

GENERATIVE FATHERING AND MARRIED ADULT CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF
CONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN THEIR FATHERS AND THEMSELVES

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ABSTRACT

Peterson, Bethany Ann, Department of Human Development and Family Science, College of Human Development and Education, North Dakota State University, November 2011. Generative Fathering and Adult Children's Views of Connectedness Between Their Fathers and Themselves. Major Professor: Dr. Sean Brotherson.

This study utilized a phenomenological approach to examine adult children's views of how their fathers connected with them as children. Participants consisted of 10 men and 12 women between the ages of 30 and 60 who were interviewed about connection experiences with their fathers. Participants completed interviews related to their perspectives on being fathered, experiences as a son or daughter, and what they experienced in connecting with their fathers. Findings indicated that fathers connect with children through a variety of contexts that include memorable occasions, activities, personal interactions, routines, events, and other means. Also, obstacles to connection between fathers and children were explored. Study findings and their implications for theory, research, and practical application are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Fathering has been the subject of much debate in recent years regarding what a father does with his children and the impact on their lives. In the last two decades, the ways researchers study fathering have been changing and expanding. A recent article on fathering scholarship observed, “Scholars have realized that fathering must be understood in its own context and not simply as an adjunct to maternal caregiving” (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005, p. 2). In research available on parenting fathers are under-represented compared to mothers. The research on fathering is still developing relative to the topic of involvement with children and the meaning that such involvement has for children’s lives. Fathering takes place in a variety of contexts and so it is useful to look at it apart from mothering and from different theoretical frameworks.

Researchers have studied the many different roles that fathers perform in family life and the evolution of such roles over time (LaRossa, 1996; Parke, 1996). Roles such as moral teacher or guide, breadwinner, sex-role model, nurturer, companion, care provider, protector, disciplinarian, playmate and co-parent are part of being a father (Lamb, 1997; Pleck 1997). Much of the research that is being done on fathers looks at the way fathers are involved in these roles through fathers’ perceptions of themselves, fathers’ engagement with children, the accessibility of the father to the child, and the responsibility that the father has for the child (Lamb, 2000). Past research on fathering has focused particularly on levels of father involvement with children (Pleck, 1997). However, research has often been much less specific on particular activities and interactions between fathers and children.

One perspective that is useful for examining interactions of fathers and children is the generative fathering framework (Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1997).

Parent-child connectedness is one subject that has received attention in scholarship on parents and children (Barber, 1997). Research suggests that the quality of connectedness between parents and children is a powerful influence, both providing emotional security to children and acting as a protective factor in their lives (Resnick et al., 1997). Some recent research on fathering has examined this topic of connectedness and illustrated that it is a strong predictor of adolescent child well-being (Brotherson, Yamamoto, & Acock, 2003). Further, evidence suggests that connections between fathers and children develop through shared activities, care during times of stress, and other positive interactions (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005). Thus, a sense of connection develops through involvement. The number or quality of connection episodes that illustrate parent-child interactions can show an ongoing pattern of involvement. Some researchers have looked at activities shared during times of involvement by gender to see similarities and differences in how fathers connect with their children (Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Since the bonds of connection in a father-child relationship are a significant influence, it would be valuable to gather the perspectives of adult children on key shaping experiences with their fathers that were important to them. Using adult children as opposed to children between the ages of 10-25 allows for a retrospective look at how a child sees their experience of being fathered and shares a description of his or her experiences. The generative fathering framework provides a meaningful theoretical context to conduct research with adult children and study their narratives of connection in being fathered as children.

Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms are defined to provide a context for understanding the topic being examined.

- Generativity - Any caring activity by adults in caring for and contributing to the well-being of the next generation (Erikson, 1950, 1982).
- Generative Fathering – Fathering efforts that meet the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing moral and responsible relationship with them (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997).
- Connectedness – A father’s efforts to create and maintain an interpersonal connection with his child by active participation in the child’s life (Brotherson, Yamamoto, & Acock, 2003).
- Adult Child – An adult over 30 years of age who has had the experience of being parented by a father through at least age 18.

It should be noted that although a definition of connectedness based on prior theory and research is offered here, an important element of this study was to construct a definition of this concept based on the responses articulated by study participants (adult children).

Statement of Problem

This research project proposed to study the connection points between fathers and their children from the perspective of adult children. A phenomenological qualitative approach was utilized to allow an examination of what adult men and women report their fathers actually did with them as children while they were growing up as well as what they did not do. Much of the existing research on father-child relationships measures dimensions of fatherhood but does not look specifically at the activities and interactions

fathers are reported to be actually doing with their children to connect with them or cause obstacles in connection. This study was designed to gather information from the perspectives of adult children about connectedness in father-child relationships in order to develop greater understanding of the dynamics of father-child connection. The information gathered allows the mapping of how and why father involvement occurs with a child. Using adult children in this study was important due to this project being part of a larger study focused on the connectedness with fathers across generations and the intergenerational patterns of connection with fathers.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study were designed to provide insight into how adult children define being connected with their fathers and their experiences with their fathers as children. Key research questions include:

1. How do adult children define connection or connectedness with their father (or father figure)? What is the meaning of a connection point to them?
2. What are the connection points that adult children remember having with their fathers? What was the meaning of those experiences for them?
3. What are the similarities or differences between adult sons and daughters in their ideas of connecting with their fathers? What are the similarities or differences between adult sons and daughters in the connection experiences that they describe?

Delimitations of the Study

The sample for this study was limited to adult children from two-parent families in which both the mother and father were present (until the adult child was at least 18 years of

age). The purpose of this guideline was to provide a similar context of family experience among participants from which to understand the topic in this exploratory study. The adult child was required to have at least one child of his or her own beyond the age of three and also be currently married to the mother or father of that child. Having a child of sufficient age that they can reflect on and make comparisons to parenting experience was important to the study. Further, being married to the other parent of that child provided a context in which to evaluate his or her own parenting with another individual. Finally, the study included adult children between the ages of 30 and 60. This age range allowed recruitment of adults who are more likely to have growing children of their own who can also reflect on their experience of being fathered with a sense of perspective.

The research questions in the study take a deeper look at what adult children remember their fathers doing to connect with them as a child. For example, looking at whether men and women describe similar connection points with their fathers may show how common those connection patterns are in father-child relationships. Questions focused on experiences of being fathered prior to the age of 25 rather than experiences as an adult child. Both men and women were recruited for the study and included a minimum of 10 men and 10 women to allow for a range of experiences and a sufficient number of participants to fulfill the objectives of the study and furnish a solid base of information.

Purpose of the Study

Research on father-child relationships has focused much attention on the importance of father-child interactions and yet little has been reported on what fathers are actually doing to interact and connect with their children (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005; Pleck, 1997). The purpose of this study was to address the topic of

connection between fathers and children through the perspective of adult children and their experiences of being fathered. Personal narratives provide a meaningful opportunity for adult children to share how they were fathered and also how those experiences have shaped their views of connection (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1996). Dienhart and Dollahite (1997) pointed out, “Asking a father to relate a personal life story about remembered experiences of being fathered (or not fathered) may open a clinical conversation about what expectations he brings to his own fatherwork” (p. 192). Studying the experiences of adult children and their perspectives on connecting with their fathers will aid in understanding the impact that a father’s relationship can have on a child’s life. Further, this study can provide a window into the experiences of connection between fathers and children through the eyes of adult children and their views on how such experiences have impacted them as individuals and parents. The current research on generative fathering is still limited due to its recent introduction to the field. Also, very little research has been done examining the construct of connectedness between fathers and children from the perspective of adult children. This research project examined how adult men and women define connection as well as how they interpret the way their fathers connected with them during childhood and young adulthood. The study contributes understanding of how adult children describe key interactions and experiences with fathers that promote parent-child connection as well as obstacles to connection. It also provides insight on how men and women experienced father-child connection in ways that are both similar and different. Finally, the information from this study can provide professionals working with parents in clinical and educational settings with greater knowledge of meaningful ways to facilitate positive connections with children.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review first provides a limited overview of historical perspectives and early research on fathering, and then frames the perspective of generative fathering as it relates to building parent-child relationships. It next examines existing research on father involvement and then addresses the specific topic of connectedness between fathers and children. The final two sections of this chapter briefly review the literature on father-daughter versus father-son relationships and then discuss the research that has been conducted on adult children's perspectives of being fathered.

Overview of Historical Perspectives and Early Research on Fathering

Key researchers and theorists on fathering from a historical perspective have separated how fathering has been viewed socially and historically in the United States into several different patterns (Lamb, 1997, 2000; LaRossa, 1996; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Historically, fathers have been viewed in at least four different family roles and societal images: moral teacher or guide, breadwinner, sex-role model, and new nurturant father (LaRossa, 1997; Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

The image of father as a moral teacher and guide arose and was prominent from Puritan times to the early period of the American republic. During this era fathers were considered to be "responsible for ensuring that their children grew up with an appropriate sense of values, acquired primarily from the study of religious materials like the Bible" (Lamb, 2000, p. 26). Also, during this time it was expected that fathers teach their children how to read so they could study scripture.

A second major societal shift in how fathers were viewed took place during the period of industrialization, and during this period fathers came to be primarily referred to as the “breadwinner” for the family unit (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Breadwinning was important in the first time period, but during America’s shift to industrialization it became “the most important and defining characteristic of fatherhood - *the* criterion by which ‘good fathers’ were appraised” (Lamb, 2000, p. 27). Thus, the breadwinner model became a more important factor in defining what it meant to be a “good father.”

The third common public image of fatherhood largely began with the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Second World War. In this stage, society began to look at fathers primarily as the sex-role model for children and families. During this time period, Lamb (2000) notes, “[m]any books and articles in the professional and popular literature focused on the need for strong sex-role models, with many professionals concluding that fathers were clearly not doing a good job in this regard” (p. 27). Research on family life utilized correlational studies to study the father as a sex-role model, with much dialogue in professional and public circles about men and masculinity and the need for children to have strong, male sex-role models (Griswold, 1997). Typically, research focused on the development of sex roles in youth focused more on sons than daughters (Lamb, 1997). Such research suggested it was not a father’s masculinity but the closeness of the father-son relationship that more influenced whether boys conformed to the sex-role standards of the culture (Lamb, 1997).

A fourth view and image of fatherhood began in the mid-1970s with an emphasis on the new nurturant father. In this context, fathers were now being more commonly portrayed by researchers and commentators as parents that could and should be “actively

involved in the day-to-day care of their children” (Lamb, 2000, p. 27). This fourth period set the stage for researchers to begin looking more carefully in the direction of fathers’ involvement with their children.

Initially, the way that social researchers measured involvement was by looking at the amount of time a father was involved with a child (Pleck, 1997). In general, direct interaction with a child was considered involvement and other areas were secondary (Pleck, 1997). This conceptualization of involvement expanded when Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985) grouped paternal involvement into three different categories: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Engagement refers to the time that is spent in direct interaction with the child, such as playing or talking. Accessibility refers to the child’s ability to access the parent when not being in direct interaction with the child. Responsibility refers to the parent’s awareness of the child’s needs, welfare, and care. This conceptualization of paternal involvement into three related dimensions prompted researchers to look at fathering in new and different ways (Pleck, 1997). More specific aspects of research and theory on father involvement are addressed later in this chapter.

