him to confront with the difficulties of the fatherhood</p> <p>It would thus be like with the lack of acknowledgment of his struggles?</p> <p>Shame of the struggle</p> <p>Emotions → Proud → Tired → affects concentration → Guilt. → Fear</p> <p>Is this a sense of achievement that he managed to articulate the way he was feeling.</p>

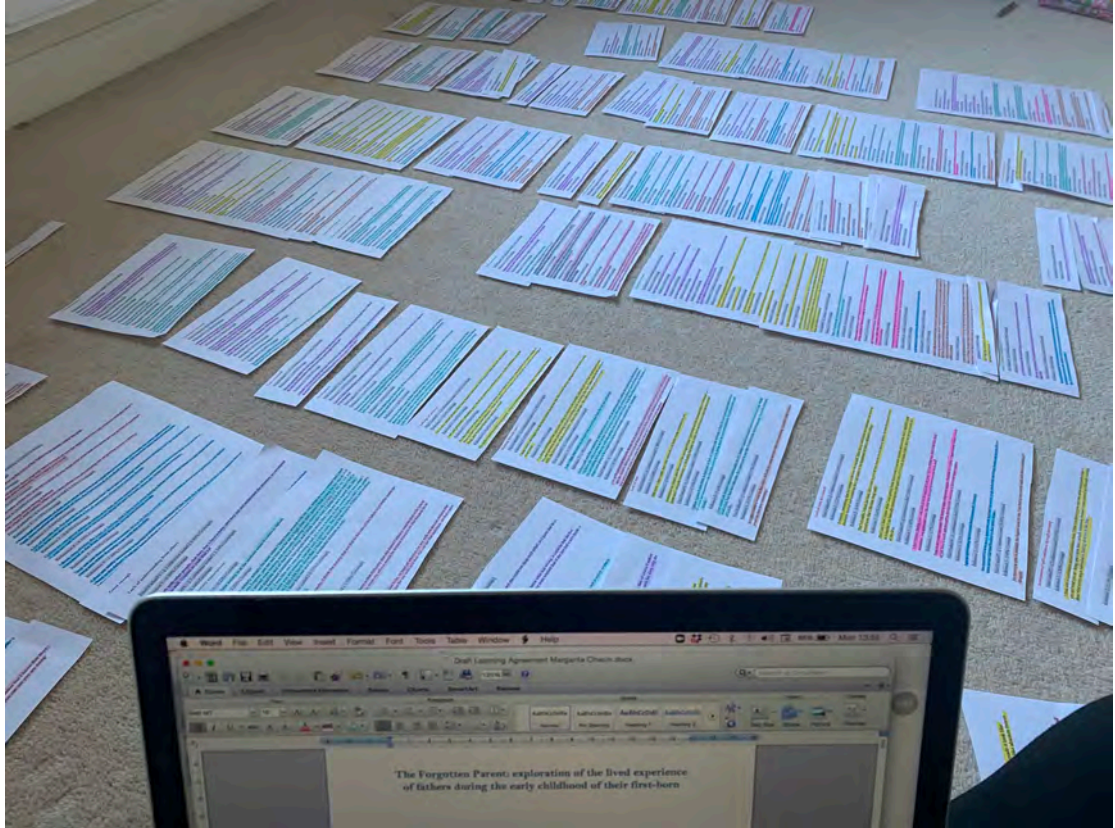
<p>Equality of responsibilities ↓ Society expectation ↓ Individual expectation ↓ connection and enjoyment</p> <p>Normalisation of fatherhood patterns of commitment:</p> <p>Involvement and a modern father</p>	<p>❖ How do you think your role as a father differs from the role of your own father?</p> <p>Ehhh, I think is different because I think maybe in the past it was more accepted that the mom is the one that is going to be taking care of the kid and the dad is more like relax about it, so I think nowadays the situation that is expected is that mom and dad share all the responsibilities.</p> <p>During my parents' time, for example my mom stopped working when I was 3 or 4 years old because it was difficult to work and take care of me and the house and everything, so she left her job and my dad was the one that continued working but I think for example nowadays eh I would want my wife to keep working and both having a job and sharing the rest of the responsibilities and I think probably that's why is different. I think eh my dad is very relaxed, so I think my mom is the one that mostly has the character, so she is the one maybe has like, taught me how to behave</p>	<p>It seems to be very clear in how the patterns have changed and he feels comfortable about it.</p> <p>There seems to be a natural willingness</p>
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<p>Active role of a father Passive role of his own father</p>	<p>and my dad was more relax about it. I think I am more relax about but hopefully I am able as well to keep that guidance, to teach Emma. And hopefully, I can also have more input in that sense. From my dad we didn't expect anything, he was going to work and that was it. But now its different, it's expected that mom and dad are both responsible and they need to look after the baby on equal foot.</p> <p>❖ For you, what is the best thing about being a father? Eh I think like discovering lots of new things every day and the surprise of, I don't know that you repeat everything that you do, and the copy you on everything that you do. Its also probably that suddenly her making some noise or saying a word that we have been repeating before to her. For example, the other day we were looking at book with animals, and there was a lion and I say rrrrr and then she started repeating the rrrr rrr, and she is now doing the whole day that sound so it is amazing the amount of things that you</p>	<p>Is there a natural willingness to be involved. Could it be that once society have more home pleasant being balance can be that also what fathers want? It's much as was not expected it doesn't seem to be a sense of guilt or not had been more active It seems to be a sense of achievement when teaching and being active in the role what about the emotional connection? wouldn't this be more in a mother role? How this connection is #?</p>
<p>Farther as the teachers note As a role model?</p>		

<p>Sense of responsibility on the development of a woman being.</p> <p>Guilt about the direction in the role</p> <p>Constant downward</p> <p>Good enough?</p>	<p>can be able to teach her, and see, you are like the image that she looks into and she probably will behave according to what you teach her.</p> <p>❖ For you, what is the worst thing about being a father? <i>(long pause)</i> Uhhmm I don't think there are many bad things, but eh I would say, maybe, I don't know that it required the 100% of your attention, you cannot relax or you can not like say, I am going relax for an hour and then come back, you have to be aware of her the whole time because in 2 minutes she has moved everything around or she can hurt herself, so you need to be very careful always. And I guess that maybe, the fear that you have that something bad can happen to her. There was one day that my daughter was crying and asking for her mom and I was thinking... Why isn't enough what I can offer?</p>	<p>is he trying to say that the way he teaches her that will influence the woman being that she will become</p> <p>there seems to be a massive guilt when thinking and considering this.</p> <p>It is describing a constant downward that seems to be very # to the role of his father when this was absent for any time you can not relax?</p>
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<p>Changes in the relationship.</p> <p>Fulfillment with balance</p>	<p>I don't have time to talk with my wife as we did before, all the attention goes to the child, we don't have much time to talk about feelings and we have less intimacy.</p> <p>❖ Could you describe a typical easy day for you as a father? How do you feel during a day like this?</p> <p>I think, I would say in the past I will wake up, then go to work and then come back and then I say goodbye to her, so very simple. Ehh nowadays, maybe I will say when she has 2 good naps and that means that 3 hours of our time is for us, so we can ehh have more time to do our job, or we are more relax to be watching the tv together or something like that. Ehh that would be important for the day and I think ehh if she eat all her food, she has no tantrums, she is happy eating everything without throwing all the food to the floor, ehh most days she is a happy baby, she does not cry a lot, but I guess, when she is smiling, laughing, in a good mood, especially when she hasn't slept the siestas</p>	<p>It's decentering changes in the relationship</p> <p>The use of language on this question was very fluent.</p> <p>He described an easy day with little contact with her but with he sounds it sweet.</p> <p>What does it really consist a good father? Does he realistically needs to be active the huge time?</p> <p>He feels as a good day when he also have time to look after himself / work / live</p> <p>COVID</p>
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Appendix H. Manual Analysis Process





Appendix I. NVivo Trainings





Certificate of Completion
Congratulations, Margarita Chacin

NVivo 2018 Essential Training

Course completed on Sep 16, 2020 • 1 hour 23 min

By continuing to learn, you have expanded your perspective, sharpened your skills, and made yourself even more in demand.

LinkedIn Learning
1000 W Maude Ave
Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Head of Content Strategy, Learning

Certificate Id: ASyfycesp8X1cBPYHAWVC39Za



Appendix J. Initial NVivo Coding (Nodes)

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Development of contemporary fatherhood		2	35
1. Clarity of roles		1	1
2. Expectation Vs Reality		2	12
3. Father as a natural way of being	as an expectation?	2	8
4. Involvement as a modern father		1	2
5. Lack of agreement		1	2
6. Natural shift of fatherhood		1	1
7. Paternal bond		1	1
8. Social pressure to have children		1	1
9. Society Vs Personal expectations		1	2
10. Traditional fatherhood		1	3
11. Traditional Vs Contemporary father	It seems that the discipline from his dad was absent and his concept of a good dad is "always fun" and this is why he feels guilty when correcting his son	1	8
12. Wife expectations		1	1
Father as a learning experience		1	4
13. Bonding through care	It seems that the bond has developed more because of the day-to-day contact more than through special moments (like his father)	1	2
14. Challenge of patience		1	4
15. Development		1	1
16. Development of self-confidence through parenting		1	2
17. Lack of freedom		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
18. Continuous demand		1	3
19. Lack of time		1	2
20. Lack of time for himself	He mentioned... Is definitely a thing, does this mean he is struggling	1	3
21. Main focus on a positive expectation		1	1
22. Patience as a mandatory skill	Development of patience?	1	1
23. Task orientated		1	2
Father in action		0	0
24. Active role of a dad through physical contact		1	1
25. Dad as an observer		1	1
26. Father as a role model		1	2
27. Father as a teaching role		2	6
28. Father as an emotional support	It is interesting to see how he assumes that other fathers do not have this and for his wife is hard	1	1
29. Giving everything		1	1
30. Identity		1	1
31. Multitasking dad		1	2
32. Parental responsibility		1	5
33. Polarised experience		1	1
34. Quality Vs Quantity of time		1	1
35. Role of the father in the discipline		1	4
36. The moulding of a human being		1	2
Meaning in life		1	5
37. A sense of contribution		1	1
38. Child as priority		1	3
39. Discovery of new enjoyments		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
40. Extended happiness		1	2
41. Fatherhood happiness		1	4
42. Life around the child		1	1
43. Relationship Changes		2	6
44. Sense of fulfilment when balanced		1	2
45. Thoughts about having another child		1	2
Undesirable feelings		1	1
46. Coping with tiredness		2	5
47. Dealing with frustration		1	2
48. Discomfort with a compliment		1	1
49. Doubtful positivity	I am not sure about this name. But often when the participant wants to say something positive his language tends to be quite insecure.	1	4
50. Fear		1	1
51. Good enough		1	1
52. Guilty when physically absent		1	5
53. Justification of the struggle		1	1
54. Lack of understanding from others		1	1
55. Reward Vs Struggle		1	1
56. Shame of struggle		1	3
57. Stress		1	1
58. Unexpectancy of the struggle		1	1
59. Worry		1	2

Appendix K. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Risk of harm	Management of risk to acceptable level
Participant	Psychological distress during or after the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In the case of psychological distress during the interview the protocol designed for Draucker <i>et al.</i> (2009), for managing distress in the context of an interview will be followed. ❖ In case the participant is showing distress during the interview, this will be stopped, and immediate support will be offered, mental status will be assessed to decide if the participant feels able to carry on. ❖ If the participant is unable to carry on or he is feels distressed as a result of participating in the research on a time frame of 4 weeks after the interview, he will be referred to a trusted therapist, or if the participant prefers he can contact his own GP or mental health provider.

<p>Researcher</p>	<p>Emotional activation during or after the narrative of the participant Difficulty finding the researcher way in the diverse and fragmented field of narrative research (Sools, Murray, & Westerhof, 2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Researcher will ensure time to de-brief after interviews and during analysis with Academic Advisor and Clinical Supervisor if necessary ❖ Research support will be sought with Academic Consultant, Academic Advisor and literature.
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Appendix L. Metanoia Institute Data Protection Checklist for Researchers

Project title: The Forgotten Parent: an exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born
 PI/Supervisor: Dr. Alistair McBeath Date: 21/02/2020

There are **eight data protection principles**, which states that information must be:

1. Fairly and lawfully processed;
2. Processed for specified and lawful purposes;
3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive;
4. Accurate and kept up date where necessary;
5. Not kept for longer than is necessary;
6. Processed in accordance within individuals’ rights under the DPA;
7. Kept secure;
8. Not transferred to countries without adequate protection.

Section 33 of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) provides exemption to some of the eight data protection principles for processing personal data for ‘research purposes’ including statistical or historical purposes. These are noted in the checklist below.