This tripartite model of father involvement was an important formulation in theorizing about fathers in family life and shaped much of the early research and thinking on fathering. Additional theoretical perspectives related to fathering have emerged in the last two decades. Some of the other concepts and theories in the social sciences about fathering and involvement have come from researchers such as Parke (1996), Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998), and Marsiglio, Amato, Day, and Lamb (2000). Although not exhaustive, these influential perspectives are briefly reviewed here to provide further

context on thinking about fathers in family life and the progression of theory and scholarship on fathering.

Parke's (1996) model takes a systems view on how a father's involvement is determined in family life. Parke's (1996) systemic model of involvement consists of four levels of factors that influence father involvement with children. The first level is *Individual Influence*, consisting of a father's attitudes, beliefs, and motivation, his relationship with family of origin, timing of entry into parental role, and child gender. The second level is *Family (Dyadic and Triadic) Influence*, consisting of the mother-child relationship, father-child relationship, husband-wife relationship, and father-mother-child relationship. The third level is *Extrafamilial Influences*, with two subgroups: Informal support systems and formal systems. Informal support systems consist of relationships with relatives, relationships with neighbors, and relationships with friends. The second subgroup is Institutional or Formal Influence, which consists of working-family relationships and hospital and health-care delivery systems. The fourth level is *Cultural Influence*, consisting of such elements as childhood cultures of boys and girls, attitudes concerning father/mother gender roles, and ethnicity-related family values and beliefs. The levels of systemic influence are not independent of each other, but rather Parke (1996) believes that they work together in determining a father's level of involvement with children.

A conceptual model of responsible fathering was developed by Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998). This model focused on the bond between a father and a child and the factors that contribute to creating and maintaining that bond. The model includes the father-child, mother-child, and father-mother relationships, as well as each of their individual factors. This model highlights five dimensions that influence responsible

fathering: contextual factors, child factors, mother factors, father factors, and co-parental relationship factors. Contextual factors include institutional practices, employment opportunities, economic factors, race or ethnicity, resources and challenges, cultural expectations, and social support. Child factors consist of attitude toward father, behavioral difficulties, temperament, gender, age, and developmental status. Mother factors are attitude toward father, expectations of father, support of father, and employment characteristics. Father factors include role identification, knowledge, skills, commitment, psychological well-being, relations with own father, employment characteristics, and residential status. Finally, co-parental relationships factors involve marital or non-marital status, dual versus single earner context, custodial arrangement, relationship commitment, cooperation, mutual support, and conflict. The three dimensions suggested in this conceptual model as having the most influence on the father-child relationship based on existing research include the co-parental relationship, factors in the other parent, and larger contextual factors.

Another theoretical frame that has been utilized to understand fathering is social capital. Social capital has been described as “family and community relations that benefit children’s cognitive and social development” (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000, p. 1176). This concept looks at the father’s connection to other individuals and organizations as critical factors in what fathers add to child development. In this view, a father’s involvement in a child’s life socially, emotionally, and academically represents an important element of social capital.

Another theoretical framework that has contributed in recent years to new thinking about father involvement is lifespan human development (Palkovitz, 2002; Snarey, 1993).

Snarey (1993) examined and applied the concept of generativity from work done by Erik Erikson (1982) and used it to look at the involvement of fathers in their children's lives. Snarey (1993) defined generative fathers as "men who contribute to and renew the ongoing cycle of the generations through the care that they provide as birth fathers (biological generativity), childrearing fathers (parental generativity), and cultural fathers (societal generativity)" (p. 1). Snarey (1993) further discussed two hypotheses that are used in some fathering research, the modeling and reworking hypotheses, which have been used to describe the influence that a father has on his son. The modeling hypothesis "claims that fathers who are accessible, nurturant, and authoritative will serve as the most influential models for their sons" (Snarey, 1993, p. 277). Research done to examine this hypothesis has found that fathers who provide a good model of parenting to their sons are more likely to have children who model those fathering techniques with their own children (Floyd & Morman, 2000). In contrast, the reworking hypothesis "claims that sons of comparatively distant, non-nurturing, and powerless fathers will attempt to redress the fathering they received by giving their children the personal involvement that they themselves never received" (Snarey, 1993, p. 277). The reworking hypothesis, also called the compensation hypothesis, looks at how sons that did not have fathers that were involved in their lives make strides to father their own children in the way that they would have liked to be fathered. Research done using the reworking hypothesis has found that many adult sons that have experienced fathering that was negative or minimally involved do "rework" the model that they received from their father to become more involved fathers themselves (Beaton & Doherty, 2007; Floyd & Morman, 2000). Snarey (1993) asserted that the

concept of generativity in Erikson's theory of psychological development which provided a useful perspective on understanding how fathers undergo the parenting experience.

Building on Snarey's work, Dollahite, Hawkins, and Brotherson (1997) utilized Erikson's (1959) psychological model and built on it to come up with a "conceptual framework of generative fathering." Generative fathering emphasizes "the kind of activities and work fathers do in response to the role obligations" associated with being a father (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000, p. 1177). The conceptual ethic of generative fathering is designed to furnish a different, developmental and strength-based view of the work that fathers do in being parents and building connections with their children. Using this strength based approach allows us to emphasize the positive contributions fathers add to children's lives as well as look at what it is that fathers are specifically doing to build connection. Other theories used in fathering research do not look specifically at the activities taking place during an interaction.

Generative Fathering

In summarizing research on father involvement, Parke (1996) has written, "Men's own psychological and family background, attitudes toward the fathering role, motivation to become involved, and child-care and child rearing knowledge and skills all play a role in determining their level of involvement with their children" (p. 79). This statement accurately sums up much of the research and thinking on fatherhood that has been discussed. Moving beyond a discussion of the defined roles that fathers play in the lives of children, the newly developing framework of generative fathering looked primarily at the specific types of parenting work that fathers do (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). This conceptual framework is somewhat different in that it shifts focus from the fathering role to

types of fathering work that a parent has to do in raising his child in meaningful ways. It does not focus on how fathers are fulfilling societal roles placed on them, but rather on specific efforts made in a variety of parenting domains that are meaningful to both the child and the parent.

The generative fathering framework de-emphasizes a father's role as a set of socially constructed expectations of fathers based on shifting norms, and instead focuses on fatherwork as activities that a father participates in to care for the needs of the next generation (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997). This concept of generativity comes from Erik Erikson's (1950, 1982) work, which describes generativity as the work adults do that is driven by the needs of children in the next generation. Snarey (1993) brought the concept of generativity into the realm of research on fathers with his study of generativity among fathers in a four-decade study with fathers and children. In addition, the concept of generativity has been used as the basis for the framework of generative fathering developed in the work of Dollahite, Hawkins, and Brotherson (1997). Dollahite et al. (1997) define generative fathering as "fathering that meets the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing ethical relationship with them" (p. 18).

There are a number of basic assumptions that seem important to the generative fathering framework, particularly the emphasis on doing generative work to meet children's needs. Dollahite, Marks, and Olson (2002) note the "generative approach is grounded both in fathers' personal desires to meet their children's needs and their moral responsibility to strive to meet those needs" (p. 261). Generative fathering is framed as a "conceptual ethic" that offers a set of positive assumptions, meaning that it does not suggest a model of how men should father but rather looks at what is possible and desirable

in fathering (Dollahite et. al., 1997). Some of the assumptions guiding the conceptual ethic of generative fathering are:

(a) fathers are under the obligation of an ethical call from their children and their communities to conduct the multidimensional work of caring for the next generation in ways that attend to the fundamental conditions and constraints of children's lives within families, (b) generational ethics rather than adult relational ethics should be preeminent when considering the needs of children, (c) fathers have contextual agency in their relationships with the next generation, and (d) a responsibilities-based and capabilities-based perspective according to which fathers should and can care for their children in meaningful ways. (Dollahite et al., 1997)

In the generative fathering framework, fathers' work is based on the fundamental and enduring needs of children rather than changing societal expectations. The framework focuses on the capabilities of fathers and using their strengths to fulfill the responsibilities of caring for children. It emphasizes a developmental perspective that considers parenting as a step-by-step journey of growth for both parents and children. It also focuses on specific domains of work that fathers do in parenting children which arise from the diverse needs of children.

What does the framework propose as the fundamental domains of fathering that are connected to children's needs and the types of work that fathers do to meet these needs? Dollahite et al. (1997) suggested several different domains of generative work in the idea that the needs of children and the parent-child relationship combine to establish a context of "work." These domains consist of ethical work (continuing commitment), stewardship work (providing security), developmental work (fostering growth and change), and

relationship work (maintaining connection) (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997). Each of these domains consists of specific types of activity that fathers do to meet the needs of children in that area. Ethical work is done by the father committing and choosing to do his work as a father for the next generation (Dollahite et al., 1997). Stewardship work is done by the father creating resources to meet material needs for living as well as fostering learning and educational opportunities for the child (Dollahite et al., 1997). Development work is done by the father caring for the needs of the growing child as well as changing personally over time to meet the needs of the child (Dollahite et al., 1997). Relationship work is done by the father connecting with the child through “healthy, lasting attachments” and communicating with the child both “verbally and nonverbally” (Dollahite et al., 1997, p. 32). Brotherson et al. (2005) stated, “The generative fathering framework affirms the importance of the father-child relationship by suggesting that most fathers have both the capacity and the responsibility to build positive, healthy relationships with their children” (p. 4). The domains of fathering work outlined in this framework suggest the variety of capabilities held by fathers and the opportunities to build positive and healthy relationships with their children through such generative work.

Father Involvement

A father’s involvement in a child’s life has been the focus of much of the fathering research. Lamb et al. (1985) divided involvement of parents into three parts: engagement (interaction), accessibility (availability), and responsibility. Engagement (interaction) is the time spent with the child actually doing something together. Accessibility (availability) is a less intense degree of interaction, which consists of the parent’s ability to be accessible to the child but not in direct interaction with the child. Responsibility is the parent’s

knowledge of the needs of the child and efforts to take care of those needs. Palkovitz further refined the construct of father involvement (1997) by taking the three categories of parental involvement and breaking them down into 15 more specific categories (e.g., affection, protection, teaching, supporting emotionally, and shared interest). By doing this, research on father involvement has expanded to look at these specific aspects of involvement as well as involvement as a whole. As the topic of father involvement is a large subject, this review focuses more on involvement as related to the influence of fathers' involvement on their children's later relationships and parenting.

Researchers have recently taken the concept of involvement and applied it to fathers to discuss different types of fathers. Marks and Palkovitz (2004) looked at different patterns of father involvement and broke them down into four types of fathers: the new, involved father, the good provider father (economic), the deadbeat dad, and paternity-free manhood (chooses not to have children). The new, involved father and the good provider father are classified as the "good" types of father, the deadbeat dad is classified as the "bad" type of father, and paternity-free manhood is classified as the "uninterested" father. Marks and Palkovitz (2004) compared fathers that fit into these four categories to studies done in the 1920s and 1930s by Lynd and Lynd (1929; 1937). The Lynd studies did not look directly at fathering or fathers, but did ask questions revolving around being fathered and father involvement (Marks & Palkovitz, 2004). These scholars suggested that the biggest difference between the Lynd studies and theirs was the addition of paternity-free manhood as a relevant category. They further noted that the "new," involved father is not a new concept, but rather it was also something that was idealized by children when the Lynds studies were done as well. The type of father involvement that a man practices has

been found to be related to the type of father that they had growing up (Beaton & Doherty, 2007).

Previous studies on the topic of father involvement have examined what factors contribute to a father's ability and willingness to be present and involved in his child's life. Jain, Belsky, and Crnic (1996) looked at the different roles men take on as fathers and how they play out in the involvement of the father. Jain et al.'s (1996) study used fathers' ratings on caretaking, playing, teaching, and disciplining to identify the type of father role occupied by men in their study. They found that only two types of fathers could be distinguished: progressive fathers and traditional fathers. In sum, they found that "progressive fathers" (the caretaker and playmate-teacher groups) were "more educated, had more prestigious occupations, and were less anxious, hostile, and irritable than traditional fathers (the disciplinarian and disengaged groups) (Jain et al., 1996, p. 440). The value of this research lies in linking certain aspects of a father's involvement with particular father types that may be common among men.

Beaton, Doherty, and Rueter (2003) looked at the influence that a father's family of origin has on his attitudes about the involvement of the father in a child's life prior to the birth of a first child. This research found that male adult children take their experiences of affection from their parents and the affection that they observed between their parents and apply it to their own attitudes regarding involvement with children. Beaton et al. (2003) demonstrated that the family-of-origin father's competence in his role could influence how the adult child sees the importance of involvement with his own child. Specifically, adult men who had higher levels of involvement from their own father or who, conversely,

experienced little father involvement were most likely to have strong attitudes about being more involved themselves as fathers.

Dick and Bronson (2004) studied the importance of father involvement and the lasting effects of the father-son relationship on self-esteem of adult men. They also hinted at the mechanisms described earlier in father-child relationships regarding the modeling and reworking hypotheses. They noted, “The father-child relationship can either foster sense of self in the child and provide a positive model for future parenting or serve to diminish the child’s self-esteem and their future ability to manage interpersonal relationships with their self, intimate partners, and their own children” (Dick & Bronson, 2004, p. 580). Dick and Bronson’s (2004) findings show some evidence that there is a connection between the relationship type that a man has with his father in his youth and his self-esteem as an adult. Men that had high self-esteem saw their fathers as being very involved and emotionally supportive to them, while the finding was opposite for men with low self-esteem. Another important finding was that the men that had highly involved and emotionally supportive fathers were also more involved and supportive of their own sons.

Floyd and Morman (2000) conducted a study with the purpose of looking at affectionate communication in the relationship of fathers and sons. They studied the affection men received from their own fathers as a predictor of the affection that men showed to their own sons. This study was done from a developmental approach using the modeling and compensation hypotheses. The modeling hypothesis argues that adult children replicate the style of parenting they received in their family. The compensation hypothesis argues that adult children attempt to take a different parenting style than the negative one their parents employed. This study used a combination of the modeling and

compensation hypotheses, “which predicted that men are most affectionate with their sons when they had fathers who were either highly affectionate or highly unaffectionate” (Floyd & Morman, 2000, p. 357). They found that the amount of affection men received from own fathers was associated with how close, involved, and satisfying their relationships with their own fathers were. Another finding was that the amount of affection participants gave their own sons was associated with the closeness, involvement, and satisfaction of those relationships. These particular studies (Floyd & Morman, 2000; Dick & Bronson, 2004; Beaton et al., 2003; Jain et al., 1996) illustrate that the involvement a father has with his children in varying ways can affect the child in later life as an adult.

The perspective of adult children on how they were influenced by fathers brings up the issue of whether or not fathers and sons identify the same qualities in a good father. Morman and Floyd (2006) conducted another study looking at whether or not fathers’ and sons’ meaning of being a good father is the same. Two different studies were conducted. The first looked at what fathers believed to be characteristics of being a good father, and the second looked at father and son pairs. The first study with fathers only had them write down what they thought it meant to be a “good father and “any specific examples that they could think of when they thought they were a particularly good father” (Morman & Floyd, 2006, p. 127). Twenty categories were produced through the written responses of the fathers and the scholars noted that the resulting category scheme could be useful in “developing a more consistent and stable list of effective fathering characteristics that hopefully will be useful in future” (Morman & Floyd, 2006, p. 123). The three categories that came up the most were love, availability, and role modeling.

The second study conducted with pairs of fathers and sons answered the same question as the fathers in the first study, except for the sons the sentence about specific examples was excluded. This study found differences from the first study in the overall order of the categories, but the top three categories associated with being a good father were still the same: love, availability, and being a good role model. The difference between fathers and sons was that fathers “emphasized their nurturing role and sons emphasized the importance of fathers granting autonomy” (Morman & Floyd, 2006, p. 128). These findings overall show that fathers and sons have quite similar ideas regarding what it means to be a good father. Love, which can be associated with a sense of being connected to another person, ranked at the top of the categories described by fathers and sons. This finding on the importance of love between fathers and children provides a useful starting point because it highlights the value of the concept of connectedness between parents and children as an important factor in father-child relationships.

Connectedness in Parent-Child Relationships

The relationship work domain of generative fathering highlights specific pathways of interaction that include connecting with a child and communicating with a child. Connection interactions or experiences are episodes that often represent an ongoing pattern of involvement with the child. The connection part of relationship work is the interaction in activities that “connect generations, instill values, increase affection, and provide for mutual support” (Dollahite et al., 1997, p. 27). Connection “involves both a sense of feeling emotionally and psychically connected with a son or daughter and the father’s efforts to create and maintain healthy bonds between the child, himself, and others in the child’s environment” (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005, p. 5). The study of connectedness

between parents and children has become an important area of research and has its roots in work done by Barber (1997). However, only limited research has yet emerged on connections between fathers and their children, and less still on the types of activities and interactions that are described as part of connectedness in such relationships (Brotherson et al., 2005).

The topic of connectedness between fathers and children raises the question of what activities or interactions serve as primary points of connection between fathers and children. Connection points between fathers and their children have not been studied in depth to gather a good understanding of how they work in relation with issues such as father involvement. Brotherson and Dollahite (1997) looked at the ways fathers connect with their children who have special needs (physical or developmental disability, terminal illness, etc.) and found that it occurs in “being personally involved in activities with a child, [s]pecifically in activities of recreation, play, learning, work, or attendance at important events” (p. 102). Brotherson, Yamamoto, and Acock (2003) examined connection between fathers and adolescent children with an NSFH sample, finding a “positive relationship between connection with children and quality of the father-child relationship” (p. 204). This finding provides support to the connection component of relationship work in the generative fathering model. These findings also gained support from Brotherson et al.’s (2005) qualitative study looking at connection points between fathers and children, which suggested that “the central function of connecting with a child in relationships occurs in a father’s interactions with his children” (p. 17). Brotherson et al. (2005) also found that fathers connect through personal involvement in shared activities with children, particularly activities that involve recreation, play or learning, or working together.

Another finding is the importance of physical interaction and mutual interest as well as personal conversation in forming and maintaining such connections.

There are some activity contexts that seem to provide a meaningful opportunity for fathers and children to relate to each other and build connectedness. There have been a number of studies done looking at the involvement of fathers in their child's sporting activities (Coakley, 2005; Harrington, 2005; Shakib & Dunbar, 2004) and in religious settings (Dollahite, Marks, & Olson, 2002; Harrington, 2005; King, 2003). Coakley (2005) observed, "Today, when sons and daughters excel in sports, their success is directly attributed to parents, especially fathers" (p. 153). Sports activities have often provided an avenue for both male and female children to connect with their fathers. Harrington (2005) found that fathers use sports as a way to build their relationship with their child. Dollahite et al. (2002) and King (2003) also found that involvement in religious activities was another mechanism that fathers use to connect with their children. For example, fathers may use going to religious services, praying, and teaching their child about the faith as a way to connect. These studies examine the topic of connectedness between fathers and children from the view of the father and how he connects with his child. However, this still leaves the question of how children, particularly as adults, may feel about the way their own fathers connected with them and the impact it has had on the way they connect with their children. The purpose of this study is to specifically address the question of how adult children view their connection experience with their father and explore it with both adult sons and daughters of fathers who were involved. As part of a larger study, the research will also look at the impact these connection experiences have on adult children's relationship with their own children, but will not be presented at this time.

Gender Differences in Being Fathered

Do fathers typically parent their daughters differently than they do their sons?

Research has looked at father-daughter and father-son relationships separately as well as together. The stage of a child's development must be taken into consideration when looking at similarities or differences in interaction between fathers and daughters versus fathers and sons (Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). Literature looking at both sons and daughters finds a variety of patterns in how fathers are involved over time with their children of different genders.

When looking at what fathers do with sons and daughters, Harris, Furstenberg, and Marmer (1998) found that fathers had more emotional and behavioral involvement with their sons than their daughters during early to mid-adolescence. Another study found that fathers are more involved with their sons than their daughters overall when looking at closeness, nurturance, and discipline (Starrels, 1994). Still, when looking at each individual dimension of closeness, nurturance, and discipline, research suggests there is more similarity than difference in the way that fathers interact with sons and daughters. Starrels' (1994) research showed that there was a significant statistical difference overall between how close fathers are to sons as compared to daughters, yet the same findings showed no meaningful difference between sons and daughters except in the components of identifying with (a child) and closeness activities. It is not surprising that in these two areas there would be a difference with fathers between sons and daughters. Starrels (1994) found only one meaningful difference each between father-son and father-daughter relationships on items related to nurturance and discipline. In measuring nurturance, the only meaningful difference was found in the areas of kissing and hugging, in that fathers kiss and hug their

daughters more than they do their sons. In regard to discipline, the only area of meaningful difference was talking, in that fathers talk to their sons more when they are disciplining them than they do to their daughters.

Raley and Bianchi (2006) conducted a literature review looking at research done in the area of family processes and if gender of the child matters. Overall, they concluded that when it came to spending time with sons or daughters, that fathers do spend more time with their sons because of common interests and “shar[ing] in masculine activities” (Raley & Bianchi, 2006, p. 409). The literature review also addressed the question of whether fathers are more invested with their sons than with their daughters. The research in this area suggests that in intact families fathers tend to spend more time in leisure play with the family as a whole when they have a son (Bryant & Zick 1996; Katzcev, Warner, & Acock, 1994). Research has also demonstrated that when there is a son in the family, fathers are more involved with both sons and daughters (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Lamb, 1987). However, a study conducted by Marsiglio (1991) on paternal engagement in activities with children found no difference when looking at gender of the child. Other scholars have found that even though there was a difference in fathers’ involvement between sons and daughters, there was a similar amount of affection reported for both sons and daughter by fathers (Tucker, McHale, & Crouter, 2003).

When looking at the age of the child and the involvement of fathers the research has shown mixed findings. There is research that shows when a child is under five there is little difference in father involvement between genders, but after the age of five fathers are more involved with sons than with daughters in some areas (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998; Marsiglio, 1991). Higher levels of father involvement with sons at later ages tend to

be in one-on-one activities and companionship activities (Crouter & Crowley, 1990; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Research done by Barnett and Baruch (1987) found that as children aged their fathers interacted with them less no matter what the gender of the child. If the father has been actively involved throughout a child's life, they are typically more involved when their child is older for both genders (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998).