For guidance on the Data Protection Act for Social Research please see the MRS/SRA Data Protection Act 1998: Guidelines for Social Research, April 2013 which can be accessed using the following link:
<http://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/2013-04-23%20MRS%20SRA%20-%20DP%20Guidelines%20Updated.pdf>

Guidance on large data sets can be found at the Information Commissioner’s Office website – Big Data and Data Protection July 2014.
http://ico.org.uk/news/latest_news/2014/~/_media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Practical_application/big-data-and-data-protection.pdf

You may also find JISC Legal Information on Data Protection and Research Data Questions and Answers, Aug 2014 helpful. <http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ManageContent/ViewDetail/ID/3648/Data-Protection-and-Research-Data-Questions-and-Answers-21-August-2014.aspx>

Note: Personal data which is anonymisedⁱ, permanently, is exempt from compliance with the DPA and registration process. See endnotes for further details.

Conditions which must be met for a research exemption to apply under section 33 of the DPA 1998	Please indicate	
1. The information is being used exclusively for research purposes?	Agree	
2. The information is not being used to support measures or decisions relating to any identifiable living individuals?	Agree	
3. The data ⁱⁱ is not being used in a way that will cause or is likely to cause, substantial damage or substantial distress to any individuals or very small groups? <i>If you ‘Disagree’ please provide details why an adverse effect is justified:</i>	Agree	
4. The results of the research, or any resulting statistics, will not be made available in a form that identify individuals? <i>If you ‘Disagree’ please provide details why identification is intended:</i>	Agree	

<p>If you 'Agree' to all of the above conditions then the use of personal data is exempt from the Second Principle and the Fifth Principle, but you must comply with First, Third, Fourth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Principles of the DPA. If a research exemption does not apply then you must ALSO comply with the Second and Fifth Principles of the DPA</p>			
<p>First Principle: Fairly and lawfully processed</p>			
<p>5. Will you have appropriate informed consentⁱⁱⁱ secured from participants for the personal data^{iv} that you will be analysing? i.e., inform participants of</p> <p>a) What you will do with the data?</p> <p>b) Who will hold the data? (Usually MU, unless a third party is involved)</p> <p>c) Who will have access to the data or receive copies of it?</p> <p>(e.g., for secondary data sets, are you sure that appropriate consent was secured from participants when the data was collected?) <i>If 'no' please provide details and any further actions to be taken:</i></p>	Yes		
<p>6. If you plan to analyse sensitive personal data^v, have you obtained data subjects'^{vi} explicit informed consent^{vii} (as opposed to implied consent^{viii})? <i>If 'no' please provide details:</i></p>	Yes		
<p>7. If you do not have the data subjects' explicit consent to process their data, are you satisfied that it is in the best interests of the data subject to collect and retain the sensitive data? <i>Please provide details: I will always have subjects' explicit consent</i></p>		N/A	
<p>8. If you are processing^{ix} personal data about younger individuals or those with reduced capacity, have you put a process in place to obtain consent from parents, guardians or legal representatives, if appropriate? <i>Please provide details:</i></p>		No	
<p>9. Will you have a process for managing withdrawal of consent? <i>If 'no' please provide details:</i></p>	Yes		
<p>10. Will it be necessary or desirable to work with external organisations e.g., charities, research organisations etc. acting as a third party i.e., directly providing a service for us or on our behalf that involves them accessing, collecting or otherwise processing personal data the third party will become a data processor under the DPA?</p> <p><i>If 'yes' then you will be using a third party as a data processor you must take advice from the Metanoia Institute Data Protection Officer about the planned contractual arrangements and security measures.</i></p>		No	
<p>11. If you hold or control personal data, will you register and/or inform the Metanoia Institute Data Protection Officer when:</p> <p>i) A new dataset has been established,</p> <p>ii) The purpose for which personal data stored in a dataset has changed,</p> <p>iii) A networked dataset of personal data is being used,</p> <p>iv) Extracting personal data from a networked dataset to create a new dataset.</p>	Yes		
<p>Second Principle: Processed for limited purposes</p>			
<p>Will personal data be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and not further processed in any manner incompatible with the purpose(s)? (Research data subjects should be informed of any new data processing purposes, the identity of the Data Controller^x and any disclosures that may be made.)</p> <p>Research Exemption Note (section 33(2)): Personal data can be processed for research purposes other than for which they were originally obtained if that processing does not</p>	Yes		

lead to decisions being made about an individual and is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual. That data may also be held indefinitely (Section 33(3)).			
Third Principle: Adequate, relevant and not excessive			
12. Will you only collect data that is necessary for the research? <i>If 'no' please provide details and any further actions to be taken:</i>	Yes		
Fourth Principle: Accurate and where necessary, kept up-to-date			
13. Will you take reasonable measures to ensure that the information is accurate, kept up-to-date and corrected if required? <i>If 'no' please provide details:</i>	Yes		
Fifth Principle: Not kept for longer than is necessary			
14. Will you check how long data legally must be kept and routinely destroy data that is past its retention date and archive data that needs to be kept? Research Exemption Note (section 33(3)): Personal data processed for research purposes can be kept indefinitely.	Yes		
Sixth Principle: Processed in accordance with individuals' rights under the DPA^{xi}			
15. If you are intending to publish information, which could identify individuals , have you made them aware of this when gaining their informed consent? <i>If 'no' please provide details: I will not publish information that could identify individuals</i>			N/A
16. Will you allow access to all personal data held about a data subject if an individual makes this request? Research Exemption Note (section 33(4)): Where the results of processing personal data for research purposes do not identify a data subject, that data subject does not have a right of access to that data.	Yes		
17. Will you ensure that all researchers who have access to personal data understand that it must not be provided to any unauthorised person or third party (e.g., family members etc.) unless consent has been given?	Yes		
Seventh Principle: Kept secure			
18. Will you ensure that personal data will be stored in locked cabinets, cupboards, drawers etc. (regardless of whether data is on paper, audio-visual recordings, CDs, USBs, etc.)?	Yes		
19. Will you ensure that if personal data is to be stored electronically it will only be kept on encrypted devices ?	Yes		
20. Will you ensure that individuals who have access to the personal data are aware that email is not a secure method of communication and should not be used for transferring the data ?	Yes		
21. Will you ensure that disposal of personal data will be via confidential waste services or in the case of electronic media and hardware should be destroyed in line with Metanoia Institute guidelines and procedures?	Yes		
Eighth Principle: Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection			
22. Will you ensure that personal data is not transferred outside the EEA unless one of the following applies?	Yes		

i.	The country you are transferring the data to has been approved as providing adequate protection			
ii.	You have obtained explicit informed consent from the individual(s)			
iii.	You have a contract in place with the recipient of the data, which states the appropriate data protection requirements.			
iv.	You have completely anonymised the data.			