Beyond research on levels of involvement or types of interaction that occur between fathers and children, some additional research has examined the outcomes that may occur for children of either gender based on paternal involvement. Daughters that have a father who is supportive and warm tend to have higher self-esteem, greater life satisfaction, less depression, more social competence with peers, and more psychological maturity (Morgan, Wilcoxon, & Satcher, 2003). In an overview of research done on fathers and daughters, Hall and Tift (2007) cited a variety of studies showing that father involvement has a positive influence on daughters in the areas of well-being (Brotherson, Yamamoto, & Acock, 2003), social and behavioral risk (Smith, 1994), anti-social behavior, substance abuse, violence, and theft (Kosterman, Haggerty, Spoth, & Redmond, 2004), and social and psychological development (Hall & Tift, 2007). Some research has found that parents kiss and hug the same-sex child more than the opposite sex child (Belsky, 1979). However, receiving physical affection from fathers is more important for young girls' self-esteem than boys (Barber & Thomas, 1986). Kavalier (1988) studied the contributions a father may make at different stages of his daughter's life, and found that men assist their daughters through being involved in interactive play, modeling partner relationships, and providing security and esteem.

As noted, fathers tend to be more involved with sons and have a significant influence on them in a variety of ways. When looking at paternal involvement with sons, Dick and Bronson (2004) found that males had higher self-esteem when they had a good relationship with their father. Fathers who had good relationships with their sons were seen as more nurturing, understanding, encouraging, loving, affectionate, and comforting. Floyd and Morman (2000) found that sons who perceive their father to be more involved are more likely to become involved with their own children. Fathers who are involved provide a meaningful benefit to the overall well-being of sons (Brotherson, Yamamoto, & Acock, 2003), cognitive development and academic achievement (Parke, 1996), and social and emotional competence (Gurian, 1996).

Adult Perspectives on Being Fathered

In the research on father involvement, there is only limited information on the ways that adult children perceive how their fathers connected with them and shaped their life experiences (Snarey, 1993). The research that has been done has tended to focus on adult men and their experience of being fathered, but not much has looked at adult women's experiences of being fathered (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005; Floyd & Morman, 2000; Roy, 2006). Also, the research that has been done looking at how adult men perceive their father's involvement does not look at what it is that their father did to be involved with them.

Research conducted by White (1994) looks at how adult male children define what it means to be a father, their memories of being fathered, and how these two things are interconnected. Roy (2006) interviewed adult low-income African America men about how they identified with their father. Floyd and Morman (2000) looked at how the affection an

adult son received from his father impacted the affection that he showed his son. Dick and Bronson (2004) examined how adult men's self-esteem is affected by their relationship with their father. One research study by Brannen and Nilsen (2005) looked at families that had four generations living and studied how different generations talked about being fathered.

The importance of connectedness in father-child relationships combined with the limited perspectives available from adult children on such issues provides an opportunity for further research. One avenue of investigation lies in gathering the perspectives of adult sons and daughters on how their fathers were involved with them, the importance of their connections, and how such experiences have shaped them. Research conducted by Snarey (1993) touched in this area by doing interviews with both fathers and sons and daughters looking at paternal generativity. We hope that gathering the perspectives of adult sons and daughters on being fathered and their experiences of connection will provide insight on this important element of the father-child relationship.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research study focused on how adult children perceive and describe the way their father connected with them. This study utilized a qualitative research process for gathering narratives of adult children about experiences in being fathered. This chapter will briefly discuss the usage of a qualitative approach in this study, the research design and procedures that were used in collecting adult children's narrative accounts of relationships with their fathers, and analysis of the information gathered during the research process.

Research Design and Procedures

In any research project, it is important to evaluate the questions that are going to be explored and select an approach that will allow information to be gathered so that such questions can be answered. This particular study was designed to look at what adult men and women describe regarding their experiences of connection with their own fathers. In order to gather information from participants, a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews was used for this study. The study methodology combined a phenomenological qualitative approach with a standard interpretive approach sensitized by the generative fathering framework.

Phenomenology is attentive to how people frame and interpret their lived experiences (Cresswell, 1998). Specifically, phenomenology is concerned with the goal of explaining "how objects and experience are meaningfully constituted and communicated in the world of everyday life" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1998, p. 140). The descriptions of life shared by people about their experiences tend to highlight the patterns that are significant and meaningful to them in such experiences. A phenomenological qualitative approach

allowed participants to speak from their individual frame of reference, share experiences, and provide their own insights on the meaning of those experiences (Cresswell, 1998). In addition, usage of a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to better understand and become sensitized to the experiences being described by participants (Daily, 2007). This study utilized a standard interpretive process to compare the experiences of participants and provide a thick description of their similarities and differences (Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992). A retrospective methodology was used so that adult children could articulate the meaning behind experiences shared with their fathers. Concepts from the generative fathering framework and supporting research were utilized as sensitizing points of reference in the interpretive process.

Through in-depth qualitative interviews, adult children were encouraged to express in detail their experiences of how their fathers connected with them and what such connecting experiences have meant to their lives. Using a qualitative approach was useful in allowing flexible responses to structured open-ended questions in the interviews (Brotherson, 2000). Adult children were given time and space to openly reflect on feelings and thoughts raised by their experience of being fathered. Gathering personal narratives through qualitative interviews has been utilized as an approach in previous research on generative fathering and father-child relationships (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005). Dienhart and Dollahite (1997) noted that asking individuals to “relate a personal life story about a remembered experience of being fathered” can be a powerful way to understand both paternal influences and how adult children carry such experiences into their own parenting (p. 192). The interviews provided a way for each adult child to

remember and share experiences regarding their father connecting with them and the meaning of such experiences for his or her life.

Participant Selection

For this investigative study, a convenience sample of adult participants willing to participate in the project was selected and the study sought to include a range of 10 to 15 individuals among both adult men and women to allow a range of experiences. Also, the sampling approach set a baseline of 10 individuals from each gender to allow a sufficient number of participants to provide a solid base of information.

As this is an initial and exploratory study on this topic, it was considered to be helpful to study participants with a general similarity in family background. Thus, the participants for this study were limited to adult children from two-parent families in which both the mother and father were present (until the adult child was at least 18 years of age). The purpose of this guideline was to provide a similar context of family experience among participants from which to understand the topic in this exploratory study. The adult child also needed to have at least one child of their own beyond the age of three and also be currently married to the mother or father of that child. Having a child of sufficient age so that they could reflect and make comparisons on parenting experience was important to the study. Further, being married to the other parent of that child provides a context in which to evaluate their own parenting with another individual. Finally, the study sought to include adult children between the ages of 30 and 60. This age range allowed recruitment of adults who are more likely to have growing children of their own who can also reflect on their experience of being fathered with a sense of perspective.

Participants were recruited into the study through a variety of methods. Individuals who chose to participate in the study generally contacted one of the researchers after reading about the study or were referred by other contacts aware of the study. Thus, “snowball sampling” was one of the methods used and a number of participants were gained through this sampling approach. In addition to self-referrals and snowball sampling, purposive sampling (sampling to recruit a specific target of participants) was attempted to facilitate increased diversity among study participants. Participation was encouraged by advertising the study through the multicultural Parent Teachers Association in Fargo and the Cultural Diversity Resource Center. Approaches that were used in recruiting participants for this study included e-mail announcements, a community press release, and distribution of study information through classes sponsored by the Parent Resource Center in Cass County. In addition, flyers encouraging study participation were placed around the North Dakota State University campus including University Village. Participants were also invited into the study through making requests in local parenting classes in order to recruit individuals from the broader community.

Participant Selection and Description

In this study only adult children whose parents had been married until the adult children were 18 years of age, were married, and had children of their own with their present spouse were selected. The target number of participants for this research study was 20 to 30 adult children between the ages of 30 and 60 with a balanced number of both men and women. Thirty adult children showed interest in study participation and 22 of the potential participants fit the study requirements and agreed to be interviewed. Four potential participants were excluded because they did not fit the requirements. The other

four non-participants were excluded due to scheduling issues or lack of continued interest. The remaining 22 individuals who participated in the study included 12 adult daughters and 10 adult sons.

Participants were asked about demographic information that included age, number and gender of children, number and gender of siblings, education, occupation, religious affiliation, and ethnicity. Participant responses to these questions are illustrated in Table 1 for female participants and Table 2 for male participants.

The age of the female participants ranged from 33 to 61 (average age of 44.5 years) at the time of the interviews, with one participant not reporting age. The age of the male participants ranged from 39 to 59 (average age of 46.5 years) at the time of the interviews. All participants were currently married to their spouses and had at least one child with that spouse. Family size ranged from one child to four children, with the average being 2.4 children per family. All of the participants described themselves as having some level of college education and 13 of the 22 participants had graduate-level degrees, suggesting a highly educated sample. Nearly all participants (21 of 22) designated themselves as having a Christian religious affiliation (7 were Catholic, 9 were Lutheran, one was Methodist, one was Protestant, one was Evangelical Free, one was Episcopalian, and one was Baptist) While one participant was Hindu. All of the participants but one were Caucasian.

Approval of the study and its procedures was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of North Dakota State University.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Female Participants

Demographic Information about Adult Daughters							
Participant ID Code	Daughter's age at time of interview	Number and gender of children	Number and gender of siblings	Education level	Occupation	Religious affiliation	Ethnic background
#F-001	53	1- girl	4- two boys and two girls	B.S.	Dental Hygienist/ Oral Health Consultant	Lutheran	Caucasian
#F-002	33	4- three boys and a girl	3- two older girls and one younger	Ph. D	Program coordinator	Catholic	Northern European Mix
#F-003	40	2- boy and girl	9- seven boys and two girls	Ph. D	Scientist/ teacher	Catholic	German
#F-005	38	2- girls	1- younger sister	B.S	Higher education	Lutheran	Caucasian
#F-006	40	4- three girls and a boy	1- younger sister	2 years of college	Daycare provider	Baptist	Swedish, German, and Irish
#F-007	58	2 - girls	2- younger sisters	2 years of college	Secretary	Protestant	Caucasian
#F-009	34	2- boys	2- older brother and younger sister	Masters	Higher education	Lutheran	Caucasian

Table 1. (continued)

Demographic Information about Adult Daughters							
Participant ID Code	Daughter's age at time of interview	Number and gender of children	Number and gender of siblings	Education level	Occupation	Religious affiliation	Ethnic background
#F-010	37	2-boys	8- four boys and three girls	M.S	College instructor	Catholic	Russian - German
#F-011	None given	3- two sons and a daughter	3- older sister and younger sister and brother	College training	Director at nonprofit	Lutheran	German/ Caucasian
#F-012	55	3- two sons and a daughter	7- two older sisters, two younger brothers and three younger sisters	M.S	Educator	Catholic	Caucasian
#F-014	61	3- daughters	None	B.S.	Librarian	Methodist	Welsh
#F-015	40	2- daughters	2- older sister and younger brother	M.S.	Extension associate	Hindu	Asian - Indian

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Male Participants

Demographic Information about Adult Sons							
Participant ID Code	Son's age at time of interview	Number and gender of children	Number and gender of siblings	Education level	Occupation	Religious affiliation	Ethnic Background
#M-001	35	4- one boy and three girls	2- younger brother and sister	Ph. D	Animal scientist	Lutheran	Caucasian
#M-002	56	3- two boys and a girl	2- older brother and sister	Ph. D	Professor	Evangelical Free	Caucasian
#M-003	59	4- two boys and two girls	4- three younger brothers and a younger sister	M.S.	Chemist	Lutheran	Caucasian
#M-004	41	3- one son, two step children, a boy and a girl	3- two younger brothers and a sister	B.S.	Facilities manager	Lutheran	Norwegian
#M-005	41	2- boys	3- older sisters	Ph. D	College professor	Lutheran	Norwegian-American – Caucasian
#M-006	38	2- boy, girl	2- younger brother and sister	B.S	Extension agent/ Farmer	Catholic	White

Table 2. (continued)

Demographic Information about Adult Sons							
Participant ID Code	Son's age at time of interview	Number and gender of children	Number and gender of siblings	Education level	Occupation	Religious affiliation	Ethnic Background
#M-007	56	1- girl	3- older sisters	M.S. MBA	College administrator	Episcopal	Caucasian
#M-009	59	2- boys	1- brother - killed in car accident	M.S.	Retired elementary school teacher	Lutheran	Norwegian-Caucasian
#M-012	43	1- boy	1- older sister	M.S.	Patent agent/technology manager	Catholic	Caucasian
#M-013	37	2- boy and girl	2- one brother and a sister	B.S	Tool and Die maker	Catholic	Caucasian

Interview Procedures

The process used to gather adult children's narrative accounts in this study was through conducting qualitative in-depth personal interviews with interested participants. Such interviews furnish a systematic approach to collecting individual accounts of being fathered and experiencing connections in the father-child relationship. Further, qualitative interviews offer an appealing format for individuals to share their personal experiences. The design of this study was largely exploratory and intended to examine patterns that reflect connectedness between fathers and their children and the influence of such experiences on an adult child's experience of being fathered.

Participants who expressed interest in the study by sending an email, making a phone call, or otherwise responding to the study announcement were listed for follow-up contact. An initial telephone screening or e-mail correspondence was conducted with each respondent to ensure that he or she met the identified criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants were allowed to select an interview time and location that best fit with their schedule and circumstances, as well as those of the researchers. During the initial phone screening or e-mail dialogue, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and rights as a study participant. For those individuals who chose to participate, a reminder phone call or e-mail regarding the scheduled interview was made to each participant the day prior to the interview. One or two early interviews were conducted jointly with the researcher and the major professor. During the first one or two interviews the major professor took the lead by asking the main questions. The researcher asked follow-up questions such as, "Can you tell me more about that?" and others when appropriate. The researcher conducted all subsequent interviews.

Participants were engaged in a one to two-hour semi-structured interview following a series of up to a dozen questions. The interviews started by reviewing the informed consent document and the demographic information form that participants were asked to fill out prior to the interview. The participants were then asked to give some background information such as how long their parents were married, how many siblings they had, what their parents did for a living, how many children they have currently, how long they have been married, etc. This portion of the interview ranged from five minutes to thirty minutes. Participants were then asked to answer questions related to each research question and share their personal experiences to the best of their knowledge and their level of comfort. After each question the participant was asked about the meaning the experience they discussed had for them. Prompting questions were used to obtain a richer description of the experiences being described. All interviews were tape-recorded on a portable tape recorder on high-quality audiotapes.

The questions in the study sought to gather personal narratives to facilitate understanding of what experiences adult children remember with their fathers in feeling connected with them as a child. Questions focused on experiences of being fathered prior to the age of 25 although some experiences shared took place as an adult child. Such stories from adult children did come from later in their adulthood, but reflected their connection with their father and how connection is always evolving. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions that were designed to open up communication and sharing of experiences to more fully understand a person's experience of being fathered. In addition to the questions in the interview schedule, probe questions designed to initiate additional feedback, such as "Can you tell me more about that?" or "What other details do you

remember” were used when needed to explore the topics in greater depth. Closing questions for the interview included, “Is there any additional information you would like to tell me about your experiences” and “Do you have any questions for me about our interview or the research being done?” The interview schedule used for this study is included in Appendix A.

Once interviews were conducted, participants were given an assigned identity code, which was used to protect confidentiality. Other steps that were taken to protect confidentiality include keeping collected information in a locked location, which is only available to the researcher. Once interviews were completed and transcription of the information is complete, the audiotapes will eventually be destroyed within a period of 5 years.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in this study included informed consent of the participants, understanding the risk-benefit potential of the research process, and confidentiality. Participants were informed of all areas of the research that may influence their willingness to participate. Each of the participants received an informed consent document that listed all relevant information. The areas of confidentiality, risks and benefits, informed consent, and the participant’s freedom to decline participation were reviewed again prior to the interview.

Prospective participants were contacted via telephone or e-mail to set up an appointment to review ethical considerations. Information was reviewed over telephone or via e-mail prior to participation. Participants were informed during this time that all identifying information received through the research process will be confidential and

received an explanation of how their confidentiality would be protected. Participants were informed during the initial telephone call or e-mail and before the interview that at any time during or after they interview they have the freedom to decline to participate if they believe it to be in their best interest. During the initial contact the risks and benefits were discussed. No participants chose to decline participation in the study due to ethical concerns.

In conducting this study, we believe there was minimal risk involved in participating in this study, and that the benefits of sharing their individual story outweigh any emotional risk that might possibly occur. Sharing memories of childhood experiences about one's father may elicit emotional responses in the adult children; thus, counseling services and support were identified and referred to as necessary. Participants may gain insight into the meaning of their experiences, their identity as a parent, and their interaction with their family through self-reflection during the interview process.

Confidentiality for all participants was dealt with in two ways. First, all the information gathered, such as interview tapes and transcripts, were kept in a locked location by this researcher. Second, all participant names were changed and identity codes were assigned, and pseudonyms were used in the data that was analyzed. Further, identifying details were modified as necessary to preserve confidentiality

Data Analysis

All recorded interviews were transcribed carefully. The transcriptions were read and analyzed for accuracy in the transcription. When all interviews were transcribed satisfactorily, a three-step coding process was used to conduct an analysis of the information collected. Qualitative analysis of the study interviews was conducted to

understand the experience of connection with fathers from the perspective of adult children and also similarities and differences between adult sons and daughters.

The first step in the coding process involved reading and re-reading the interviews to help the researchers become familiar with the content of each interview. This process of becoming familiar with the material is an important beginning element of the analysis process.

The second step in the process included a systematic exploration for themes that occur within the individual interviews in order to better understand father-child connectedness and related issues (Seidman, 1998). Both researchers conducted an analysis of each interview and then jointly discussed their analysis to confirm the ongoing interpretation and construct a set of findings that was representative of shared analysis. In the analysis process, each interview was first coded individually so that passages of information which were relevant to the topic were marked and labeled. This coding step was used to find and identify emergent themes within each individual interview (Shank, 2002).

The third step of the analysis consisted of developing thematic categories that occurred across the interviews as they were compared with each other. Themes were developed by looking at experiences that were recurring across each of the interviews. Interview material was grouped into codes that represented key themes and sub-themes occurring among the participants. Within each of these thematic categories the researchers identified specific themes or concepts and labeled them (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The focus was on looking for specific patterns and themes in how adult children remember their father being involved and connecting with them. Once all the experiences had been placed

in the most appropriate category of thematic analysis based on agreement between the researchers, an additional coding step took place. Each set of themes was examined to look at initiation of the experience, the context it took place in, the activity being done and the interaction occurring between father and child. Both researchers read through the experience and discussed which context, activity, and interaction was taking place in a specific episode. Themes that were noted across more than half of the participant interviews and which were cited more than 20 times across interviews were defined as “major” themes. A “minor” theme was categorized as having more than 5 but less than 20 occurrences across the interviews analyzed.

Summary

A qualitative research project was conducted to collect personal narrative accounts that reflect the experience of connection between fathers and children, as recalled by adult children. The information gathered was utilized to examine themes and sub-themes regarding the importance of connectedness in father-child relationships, how it is framed by adult children, and how it is similar or different for adult sons and daughters. A minimum of 20 participants was selected for participation in this study through a variety of methods. Personal in-depth interviews were pursued to collect information from individual participants regarding their experiences of being fathered. Each interview followed a semi-structured interview schedule along with probe and follow-up questions as needed.

The process of data analysis consisted of identifying and grouping issues into common themes and patterns from the interview material. The intent of this analysis was generate conceptual understanding and frame the issue of connectedness in father-child

relationships in a different perspective and context, providing insights that may be useful in theory, research, and practice with families and children.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This purpose of this study was to examine how adult men and women define connection as well as how they interpret the way their fathers connected with them during childhood and young adulthood. In addition, the study explored if adult children perceived a difference in the way fathers connect with their sons than with their daughters. This chapter first summarizes the themes regarding what connection between fathers and children means and the meaning that connectedness might have for the persons involved. The chapter then highlights the following thematic categories and findings that illuminate the adult children's experience of connection: (1) patterns of connectedness between children and their fathers; (2) obstacles to connectedness between children and their fathers. Findings are categorized by gender to allow for presentation of similarities and differences described by adult sons and daughters.

The Meaning of Connection

The first component of the study analysis involved constructing a phenomenological definition of "connection" as described by participants. The construct we were seeking to understand and define was generally referred to as "parent-child connection" or "connectedness between parent and child." Thus, the first questions in the interview schedule asked participants what the term "connection" meant to them personally and as it applied to relationships with others. The adult children had many ideas regarding what goes into being connected to someone. The responses shared by participants ranged from ideas on how to build connection between two people to the feelings involved when a sense of connection is present. There were more similarities than differences in how adult

men and women answered the question and it became clear that connectedness is a multifaceted construct. The common themes related to the participant descriptions of parent-child connection are shared below.

The most common response regarding “what connection means” that was heard from both women and men was the idea of being “in sync” or having a sense of what the other is thinking. This response was given by nine of twelve females (75%) and seven out of ten males (70%). Some terms and phrases that women and men used to express being “in sync” included being on the same mental page, bonding between two people, interlocking minds, understanding who the other person is, and being on the same mental wavelength. Overall, this element of connection thus seems to consist of understanding the other person and being understood, which is often characterized by a sense of mental familiarity with each other. In talking about the meaning of connection when referring to this element of being “in sync” with the other person, women more frequently referred to knowing what the other person is thinking whereas men more often referred to the idea of mutual understanding. Two males and two females when describing the idea of being “in sync” and knowing or understanding one another also discussed being “bonded” or feeling bonded to one another.

Another defining element of parent-child connection that participants described was sharing something “in common” with each other, such as similar interests or activities, a history of shared experiences, or common values and expectations. Five out of twelve females (42%) and three out of ten males (30%) noted having similar interests or doing activities with a person contributed to feeling connected with a person. It was explained by one participant as “finding a common ground that provides a connection.” This element of

connection was reflected in many narratives that participants shared in which they recounted shared interests and activities (sporting activities, recreational interests, etc.). A similar idea that participants shared and which was grouped with this theme was a history of shared experiences. Three out of twelve females (25%) and four out of ten males (40%) thought a shared history of common experiences boosted the connection between two people. Shared history was explained by participants as meaning time spent together in family traditions our routines and having the same values due to being raised together.