Any concerns in relation to compliance with the DPA should be discussed with the Middlesex University Data Protection Officer.

ⁱ **Anonymous data** is prepared from personal information but from which, an individual cannot be identified by the person holding the data. **Anonymisation** is a **permanent** process. Personal data must be treated so that it cannot be processed in such a way as to link the data to a specific individual (e.g., using an identifier). Coded data is not anonymised and therefore not exempt from compliance or registration.

ⁱⁱ **Data** covers information that is held on computer, or to be held on computer to be processed. Data is also information recorded on paper if you intend to put it on computer.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Informed consent** means providing participants with a clear explanation of the research project in order for them to give informed consent regarding the use of their data. Individuals should be informed that their involvement is voluntary and that they have the right to refuse or withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Informed refers to the following information being provided to the data subject/participant:

- i) Who you are, the organisation you work for and who else is involved in the research project or using the data.
- ii) What data will be collected and how.
- iii) Who will hold the data, control access to the data and how it will be stored and kept safe and whether it will be transferred to a third party.
- iv) How the data will be used.
- v) How long it will be kept and what will happen to it at the end of the project.
- vi) Risks related to any aspects of the research project and data, benefits of the research project and any alternatives.

^{iv} **Personal data** (sometimes referred to as personal information) means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified from those data whether in personal or family life, business or profession, or from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller. The data is of biographical significance to the individual and impacts an individual in a personal, family, business or professional capacity. It includes any expression of opinion about the individual and/or statements of fact.

^v **Sensitive personal data** means personal data consisting of information about the **data subjects'**,

1. Racial or ethnic origin,
2. Political opinions,
3. Religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,
4. Trade union membership

-
5. Physical or mental health or condition,
 6. Sexual life,
 7. Criminal matters

Also personal financial details are vulnerable to identity fraud and should be handled confidentially and securely although not defined as sensitive under the Act.

^{vi} **Data subject** is a living individual to whom the personal data relates. If an individual has died or their details have been anonymised then their data does not fall within the Act. Personal data relating to deceased individuals may still be owed a duty of confidentiality.

^{vii} **Explicit informed consent** is where an individual actively opts to participate.

^{viii} **Implied consent** is where an individual must inform the researcher that they wish to opt out.

^{ix} **Processing** of personal information includes collecting, using, storing, destroying and disclosing information.

^x **Data controller** is the person who either alone or jointly on in common with other persons determines the purposes for which, and the manner in which, any personal data are or are to be, processed. The fact that an individual or institution holds or processes personal data does not make them a Data Controller if they do not determine the purpose and manner of that holding or processing. (This is probably one of the most widely misunderstood definitions of the Act.) In most cases the Data Controller will be Middlesex University, however further guidance and clarification can be sought from the Middlesex University Data Protection Officer.

^{xi} **Data subject rights** include rights to access, for accuracy, to prevent processing likely to cause damage or distress, to prevent direct marketing, to prevent automated decision making, to seek compensation and for no third-party access. Access means an individual can make a subject access request for all copies of all personal data held about them and ask to whom it has been disclosed. An individual potentially has access to personal comments written about them. It is an offence to deliberately edit or destroy data once a subject access request has been received. Third parties do not generally have access to subject data unless an exemption applies or there is overriding public interest. There may be limited third party access to ordinary personal data relating to a business or professional capacity in the public interest through the Freedom of Information Act.

Appendix M. Research Ethics Application Form



Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University
Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee

These guidelines exist for candidates and staff, and for any external body wishing to access Metanoia Institute for the purposes of research. Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee oversees the process of approving all research undertaken by staff and candidates prior to the commencement of the study. If ethical approval has been obtained from a recognised Research Ethics Committee, the letter of approval must be submitted to the Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the study with the application to Metanoia's research committee. You will need to complete the ethics form itself and also complete a risk assessment for the project work. Risk assessment materials are included at the end of this document. Please read these guidelines carefully, to ensure that you submit the correct documentation.

Approved proposals may be audited at random in order to verify that they comply with the ethical requirements/guidelines of Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee.

Please note that at Metanoia Institute we do not distinguish between categories of proposal since we require full documentation to be submitted for all proposed projects.

All applicants should read the British Psychological Society's *Code of Human Research Ethics* (2010) (available to download at www.bps.org.uk), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* (2016) (available to download at www.bacp.co.uk), and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy *Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Conduct* (2009). Applicants should also familiarise themselves with

the Data Protection Act (1998) - information and guidance on this is provided by the Information Commissioner's Office (available at: www.ico.gov.uk) - and also the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (2005) (available to download at: www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyandGuidance/ResearchandDevelopment).

Consistent with BPS, BACP and UKCP guidance, ethical conduct needs to be viewed as a process. Hence, ethical matters should be continually reviewed and addressed throughout the course of the project and in consultation with your research supervisor. If there are significant changes to your research design, you should consider the ethical implications of these changes and consider also, in consultation with your research supervisor, whether formal ethical approval needs to be obtained again.

Before completing this form, you should discuss the ethical implications of your research with your research supervisor.

Statutory data collected as part of a candidate's employment

Candidates do not need to seek approval for the collection of data obtained as part of their normal professional work roles and under statutory powers. However, should a candidate intend to use the data to address a research question outside their 'normal work role' ethical approval will be required. Permission for the access to and use of the data for research purposes should be provided by the employer with reference to the data protection act. In such cases, this committee does not approve the collection of data but only its use as part of the candidate's research project. In order to assist the committee in its deliberations candidates are advised to provide a paragraph outlining the capacity in which they are obtaining the data.

Studying abroad

When research is being carried out abroad, in addition to the requirements of the ethical procedure of the host country, candidates should seek written permission (concerning access), from the relevant bodies/departments to access the research participants/records/documentation. Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee will be responsible for the ethics scrutiny of the project and the candidate will be required to follow the normal procedures and guidelines for obtaining Metanoia's ethical permission.

Purpose of this form

This form is reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee in order to assess the ethical implications of your research project and your response to these implications. The research cannot proceed until ethical approval has been

obtained. Applicants may be asked to review and re-submit this form in the light of the Research Ethics Committee's decision regarding whether ethical issues have been adequately identified and addressed prior to starting the research work.

Once completed, this form should be submitted to your Academic Coordinator, accompanied by:

- Your finalised research proposal.
- Any research materials such as participant recruitment advertisements, letters/email communications to participants, information sheets and consent forms.
- Research materials such as interview schedules, topic guides, published questionnaires, or other research protocol materials.
- Letter of consent from any organisation where researcher is conducting either interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations etc.
- Evidence of permission to access data, or provide justification where permission is not required.
- A letter of approval from a recognised Research Ethics Committee if ethical approval for the study to take place has been required from another organisation (e.g., NHS, MoD, etc.).

DETAILS OF APPLICANT AND RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

1.1. Applicant's name: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor

1.2. Email address: margarita.fuenmayor@metanoia.ac.uk

1.3. Telephone number: 07803280892

1.4. Research supervisor(s) name, qualifications, and contact details:
Dr.Alistair McBeath, Chartered Psychologist and Psychotherapist,
Alistair.McBeath@metanoia.ac.uk

1.5 Institution/contact details (if applicable): Metanoia Institute

1.6 Do you have any external funding for this project? No

1.7. Project title: The Forgotten Parent: exploration of the lived experience and psychological challenges of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note: The items below cover all of those in the A/B categories of Middlesex University

	YES	NO	N/A
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1. Will you describe the research procedures in advance to participants so that they are informed about what to expect? Please attach a copy of any recruitment letters and information sheet to be used.	X		
2. Is the project based on voluntary participation?	X		
3. Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X		
4. If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?			X
5. Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason and inform them of how they may withdraw?	X		
6. Will you ensure that participants are not subtly induced, either to participate initially, or to remain in the project?	X		
7. Will you give participants the option of omitting questions from interviews or questionnaires that they do not want to answer?	X		
8. Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X		
9. Have you made provision for the safe-keeping of written data or video/audio recordings?	X		
10. Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation?	X		
11. Have you ensured that your research is culture/belief/ social system sensitive and that every precaution has been taken to ensure the dignity, respect and safety of the participants?	X		

If you have answered 'NO' to any of the questions listed in 1 to 12 above, then please provide further details on a separate page and attach it to this application.

	YES	NO	N/A
12. Is there a realistic risk of any participant experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If YES, what will you tell them to do if they should experience any problems (e.g., who they can contact for help.) <i>In the case of psychological distress during the interview the protocol designed for Draucker et al. (2009), for managing distress in the context of an interview will be followed.</i>	X		

<p><i>In case the participant is showing distress during the interview, this will be stopped and immediate support will be offered, mental status will be assessed to decide if the participant feels able to carry on.</i></p> <p><i>If the participant is unable to carry on or he is feels distressed as a result of participating in the research on a time frame of 4 weeks after the interview, he will be referred to a trusted therapist, or if the participant prefers he can contact his own GP or mental health provider.</i></p>			
13. Is there an existing relationship between the researcher and any of the research participants? If YES, please describe the ethical implications and the safeguards in place to minimise risks.		X	
14. Your research does not involve offering inducement to participate (e.g., payment or other reward)? If YES, please describe the ethical implications and the safeguards in place to minimise risks.		X	
15. Will the project involve working with children under 16 years of age? If YES, please describe parental consent and safeguarding procedures.		X	
16. Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way? If YES, please explain why this is necessary.		X	
17. Will you need to obtain ethical approval from any other organisation or source? If YES, please attach letter confirming their ethical approval.		X	
18. Are there any other ethical considerations in relation to your project that you wish to bring to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee that are not covered by the above? If YES, please describe on a separate sheet.		X	

If you have answered ‘YES’ to any of the questions listed under 13 to 18 above, then please provide further details on a separate page and attach it to this application.

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

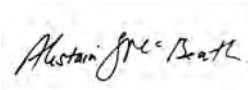
I have read the BACP and the BPS guidelines for ethical practices in research and have discussed this project with my research supervisor in the context of these guidelines. I confirm that I have also undertaken a risk assessment with my research supervisor:

Signed:..... 

Print name...Margarita Chacin.....Date.....21/02/2020....
(Applicant)

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR DECLARATION

- As supervisor or principal investigator for this research study I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that researchers/candidates under my supervision undertake a risk assessment to ensure that health and safety of themselves, participants and others is not jeopardised during the course of this study.
- I confirm that I have seen and signed a risk assessment for this research study and to the best of my knowledge appropriate action has been taken to minimise any identified risks or hazards.
- I understand that, where applicable, it is my responsibility to ensure that the study is conducted in a manner that is consistent with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (see <http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm>).
- I confirm that I have reviewed all of the information submitted as part of this research ethics application.
- I agree to participate in committee's auditing procedures for research Studies if requested.

Signed:... 

Print name Dr Alistair McBeath..... Date...21/02/2020.
(Supervisor)

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This project has been considered by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee and is now approved.

Signed:.....

Print name..... Date.....
(On behalf of the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee)

Appendix N. Interview. “Talking about the contemporary father”.

 **Horley Psychology**
21 de junio de 2020 · 🌐

<https://youtu.be/8Jnml80bE2U>



YOUTUBE.COM
Salud es Vida / Psic. Margarita Chacín / El Rol del Papà Actualmente
El Rol del Papà Actualmente

Appendix O. Male Psychology Section Conference



Dear Margarita,

Regarding your recent submission to the Male Psychology Section 2021 Virtual Conference being held on Friday 22nd October 2021.

Following further review, the committee would like to offer you the opportunity to present your work as a **poster presentation**. Please find attached the **Poster Guidelines** which will provide you with further details on formatting and presenting a poster.

Please confirm that you would like your submission including in the conference programme as a poster by emailing mps@kc-jones.co.uk by Friday 8th October 2021.

The **Conference Programme** has been published, please [click here](#) to see the timings for the day.

If you have not yet registered to attend the conference you can do so through the [event website](#). All speakers are expected to register and pay at the relevant delegate rate. Without a registration you will not be able access to the online portal to present your research.

Presenter Run Through

We are holding a Presenter Run Through on **Friday 15 October 2021 at 10:30am** which will last approximately 30-45 minutes. We strongly suggest at least one presenter from each poster attends so you feel confident presenting on the day. The link to join this will be sent nearer the time.

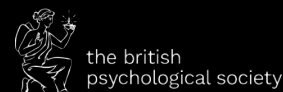
If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us by calling 01332 224509 or emailing mps@kc-jones.co.uk.

Thank you again for your submission. We look forward to seeing you virtually in October.

Kind Regards,

Tom Holmes
On behalf of the BPS Male Psychology Section

Male Psychology Section 2021 Poster Presentation Guidelines



Congratulations on your abstract being accepted as a poster presentation at the Male Psychology Section Virtual Conference 2021 on Friday 22nd October 2021. Please take the time to look at the poster presentation guidance below.