A third theme which was mentioned by many participants regarding the definition of connection was feeling a sense of security and trust with the other person in the relationship. This element of connection seemed especially important for women. Seven out of twelve females (58%) associated the idea of security or the feeling of being secure with what connection means. A sense of security, or the feeling of being secure, was only expressed by two of the male participants. Thus, it may be that this element of parent-child connection is more significant in the perception of daughters (at least as adults) than it is for sons. Security was looked at by some as a feeling of trust that nothing bad was going to happen to their father or he was not going to do something to harm them. One looked at it as a guarantee of unconditional love, saying connection and security means that “it doesn’t matter how bad you screw up because your parents will always be your parents.” Others mentioned the idea of feeling safe with a person.

A related theme that was discussed by participants was the importance of fulfilling expectations in the relationship for a sense of connection to thrive. Seven out of twelve females (58%) and three out of ten males (30%) agreed that expectations were important in building a connection between individuals. This concept was closely connected with

establishing the feeling of trust as part of connection that individuals discussed. For example, some women in the study noted the significance of living up to expectations set by someone in the relationship and that the level of personal connection was based in part on how a person lives up to such expectations. In addition, this element of connection was described as having expectations in the relationship as to how others would act as well (e.g., how their father would treat their mother, how their father would provide for them, etc.). The men who commented on this element of connection also emphasized that it came down to how to act and following what was expected of each person in the relationship, such as knowing right from wrong or being honest.. Thus, expectations appear to be important in forming a sense of connection in that if you know what the expectations are in a relationship and you follow them then the connection is likely to be stronger.

Six out of twelve (50%) females and six out of ten males (60%) indicated that emotions between people play a significant role in connection. The emotions described as an important element of connection included a feeling of love and support between two people. The features of this emotional closeness were further described as being aware of another person's emotions and reacting to them, a sense of caring for the other person, and sharing emotions with one another. The emotional component of connection was also discussed as something that is not present with everyone and it is found more often in close relationships, such as with family members. Participants noted activities that foster such a sense of closeness and sharing including regular communication, talking about daily activities, and other forms of meaningful personal contact.

Other ideas used to describe connection by adult females and males were "feeling comfortable" with one another (17% of females and males), similar values (20% of females

and 10% of males), “automatic” (10% of males), proximity to one another (8% of females), spirituality (10% of males), support (25% of females and 10% of males), respect (8% of females), and trust (17% of females and 20% of males). Nearly all these words or phrases link clearly with one of the elements of connection already discussed.

Based on the participant responses, a phenomenological definition of connectedness between a father and child would suggest the following: Connection between a father and child involves multiple dimensions including (1) a sense of understanding and being understood by the other person, (2) a shared set of common interests, experiences, or values, (3) a sense of security and trust with the other person, (4) fulfillment of expectations that are important in the relationship, and (5) a feeling of emotional closeness and support sustained by regular contact and meaningful communication.

Mapping the Description of Parent-Child Connection by Adult Children

Since this study adopted a phenomenological approach to examine parent-child connection from the descriptions of adult children, the next step in the analysis process consisted of identifying emergent themes in the participant narratives. Each narrative shared was examined and the researchers developed a process for analyzing each narrative of a “connection point” by “mapping” the description of what took place. In other words, codes were developed to identify such recurrent elements in each narrative as how the experience began, what the context of the experience was, and the type of activities and interactions that were described. This coding pattern was developed early in the analysis process and utilized to identify a variety of themes across the narratives. While all of the coding elements were useful in the analysis process, not all of them will be discussed in detail within the presentation of findings. Four important coding elements in the analysis

process included: (1) initiation of the connection experience; (2) context of the connection experience; (3) type of activity in the connection experience; and (4) type of interaction in the connection experience.

To examine the many experiences adult children shared in connecting with their fathers, each of the connection experiences was eventually tagged in one of four “point of initiation” categories that emerged from the analysis process. These categories were helpful in beginning to map out all of the experiences and make sense of the different situations happening in each of the narratives. These categories emerged as key patterns that framed the initiation of connection experiences in childhood and youth. Each experience or point of connection was looked at and assessed for the point of initiation. The four initiation categories that emerged and were used in this research are parent-initiated, child-initiated, circumstance-initiated, and context-initiated experiences. Some connection points have been categorized in two areas due to the complex nature of the connection experience. A parent-initiated event was identified specifically as an experience that a father has intentionally put into motion. A child-initiated event was noted as an occurrence in which the child intentionally put the experience into motion. An opportunity for parent-child connection that was “triggered” by a certain event (such as a personal trauma, etc.) was denoted as a circumstance-initiated experience. Finally, context-initiated events were classified as points of connection that took place when someone took advantage of an existing opportunity that occurred naturally (riding in a car together, etc.).

The connection points shared by participants were also classified into a specific context of experience. During the coding process eight different themes emerged which mapped the “context of the experience” and were each given a specific definition:

1. Activity – An occasion that involves interaction between two persons in a common context (hunting together, etc.) and may or may not be repeated over time (more likely o be occasional).
2. Routine – A repeated similar activity over time (e.g., reading stories at bedtime each night).
3. Event – A regular activity that is made special and memorable due to the experience being made special in a fun or meaningful way.
4. Tradition – An established activity with an associated sense of historic and family meaning (may be rooted in religious identity, cultural pattern, family history, etc.).
5. Ritual - An established activity that is a formalized pattern which includes a defined sense of purpose, symbolism and meaning (wedding, etc.) (can range from particular to cultural to universal).
6. Memorable Occasion – An occasion where something takes place that symbolizes the connection in the relationship (support is expressed, etc.) and is remembered as significant.
7. Relationship Pattern – A pattern of interaction that is consistent and meaningful in the relationship over time and fosters a sense of connection (teasing behavior, etc.).
8. Personal Interaction – An experience of personal interaction that is close, caring or supportive and generates a sense of personal connection.

These differing contexts of experience can be overlapping but tend to represent related but distinctive contexts that are described by participants in their narratives.

The next step in the coding process involved identifying what type of activity was taking place within each connecting experience described. The different activity categories

could also be overlapping as sometimes multiple activity “types” co-occurred in the variety of narratives. A total of ten different activity types emerged to describe the connection experiences shared by participants: recreational (camping, picnics, etc.), play (hide-and-seek, checkers, etc.), learning/educational (word games, etc.), work (doing chores, etc.), attending important events, support (time of need or transition, etc.), communication, celebratory/commemorative (holiday, birthday, etc.), physical contact, and family time. These codes assisted in identifying what types of activity serve as the foundation for the exchanges or interactions that occur between two individuals at a connection point.

A final element in the analysis process consisted of coding the variety of interactions that took place between the two parties in the connection experience. The themes which emerged from this coding effort focused on the content of the interactions between father and child during each particular connection experience. Again, more than one dimension of interaction can be occurring simultaneously during a connection experience. Ten different interactions emerged as themes from the narratives that were coded, which included: teaching a skill, participating in common activities, sharing time together, communicating with each other, expressing appreciation, giving support and empathy, celebrating an occasion, observing father activities, observing child activities, and building a character virtue in child (ability to work, being trustworthy, etc.). Major and minor themes were separated out by the number of occurrences identified in the narratives. If a theme emerged was identified more than 20 times it was considered a major theme; otherwise, it was classified as a minor theme. The narratives used in describing the findings are cited with both the participant’s ID code and the page number of the interview

transcript. Each connection experience described can have one or a number of the interaction components depending on the situation.

In addition to this process of coding narratives so that emergent themes were discovered, the researchers compared narratives by gender of the adult child to discern similarities or differences among the perceptions of daughters and sons. To facilitate ease of presentation, the findings are presented below categorized by gender of the child. The findings regarding father-child connection as perceived by adult children have been grouped into major and minor sets of themes that emerged in the study analysis. In the findings, the connection experiences as described by adult children provide a window into the formation of connectedness through specific experiential episodes in the father-child relationship.

Patterns of Father-Child Connection Described by Adult Daughters

Among adult daughters a number of major and minor patterns were described that exemplify the development and meaning of connection between fathers and daughters. The five contexts that emerged as most prominent in the narrative accounts of parent-child connection among women were memorable occasions, activities, personal interactions, routines and events. The specific themes associated with each of these contexts are shared below.

Memorable Occasions as Connection Experiences

Memorable occasions emerged as the contextual category that was most common among the narratives described by adult women regarding their connection experiences with fathers. A memorable occasion was defined as an occasion where something takes place that symbolizes connection in the relationship and is remembered as significant by

the child. All twelve of the women in the study shared narratives describing such connection points and gave 41 different examples of experiences during which they felt connected to their father through a memorable occasion. The connection points for adult daughters in this context typically occurred during a time of need or transition in which the father was giving support to the child or the child was giving support to the father. In addition, recreational activities and celebratory/commemorative activities were also mentioned by women in this context. A significant majority of these experiences were initiated by a circumstance that presented itself and triggered the opportunity for connection to occur, while in a few cases the child, context or parent (father) played a role in initiation of the connection.

Among adult females, the major theme that characterized feeling connected to their father on memorable occasions was giving or receiving support in a time of need or transition. This activity type, support during a time of need or transition, simply dominated the accounts that were related by adult daughters in the study. In fact, 33 of the 41 examples (80%) of a “memorable occasion” fit this theme and nearly all of them were split evenly between support given in a caregiving or health need context and support during a time of personal or family transition (15 examples each). At times these “need contexts” overlapped with each other, such as when a death occurred in the family and represented both a family transition and a caregiving need due to health issues. The type of interaction mentioned most often was supportive, or giving support and empathy, which accounted for almost all the examples that were shared.

Times of caregiving need when health concerns arose and elicited opportunities for connection accounted for about half (15) of the accounts in this category and included both

occasions when a child was ill and needed care, occasions when a father was ill and needed assistance, and also times when children observed the father caring for others who were ill (a sibling, etc.). Most often these supportive interactions that fostered a sense of connection involved being present during a time of need such as sickness of a child (or other occasion) and providing care due to health issues. These activities suggest a sense of comfort and love in each other's presence when life is difficult and health concerns are prominent. The feeling associated with being cared for by her father when sick and in need was expressed in this way by one female adult child:

My mother, whenever I got sick, she never came near me, but he [my father] would get up in the middle of the night and he would take care of me. I think, no matter how old you are, you long for that, so you kind of look for it in your husband (then you find out they're not going to do it). I think you constantly search for that same thing your dad did for you. I was sick a lot as a kid. He was always the one—my mother was never there. To the point when I got older I always wanted to have a Mother's Day card that said, "Happy Mother's Day" and on the inside it would say, "Dad, you did a great job" . . . He was the one that constantly did that care-taking type thing.. (F14-5)

Another female participant described her experience in this way:

Once when I was very small I got the chicken pox. At that time the hospital, the place where we lived was very far from the main hospital, and I remember my father took good care of me. He used to apply a medicine over my whole body, my mother used to be scared of touching me, [so] it was my father [who did it]. I think I was in third grade, [and] my father was the one that took care of me. I remember that still; it is quite vivid in my memory. (F15-5)

These examples show how powerful caring for someone when they are sick can be in building a connection and sense of being cared about. When health concerns arise they seem to generate a circumstance of need that triggers the opportunity for sensitivity, connection, and the expression of care and concern between a father and child. A unique occurrence described by some adult females was when they were able to give support to

their father when he was in a time of need. At such times the child perhaps felt the role of child and adult was reversed in the parent-child relationship, and one adult child described her experience of assisting her father's mental and physical health needs in this way:

[Due to mental health needs] we ended up having to commit him [my father], and he was there for five weeks. I was here, but I did fly there about a week or two into being in the hospital. I flew there for a week. Me, my mom, and my sister would go up there every day and sit with him and it was very emotional. I learned things about him I had not known. I learned things that were a little shocking and a little disturbing, but then it also made more sense too and it was just a very emotional time, very . . . I felt like it was the first time he really, really trusted me. I felt it was the first time that he really felt that he could tell me things and that we would get through everything. (F2-5)

This account is a prime example of an adult child being present during a father's time of need and helping him feel cared for and loved as she did as a child. In these accounts, for some adult daughters the sense of connection was related to showing their fathers the same support and empathy he showed them as they were growing up.