Firstly, don't forget to register for the event! All presenters are expected to register and pay at the relevant delegate rate, please register no later than **10.00am on Friday 27th August 2021** to ensure you are included in the event, you can register here, <https://www.delegate-reg.co.uk/malepsychology2021/regform>. Without a registration you will not be able access to the conference portal.

Your Presentation

Posters will be displayed as static content for the duration of the event for delegates to download and read at their leisure. There will also be a Poster Q&A session during the Conference for poster presenters to answer questions about their research at 3.45 - 3.55pm.

Delegates are able contact you one-to-one via the Meeting Hub which will be available throughout the conference to ask any questions they may have about your research.

Quick tip: Please make sure you save your presentation and poster with **your name** as the title.

Creating your content

When creating your poster and presentation, please be mindful to take steps that will ensure your content is accessible to all, these include but not limited to;

- Keeping bullet points to a minimum and concise
- Use a legible font and size. Please avoid using Serif fonts, where possible
- Avoid colour combinations that others may struggle to distinguish between, e.g. red and green, green and brown, green and blue etc.
- Landscape formats display best on a virtual platform
- There are various software programs available to create your poster, e.g. MS Publisher, MS PowerPoint
- Be mindful that your organisation/institution may have their own brand guidelines you need to follow. Please consult with your colleagues for further details

Sending your poster

Please send a PDF version of your poster to meps@kc-jones.co.uk by **Friday 8th October 2021**. We will also be making all posters available for delegates to download after the event has taken place. If you do not want your poster to be shared, please let us know when sending your presentation.

The online platform


The event will be taking place on a platform called OnAIR. More information on how to access the portal will be shared with you nearer to the event.

Presenter run through

We will be providing a presenter demonstration at **10.30am on Friday 15th October** to allow you to familiarise yourself with the platform ahead of your session and ease any concerns you may have. Details on joining this session will be sent nearer the time.

We look forward to welcoming you in October and hearing more about your research!

Appendix P. Well doing website. Article Let's Not Forget About Fathers



Let's Not Forget About Fathers

Therapists • Aug 05, 2020 • Margarita Chacin • fatherhood , men , parenting , society

Share Tweet Pin Email Share

- Just attention is given to the importance of mothers' mental health – is enough given to new fathers?
- **Psychologist Margarita Chacin**, who is conducting research in this area, sees many clients who are struggling with their new role as fathers
- If you are a new parent and are finding things difficult, we have therapists and counsellors who specialise in supporting people like you – find yours [here](#)

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- Our therapists say
- Meet the therapist
- Body 223
- Coaches 36
- Mind 514
- Relationships 155
- Soul 361
- Work 79

Recent posts

-  What Josh Cavallo's Coming Out Means to Me and the LGBTQ+ Community
Posted on Nov 02, 2021
-  6 Habits to Thrive in Life and Work
Posted on Nov 01, 2021

Appendix Q. Division of Clinical Psychology DCP. Annual Conference 2021.



Dear Margarita,

Thank you for your submission to the DCP Annual Conference 2021: Doing What Matters: Value-Driven Clinical Psychology in Action being held virtually on 2 - 3 March 2021.

I am pleased to inform you that your submission, as detailed below, has been accepted as an oral presentation.

Presenters are allocated 15 minutes to include Q&A and transition between speakers (please plan for 12 minute presentation, 2 minutes Q&A and 1 minute transition time). To help you plan your presentation, please find presentation guidelines attached.

The Conference programme is currently being finalised and your presenting slot will be confirmed next week.

In the meantime, please ensure that you have registered to attend the conference via the online portal www.delegate-reg.co.uk/dcp2021/registration. All speakers are expected to register and pay the appropriate fee based on BPS membership status.

This e-mail has been sent to you as the contact person for this submission. Please inform your co-authors or other colleagues that will be responsible for delivering this presentation.

Please note, if you are no longer able to attend the conference, please let us know by 09.00 Tuesday 16th February 2021.

If you have any problems please let me know by calling 01332 224507 or emailing bps@kc-jones.co.uk.

Thank you again for your submission. We look forward to seeing you virtually next month.

Kind regards,

Lottie Larner-Reynolds
Sent on behalf of DCP Committee

Title	Let's talk about Dads: they matter too. Exploration of the lived experience of full-time working fathers during the COVID-19 pandemic
Paper Number	21
Paper Status	Submitted
Presentation Type	Short Oral
Presenting Author	M.S Teladoc Health UK Ireland

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the british
psychological society
promoting excellence in psychology

DIVISION CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

2 - 3 MARCH 2021, VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Please note, all speakers, timings and content are subject to change.

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

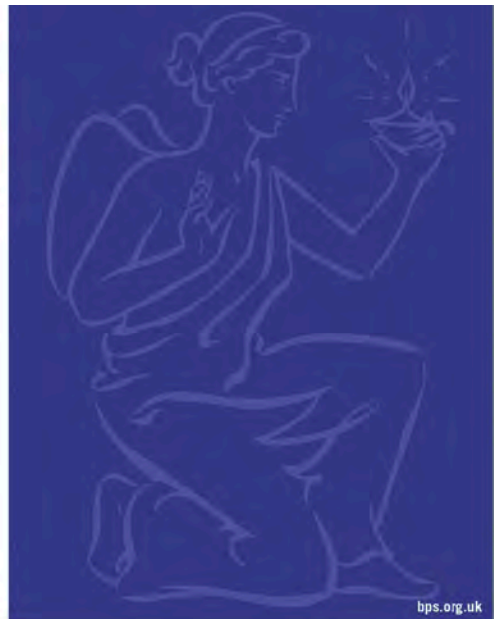
	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2	Parallel Session 3
9:45 AM - 10:45 AM	Opening of DCP & Welcome followed by Human Rights – Being aware, present and committed to valued action Dr Derek Indoe		
10:45 AM - 11:00 AM	Stretch and Screen Break 1		
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Day 1 - Parallel Session 1 Presentation 1: The Effects of Pets on University Student Mental Health and Stress during COVID-19 Jillian Bradfield Presentation 2: Let's talk about Dads: they matter too. Exploration of the lived experience of full-time working fathers during the COVID-19 pandemic Margarita Chacin Presentation 3: How to Deliver Collaborative Online Therapy to Individuals and Groups Clemency Jacques Presentation 4: What skills do Clinical Psychologists need to work digitally? National Digital Competence Framework for Psychological Practitioners Helen Pote	Day 1 - Parallel Session 2 Presentation 1: What are my values? Preliminary results from a pre-registered randomised controlled study investigating the usefulness of value clarification exercises Shane McLoughlin Presentation 2: A systematic review and narrative synthesis of burnout in UK mental healthcare staff Brownen Kite Presentation 3: Life in the Labyrinth: A podcast bringing together experiences of DClIn Psy training, parenting and family life Candice Williams Presentation 4: Clinical psychology training and the climate crisis: lessons from sustainable healthcare education Alice Walker	Day 1 - Parallel Session 3 Presentation 1: Inside out? Towards a position of safe uncertainty when considering the therapy environment Sam Cooley Presentation 2: Reducing Restrictive Practice - The Role and Contribution of Clinical Psychology Andrew Hider Presentation 3: Racism in Mental Health Research: An Example of Turkish-Speaking Diaspora's Experiences and Understandings of Common Mental Health Difficulties Ayse Akan Presentation 4: "Being the Elephant in the Room": Reflections on Race, Identity and Whiteness in Clinical Psychology Afua Appiah

Appendix R. Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting fathers' psychological needs.



**Fatherhood:
Understanding and
supporting fathers'
psychological needs**

Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor
Chartered Registered Psychologist



Appendix S. Middlesex student conference. “Research in a changing world” Award as an Outstanding Oral Presentations



Papers G1 – G4
 10:10 – 11:30
 Chair: Dr Nico Pizzolato
 Judge: Dr Johan Siebers

<p>Paper G1 10:10 – 10:30 Department: Sports Science Author/s: Angela Sorensen Title: Intra- and inter-day reliability of weightlifting variables and correlation to performance during cleans</p>	<p>Paper G2 10:30 – 10:50 Department: Education Author/s: Sindu Prasad Title: Graduate Employability Skills: A Multiple Stakeholder Investigation in the UAE (This presentation has been withdrawn)</p>
<p>Paper G3 10:50 – 11:10 Department: Metanoia Institute Author/s: Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor Title: The Forgotten Parent: exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born</p>	<p>Paper G4 11:10 – 11:30 Department: Art and Design Author/s: Neda Mohamadi Title: People On The Move Representation In Art Documentaries</p>



Certificate of Attendance

The Research Students' Summer Conference 2021
23rd June 2021
on behalf of Middlesex University, London

We are pleased to confirm that Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor registered and attended the virtual Research Students' Summer Conference which was held on behalf of Middlesex University, London. Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor presented the paper, entitled "The Forgotten Parent: exploration of the lived experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born".

Thank you

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink, one on the left and one on the right, representing the organizers.

Dr Anna Charalambidou, Dr Sandra Appiah
Research Degree Student Conference Chairs
(On behalf of the Organizing Committee)
Middlesex University, London





**Outstanding Oral Presentation
of the RSSC 2021 Conference**

is awarded to

Margarita Chacin Fuenmayor

for the presentation entitled:

**“The Forgotten Parent: exploration of the lived experience
of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born”
at the 2021 Middlesex Research Degree Student
Conference, 23rd June 2021**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anna Charalambidou" and "Sandra Appiah".

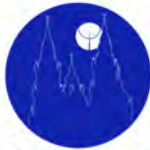
Dr Anna Charalambidou, Dr Sandra Appiah

2021 Research Degree Student Conference Chairs


(On behalf of the Organising Committee)

Middlesex University, London

Appendix T. XIX International and XIV National Congress of Clinical psychology. Spain. Modality virtual. Applied Session. Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting fathers' psychological needs. Book Chapter.



**14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**
November 10-13, 2021



**Fatherhood: Understanding and supporting
fathers' psychological needs (Applied Session)**

Author: Chacin Fuenmayor MDV.
Chartered Registered Psychologist

*Metanoia Institute, Middlesex University London.
Horley Psychology and [ShineEQ](#).
United Kingdom*



**14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**
**XIV CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL
DE PSICOLOGÍA CLÍNICA**



10-13 de noviembre, 2021

November 10-13, 2021



CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE
MARGARITA CHACIN

You have attended the "14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY"
held on November 10-13, 2021, with a duration of 30 hours.



November 13, 2021



Validation code



14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

XIV CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL
DE PSICOLOGÍA CLÍNICA

10-13 de noviembre, 2021



November 10-13, 2021

The Scientific Committee of the **14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY** certifies that Mr./Mrs. **MARGARITA CHACIN** has presented the applied session **“FATHERHOOD: UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING FATHERS’ PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS”**, at this congress.

We hereby certify that this certificate was issued on November 13, 2021.



Validation code

The Forgotten Parent: experience of fathers during the early childhood of their first-born

Authors: Chacin Fuenmayor M.

Affiliation: *Metanoia Institute, **Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's society fathers have a different and more active role than their own fathers. While there has been a great deal of research on the mother's emotions, the consequences of fatherhood have received less attention in the literature. Fathers are more involved in active childcare than they were some decades ago (Parker & Wang 2013). As father involvement increases, questions about the consequences for a father's mental health and wellbeing is gaining importance.

Society has become more receptive to the increased presence of both parents. Men who start a family today are expected to create their own role as a father and to find a balance between their job, childcare, housework, and hobbies, on an equal footing with women (Solberg & Glavin 2018). Predictors of fulfilling fatherhood, especially in different fatherhood contexts, are still relatively unknown. Nevertheless, the active involvement of the father in childrearing is nowadays taken for granted in many societies (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006).

Several studies have researched the psychological impact on fathers following a child being diagnosed with a chronic condition or when an unexpected event has happened. There seems to be a paucity of studies when children and parents are physically and mentally healthy. Considering the psychological consequences of sometimes rapid change occurring in the lives of parents and particularly fathers, this study may act as a pilot as it will explain and validate the lived experiences of fathers.

I have worked with clients struggling with the fatherhood role and note a substantial rise in this respect. They are demonstrating high levels of anxiety regarding the mentally and physical demands concerning the wellbeing of their children. In addition to this reasoning, I also noticed there is a lack of information and acknowledgement of how the demands of fathers have changed over the last decades and how they seem to be struggling, holding guilt or not feeling understood. It seems reasonable to assume that specialists in the psychotherapy world, who work with fathers would benefit from the literature that validates and explains psychological challenges they go through.

There seems to be a lack of studies of fathers in general and especially during the early childhood of their offspring. The aim of this research is to grow in knowledge and awareness in order to offer a supportive psychotherapeutic tool to fathers.

In this line of ideas my research will attempt to answer the question:

What do fathers think about their experience and psychological challenges of being a first-time father of a child during early childhood?