A second pattern of equal commonality cited by adult daughters involved support and care given in times of need during a personal or family-related transition. This theme also accounted for approximately half (15) of the accounts categorized under support activities. The supportive interactions that adult daughters described here were concerned with fathers providing support and presence at key transition points such as going to college or the death of a family member. The most commonly cited family-related transitions related to pregnancy or birth of a child and others noted were marriage, death of a family member, divorce, and other family challenges. It should be noted that these connection points were almost all linked with transitions in early adulthood and family formation, which signifies the importance of these experiences to adult daughters as well as their stage of life in reflecting on their experiences. The interaction type most common in

these exchanges was giving support and empathy. In essence, these adult women were describing the sense of connection with their father during “big moments” in life, as one noted about her marriage:

When I was getting married . . . my dad has multiple sclerosis, which then [was] a difficult thing because he has always been a very strong person, really the backbone of the family, [so] to have a physical ailment that so visibly impacts him was very difficult. When I was getting married I really wanted him to walk me down the aisle and he just couldn't do it. But he came back to the back of the church right before and that was very, very special. I have always known how proud he is of me. (F3-3,4)

Another woman described the connection experience with her father that occurred at the birth of her child in this way:

I guess it would have to be the birth of my first child. My parents were right there, they weren't in the room with us, but they were waiting right outside. I think the first thing my dad said was, “I'm proud of you for that,” and giving birth is emotional as it is. I think that was one time I can think of and there have been a few other times. As an adult with the birth of my son, coming in after my child was born and coming into the room, I could tell he was like are you okay physically. I would ask for a glass of water and he was right there with it and just very attentive to getting me whatever I needed. So that was probably one experience and just knowing that he's concerned and whatnot [in that situation]. (F9-4)

As nearly all of the experiences described in this context are circumstance-initiated, there is an onus on the father to respond in a manner that will foster the sense of connection rather than diminish it. In one case, an adult daughter described telling her father about a pregnancy at an emotional and somewhat trying time in the relationship:

I got pregnant before I got married and I was very terrified to tell my dad especially. Rob (my husband now) and I had talked and I talked actually to one of the former assistant pastors at our church, and asked him and his wife to come up and be there for my parents after we told them. Rob and I would leave, and these friends of my parents would come and be able to kind of provide emotional and spiritual support for them because I knew how hard it would be on my parents. It was hard on me, I didn't ever see myself in that position.

I remember, my dad didn't especially like Rob, and it's kind of funny because I never would have met Rob if my dad didn't make me go to this, it was like a

Campus Crusade group. I didn't want to go and my dad was like, you are living in my house so you and your sister are going to go to the campus group. I was like, fine, we will go, and that's where I met Rob. So it's just kind of ironic that I met this guy that my dad didn't like at the place my dad made me go. Anyway that was kind of weighing on me too, as I knew that my dad and Rob hadn't always gotten along very well, and I was just dreading to tell my dad. I was pregnant, obviously, so I was emotional and I was exhausted because you are when you're first pregnant.

So Rob and I went and I had already told my sister, but my siblings were out of the house and it was just my mom and dad and Rob and I. I remember Rob telling my dad, he said, "Joy's pregnant and I would like to marry her." I remember that my dad, he put his arms on his knees and he put his head in his hands and just sat there and prayed for about 20 minutes. I was trying not to fall asleep because I knew that would be extremely rude and act like I didn't care, but I was just exhausted and I was so emotional. Finally he put his head up and he said that he loved me and he told Rob, "And I love you too." If he was here Rob would say that was one of the most amazing moments he has ever experienced in his life because he said it was to me. My dad never looked back, and Rob was always this perfect person from that point on. It is just amazing to me, I mean to me too, but to Rob it was just like a huge thing to him. I just I think that was so big of my dad to just, you know, this is going to be the father of my grandchild, the husband of my daughter, and I will like him and deal with it. (F6-5, 6)

Big moments in life such as marriage, pregnancy, or the birth of a child were times that the support from a father appeared to solidify a strong sense of connection between adult women and their fathers. Thus, memorable occasions can vary and occur during times of need in the family, whether due to health concerns or family transitions, but in each account described the experience of connection revolves around adult children feeling supported and cared for by their father.

Several of the women also shared experiences under the category of memorable occasions that included activity types such as work, recreation, or celebrations. These examples illustrate that other memorable occasions are also meaningful and can symbolize the father-child connection. Typically, the activities of recreation and celebration revolved around things such as going prom dress shopping with dad, a father going out of his way to buy gifts at Christmas, or a father paying attention to cues given by daughter about

something she wanted. Such activities similarly suggest a sense of love, support and being cared for by their father. For example, one woman recalled:

When we were growing up, Christmas occasions were lean and for Christmas we were never spoiled. You got your one thing and a couple little things and that was your Christmas. Then I remember when my sister and I were in collage, I think that she was maybe a freshman or sophomore and I was a junior or senior and my mom told us, "Well, we had Christmas!" I got a TV and an entertainment center and a coffee table and end tables, because I was living in an apartment, and my sister got a VCR, coffee table and end tables and a big huge stereo. We were just kind of like . . . "What is going on?" My mom later told us, "That was all your dad, he said I feel like the girls always kind of had blah Christmases growing up, so he went out and he went shopping and he picked out all this stuff." It wasn't even the material thing of it, it was just the fact that I don't think he had probably ever shopped for one thing for us in our lives. He didn't take us clothes shopping or such things, and yet my mom had said he had gone out and bought all the Christmas presents and brought them home.

I think it's just another point where I realized that he [my father] loved me more than I really thought or understood. He didn't show lots of affection when we were [growing up], I mean you just figured he loved you—he was your dad. He wasn't outwardly caring and supportive and saying I love you. He didn't say it very much. I think what it meant is that, it also kind of said to us, maybe I didn't do everything I should have when you were growing up, but he still was struggling on how to do that yet, so his answer was to go and buy stuff. But I got it and what it meant. It's not that I expect him to one day sit down and pour out his heart because that's just not who he is. So I got what the gesture meant. (F5-6, 7)

This experience is a good example of how a father may attempt to re-connect with his children after struggling in the past to have a close relationship with them. One particular feature of memorable occasions described in the narratives is that they serve as symbolic experiences which amplify the perception of father-child connection and represent the underlying relationship between two people. In all of these activities the sense of connection is fostered by the father going the extra mile to make the child feel important and special. Memorable occasions linked to work, recreation, or celebration vary from going prom dress shopping to making something special for a child, but in each case

described they revolve around interactions such as sharing time together, expressing appreciation and celebrating an occasion with one another.

Activities as Connection Experiences

Activities emerged as the next context most commonly described by adult women as a setting for connection points between themselves and their fathers. In this study, we defined Activities as contexts that involved occasional interaction (single instances to occasional interactions) between two individuals and that occurred intermittently and may or may not be repeated. Eight of the women shared such connection points and provided 22 different examples of connecting with their father through involvement in activities with him. The four specific activity types described by women in the Activities context included recreation, learning/education, work, and play (games, etc.). A majority of these experiences were initiated by the parent (father) while in a few cases the child, context, or circumstance played a role in the initiation of the activity.

Among women, being personally involved in activities with their father was the second major theme associated with connecting experiences they described. The type of activities mentioned most often were recreational, which accounted for about half (10) of the examples that were shared. Typically, these activities of recreation involved going to sporting events together, doing outdoor activities with each other, or spending time in vacation activities together. Such activities suggest a sense of companionship and enjoyment in each other's presence. For example, one woman recalled:

My family was very sports-oriented and he was very into hockey and I figure skated, so I think [we connected around] some of those [activities]. We would go ice skating, not every Sunday but a lot of Sundays, so I guess that's another time I really felt a connection [to him] because we would go a lot of times. My siblings would come too but my mom didn't ice skate or anything, so it was just dad and the kids and we would go ice skating and he would roll us around the rink. That was

always a really fun time we would always look forward to. I remember going to Bison Hockey games when I was in junior high, and by that time my brother was too old and too cool to hang out with dad and my sister really wasn't into hockey too much, but I really enjoyed it. So, just my dad and I would go to all the Bison Hockey games together. We just lived two blocks away and so we'd just walk there. So those were a couple [of examples], and the fact that I was a girl wasn't going to keep me away from him, he was still going to include me in his sporting events, with hockey and skating. I think the impact and the sense that it had [for me] was just having something to share with him; it was something my mom didn't do but something just to share with dad. We went skating with dad, we went to the hockey game with dad. (F9-5)

This account furnishes a solid example of the sense of being together and enjoyment in shared activities of recreation that is central to this context as a connecting point for fathers and children. In another case, a daughter explained the positive memory associated with riding bikes with her father:

When I look back and I think about it, we used to go on bike rides a lot all of the time. He would always ride along beside me or he would let me get up ahead, and then he'd come as fast as he could behind me. That's when the Roadrunner (a cartoon figure) was really big, so he would get way down low on his bike and as he went by he'd say, "Meep, meep," and he'd fly by me. (F10-3)

Activities of recreation can vary and involve things from vacations to doing outdoor activities to playing instruments together, but in each case described they revolve around spending time together and sharing in a common activity.

Other activity types that emerged under the Activities category were work activities, learning/educational activities, and play activities. Each of these activity types had four examples that were described by adult women in the study. Being active or doing something together thus seems to be a preferred route of action that fathers take when trying to connect with their daughters. All learning/educational activities were parent-initiated, while the other activity types were initiated by either the parent, the child, or context. The women expressed positive feelings about their fathers being involved in

teaching them a new skill in work and learning/educational activities, such as learning to draw, drive a car, or do multiplication tables. In addition, having the opportunity to work or play alongside their fathers in doing home projects or work projects was seen as another avenue of meaningful connection. One woman described doing projects around the home with her father while growing up and how this carried over into adulthood:

I always felt cared for by him. He has always been a very helpful person, and so he is always helping even in our married life now, because my husband can't fix anything [and so] we would make lists and dad would always come and visit and we would fix the list of things together. (F7-5, 6)

In another case, an adult daughter from India described the activities with her father that revolved around learning and education:

Math was an important thing for us. We had to be prepared before school. We had to be exposed to multiplication tables before kindergarten. My father used to teach all three of us the multiplication tables. When we used to go out on our family vacations or family visits or anywhere with him, he used to ask us in the car or bus that we would ride on, "Okay, now tell me four times eight," etc. That's my earliest memory of him, asking me math questions and that developed an early interest in math, and that developed into the Science stream of study. We have the Science stream of study and the Art stream of study in India and you have to pick one of those. So the people that were intelligent in math, physics, chemistry, and biology, they would do the Science stream which is considered a little ahead of the Art stream. So, I'm really now thankful to him and grateful to him for making us develop that early interest in mathematics. In our growing up interactions he would also do word problems that we had to solve. (F15-1)

In this example the influence of her father and the connection they shared was instrumental in the path of study that she would later pursue in her educational efforts. These examples were characterized by multiple, overlapping types of interaction between fathers and daughters that typically included teaching a skill, sharing time together, participating in common activities, and communicating with each other.