II. METHOD

This research was carried out with a small, purposive, and homogenous sample, in accordance with the principles of IPA (McLeod, 2003). This study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to focus on the quality of each participant's experience of fatherhood

The recruitment was made via social media, contact via peers in different areas of the county. However, most of the participants were recruited via word-of-mouth techniques and snowball sampling, which is one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research. Seven participants were recruited for the study.

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Relationship Status
FATHERP1	Mateo	34	Bachelor	Auditor	Married
FATHERP2	Edward	33	Bachelor	Teacher	Married
FATHERP3	Bill	34	Bachelor	Manager	Married
FATHERP4	Andres	41	Masters	Teacher	Married
FATHERP5	Anthony	33	Bachelor	Engineer	Married
FATHERP6	Fred	32	Bachelor	Contract Manager	Living partner
FATHERP7	Jacob	32	Masters	Financial advisor	Married

Table 1: Participant Information

Participant	Ethnicity	Religiosity	Location	Child gender	Child age
FATHERP1	Spanish	Catholic	Horley	Female	1 year old
FATHERP2	White British	None	Newcastle	Male	2 years old
FATHERP3	White British	Agnostic	Kent	Male	2 years old
FATHERP4	Venezuelan	Catholic	Purley	Female	3 years old

FATHERP5	White British	Church of England	Horsham	Female	4 years old
FATHERP6	White British	None	Horley	Female	2 years old
FATHERP7	British/Asian	Catholic	London	Male	4 years old

Table 2: Participant Information (continue)

The data was gathered through a semi-structured interview. Each interview lasted between 45-70 minutes. This allowed a deep exploration of the participant's experience. Six interviews were conducted online using a platform called Zoom, this ensured diversity of location and culture and allowed the interviews to be digitally recorded. Moreover, only one was face-to-face at Horley Psychology; this is the private practice location of the researcher.

In this study, the data was analysed with the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). To enable themes to emerge that best reflect the participants' experience, each transcript was analysed separately, and I followed the Smith et al. (2009) six-stage approach. The analysis was done in a hybrid way, combining manual analysis with the Nvivo (version 12) software, after finishing this process four themes and 20 subthemes emerged.

III. RESULTS

The results of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the interviews with the seven fathers are presented in the below table.

Table 3: Results of Master themes and Sub-Themes

Master themes	Sub-themes
Development of contemporary fatherhood	Father as a natural way of being
	Expectation Vs Reality
	Traditional fatherhood
	Equality in parenting and involvement as a modern father
Fatherhood Challenges	Coping with tiredness
	Undesirable Feelings. "Fear, worry and uncertainty"
	Struggling in fatherhood

	Lack of acknowledgment
	Guilt when physically absent
Meaning in life	Identity as a father
	Fatherhood happiness
	Child as a priority
	Relationship Changes
Father in action	Father as a teaching role
	Parental responsibility
	Role of the father in the discipline
	Father as an emotional support
	Active role of a dad through physical contact

IV. DISCUSSION

Development of contemporary fatherhood

This research has served as a way to explain how contemporary fathers have developed. Four subthemes captured the father's experience through this evolution; participants described how becoming a father was a natural way of being, seeing their desire to procreate as a way of developing as a human being. Besides, fathers were confronted with the differences between reality and their expectations. Lastly, fathers described their experience on traditional fatherhood, including the perception of their own fathers, followed by compulsory equality in parenting and willingness to be involved as a modern father.

This research demonstrates that fathers experience their transition to fatherhood as a natural evolution of their manhood, seeing their desire to procreate as a way of developing as a human being. This view is reflected in contemporary approaches to fatherhood, and the range of 'fatherhood discourses' outlined by Lupton and Barclay (1997) more than 20 years ago remain relevant to exploring the experience of fatherhood today, seeing fatherhood as a logical step and as 'natural part of adult masculinity.

Fatherhood challenges

During this research, it was evident how fathers experienced challenges related to their role. It was evident how fathers cope with tiredness, followed by undesirable feelings, including fear, worry and uncertainty. After this, it was noticeable that fathers lacked acknowledgement and the shame that goes with it. Finally, all participants experienced guilt when they were not physically present for their children. These findings can

correlate with Petrassi (2012), who described that it has been visible that the increasingly female workforce has created more demands on fathers.

Additionally, many pieces of research have described how fatherhood demands can cause mental health disorders. A recent systematic review reported that the prevalence rates for any anxiety disorder in men ranged between 4.1 and 16.0% during their partners' pregnancy and between 2.4 and 18.0% during the postnatal period (Leach et al., 2016).

Meaning in life

In this research, it was apparent how the experience of men to become fathers had developed their meaning in life around their family. This was seen in how their men's identity evolved during their fatherhood, followed by the child's happiness brought to their lives. Additionally, it seemed that the child became their priority, and as part of this, there were challenges in their relationships than when well managed gave meaning to their lives.

The experience of fatherhood developed a new identity in man's life. Most participants explained how their lives change after becoming parents and how they had to adapt their daily routine to fulfil the family's necessities. As much as this research focuses directly on the father, specific changes in the parent's relationship are predictable, as influenced by a new family member. The time and attention required by a child had affected the communication and negatively impacted the relationship, leading to a lack of emotional and physical openness between the parents. These results reinforced how new parents will face many personal, parental, marital, and family challenges. A growing body of evidence suggests that fathers' challenges during this transition can result in anxiety, distress, and an increased risk of depression (Kumar et al., 2018).

Fathers in action

In this study, it was seen that men experienced their fatherhood as an active role; firstly, they seemed to have based their role on teaching and developing their children. Secondly, participants described a sense of responsibility for the children even when they are not physically present. Thirdly, it seemed evident that most felt that they had a more active role in their children's discipline than their partners. Fourthly, another subtheme was how fathers were willing as emotional support to their children. Fifthly, it was how fathers described how significant it was for them to be actively involved in their children's lives through physical contact. These findings correlate with the literature during the last 40 years that demonstrates that perceptions of fatherhood (in Westernised societies) and contemporary ideals of fathering practice have shifted in response to the social, economic and demographic factors outlined above and in response to changing ideas about gender roles and masculinity. Maternal employment is a significant influence of paternal involvement, which has increased considerably over the last half-century (Pleck, 2010).

Father described that a way of providing emotional support to their children was by protecting them and being available when they needed it. Besides, the sense of being

available to their children could at times be beyond their own needs as a father. This finding is consistent with Strier (2014), he described how in many Western societies, therefore, there is increasingly a contemporary notion of a father who is both sensitive to and actively involved in the nurturing of his children within a relationship (with his children's mother) founded on expectations of equal co-parenting and in acknowledgement of the cultural context in which his paternal role is accomplished.

V. REFERENCES

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