Personal Interactions as Connection Experiences

A number of minor themes that were significant emerged as important patterns in how fathers and daughters connected. Personal Interaction emerged as the first minor theme of importance that was described by adult women as an avenue for connection experiences between themselves and their fathers. Minor themes were classified as emergent themes that were not as prominent in the narratives but were cited as examples at least five or more times by participants. Personal Interaction was defined in this study as two people sharing an experience of personal interaction that is close, caring or supportive and generates a sense of personal connection.

Seven adult daughters shared 11 examples of personal interactions between them and their fathers which were positive as a connection experiences. These experiences took place across a variety of activity types including times of physical contact, recreational activities, learning/education activities, attendance at important events, and episodes of communication. A significant pattern was that all of the personal interaction examples were initiated by fathers taking advantage of a natural situation that presented itself as an opportunity for connection (context-initiated). It should be noted that personal interaction describes a context in which quality of the interaction is the central element of the experience rather than a specific type of activity.

For women in the study who shared experiences categorized under personal interactions, the type of activities most often described were recreational activities and attending important events. These two patterns accounted for more than half of the examples that were shared. Most often, these activities of recreation involved riding in the car, making food together, and sitting close to dad. Similar to the recreational activities

described earlier, these activities suggest a sense of closeness and enjoyment in each other's presence. One woman recalled:

My earliest childhood memory, I was probably three, it was really hot and the air-conditioning was not keeping up. I remember getting up, it was the middle of the summer, and dad was out typing on the typewriter at the table> He was on the school board and a bunch of stuff, and I came up to him. Typically being a little kid, you would get sent back to bed, but not that night, that night he let me stay up and he gave me a pile of scratch paper and crayons. I remember I was just little, but he flipped one of the chairs around so I would sit on my knees and color on my paper. So I was small enough that I couldn't sit on the chair and do it at the table, I was doing it on the chair, but that is my earliest memory. (F3-3,4)

This example shows how developing a sense of connection is not always about directly interacting with the child, but at times it is simply about being in the presence of one another. The feeling of closeness in the presence of the father is important to this context as a connecting point for fathers and daughters. Activities of recreation can vary and involve things from sitting with a father quietly to making food together, but in each case described they revolve around spending time together.

Activities linked to attending important events involved going to a child's extracurricular activities or watching a child receive an award. Such activities suggest a sense of support and pride fathers have for their children and a commitment to communicate that sentiment with visible support. One daughter explained her father's presence in this way:

There have been a few times I know of as an adult my dad has told me he is proud of me and those are the times then that I probably feel the closest to him. We try to do a lot of volunteering. I think, three years ago I think it was, I won a Woman of the Year award and so, of course, my parents were at the banquet and everything. That was another time [I remember] and he said, "I'm very proud of you for this and you deserve it." I would say those experiences are, and even though we have a very close-knit family, I would say my dad is not a touchy-feely person. So, he says he loves me and that he's proud of me, but there's not a lot of hugs and kisses and that kind of stuff. My mom is a very touchy-feely person so I get enough from that

side, but just to hear “I’m proud of you” is really good, it’s very important to me from him because, like I said, he’s not a hugger or anything. (F9-4)

This example gives light to the idea of a child being shown that they are loved by a father’s support and the understanding that the father has pride in them and their activities or achievements is meaningful to the child’s sense of connection with the father.. Activities of attending important events can vary from watching a child receive an award to watching a child’s extracurricular activity, but they all involve the father observing a child in an activity and communicating support to the child.

Three adult female children each gave other examples of personal interaction with their father through avenues such as physical contact, learning/education, or communication. These specific interactions involved doing a child’s hair, teaching a child in school, and sharing stories from childhood with a daughter. Again, central to the experience in these father-child activities was a sense of closeness and being cared for in each other’s presence. For example, one woman described it this way:

[We] both kind of come from, I think, a background of Science and . . . teaching, and what this means and that means, how to get through to a student, that type of thing. There are just so many of those common everyday things between us that I think what it means to me in my life now . . . I still think about the way he [my father] taught us, teaching Science in seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth grades, and I still use those techniques, but I still try to emulate that connection that he had with his students. (F3-4)

This example displays how an adult child reflects on her experience being taught by her father and the lasting effect it has had on her life. Building a sense of connection through personal interaction can be as simple as observing a father in an activity, a father sharing stories, or the physical touch a child remembers through doing a child’s hair. All of these experiences involve spending time together and communicating with each other, while they may also include participating in common activities or observing child activities. In any

case, during times of personal interaction fathers take advantage of the opportunity to make a connection with their child through expressing care or support in situations that they are placed one on one together with the child or giving support to

Routines as Connection Experiences

Routines emerged as the next minor theme context described by adult women as a setting for connection points between themselves and their father. In this study, we defined a routine as a repeated similar activity over time. Five of the women shared such connection points and provided 10 examples of connecting with their father through involvement in a routine with him. The three specific activity types described by women in the Routine context included family time, work and communication. A majority of these experiences were initiated by the parent (father) while in a few cases the child and context played a role in the initiation in the activity.

For adult daughters, having a repeated similar activity (or routine) in their involvement with their fathers provided a consistent opportunity for connecting experiences. The types of activities mentioned most often by women were family time routines, which accounted for nearly all (8 out of 10) of the examples shared. Typically, these routine activities of family time involved homework, bedtime or evening routines, and dinner time. The routines described suggest a sense of security and dependability for the child. One woman explained her experience in this way:

Something that was a repeating theme [for me], I often tell people the thing that my dad instilled in me and the gift that he gave me that was a success was reading. He was a great reader and he would come in after working on the farm for hours, and after supper he would come in and then read to us. My little sister and I would rub his shoulders or comb his hair, he loved having his hair combed, and he would read to us for hours. Long chapter books, series, and sometimes we would read the same series over and over during the course of a number of years going through the

books. My older siblings would listen too, and we all really have a strong love of reading. (F3-3)

This account gives a solid example of the sense of security she attained in knowing she was going to have time with her father and his dependability in spending his time with her. This pattern of consistency in the routine over time is a key to this context as a connecting point for fathers and children. In another case, a daughter explained her bedtime routine in this way:

I think it was so important that my dad tucked us in at night. Every night he tucked us in. The night before I got married my dad tucked me in and said a prayer with me. A lot of times, not every day, but every day that he could before we left for school we would have a group hug and he would pray with us, my sister, brother, and I before we went to school. I think those are really special times because again, when you talk about the connection, I mean there is the physical connection of touching each other. Actually my dad called it a “prayer huddle” because he loved football, so we had our little prayer huddle in the morning. But just no matter what happened during the day you still reiterated that you loved each other, and even when my dad and I probably weren’t getting along the best he would still tuck me in and pray with me at night, and we may have parted ways from that and still been upset with each other but at least we knew that there was still love there. (F6-7)

Routines involving family time can vary and involve things from bedtime activities to regular family dinners. Other activities that were shared as examples of routines included regular talks with a father while riding in the car (communication) and working together on fix-it projects around the home (working together). As routines are established between a father and child, they seem to allow not only a regular connection point but the opportunity for a built-in re-connection point when a relationship struggles. The interactions that characterize such family time routines center around spending time together, building character virtues and communicating.

Events as Connection Experiences

The last context that emerged in the female narratives as a minor theme of importance was an Event in the father-child relationship. Events were only described a few times by adult female children as a setting for connection points between themselves and their fathers. An event was defined in this study as a regular activity that is made special and memorable due to the experience being made special in a fun or meaningful way. Five of the 12 women shared such connection points and provided five examples of connecting with their father through involvement in activities classified as events. The three specific activity types described by women in the Event context included communication, celebratory and recreational. A majority of these experiences were initiated by the parent (father) while in circumstances also played a role in initiation of the activity in one example.

Examples of a father making an activity into an event was a minor theme described by about half of the women in the study. However, this theme demonstrates the diversity of ways in which connecting experiences may occur. The types of activities that were made into events mentioned included communication and celebrations. The distinguishing feature of these activities was the effort by fathers to make them into special or fun experiences which thus became unique memories. The activities linked to communication involved riding with a father on work trips and a father telling stories. Celebratory activities that were made into events revolved around birthdays and coming home to visit. The special atmosphere that fathers create during events seems to elevate the feeling of connection and the child's enjoyment of the experience. One adult daughter described her typical experience in coming home to visit in this way:

Our children absolutely loved going home. We always had to call my dad before we'd leave, this was before all the cell phones were around, and we had to call before we left. Then if we weren't there within three hours and fifteen minutes he would be coming to look for us, he would worry. So we never called until we were just leaving the door and then he would be watching for us. As we came home to visit, whether it was from college or after we were married and brought our families home, my dad was always standing at the door waiting for us. He would be out the door and halfway to the car before we got out, especially when there were babies as he wanted to be the first one to get the baby and carry the baby into the house. (F11-2)

This example shows how a simple activity such as coming home to visit was elevated to a special event due to the positive anticipation of spending time together and her father's reaction. This pattern exemplifies how a father's efforts to make the event special and increase enjoyment of each other's presence can build on the feeling of connection between a father and a child. Another woman explained the event of going to town with her father in this way:

Sometimes he would have to go to Dickinson, which was about 36 miles away from us, anyway he would have to drive to Dickinson to get a load of fuel or to get diesel fuel or gasoline or whatever. So sometimes then, if any of us kids had an appointment or sometimes just because, we would get the opportunity to go along. Well, I was usually the one that got to go so I got to ride in the big truck. I mean, that was before the age of the seatbelt, and so you could sit so high in that truck and it was just the coolest thing. You could see everything and then we would get to go to the Woolworth store.

We would get to pick [where we ate], you know, dad and I and we always sat at the counter, the big lunch counter, because they really didn't have any booths . . . but we would always sit at the counter. They had the big old snack bar, they had the big round chairs that were cemented to the floor and they could turn, and we could order whatever we wanted. Then we could watch the people cooking it . . . we could have a hamburger, you know, dad and I would each have a hamburger, the big greasy burger kind, and then they would make the fries and then you would get a big malt. So when you went with dad you could always talk him into dessert or a malt or something extra, it was always something extra, and with my mom we would have to share as she'd say, "Okay, you're not going to eat the whole thing anyway so why don't you share." My dad never made us share ever, ever, so when I would go with him I felt so cared about. Like I said, just that big truck and just the truck vibrating down the highway and stuff and looking around, and then we always got to go out to eat. With my mom it was always, "Let's get going, we've got to get

back” or “Somebody’s got to pick this person up” or “We’ve got to get back for supper.” We always had a mission [with my mom], but with my dad it was an event. He took the time to spend it with you and so you always felt like he was just the man and that was your day to spend with him. So it was a wonderful thing. (F1-9, 16-17)

These narratives suggest that simple, ordinary activities can be turned into events which becoming lasting memories of connection for children by making the child feel special. Events become lasting connection experiences when fathers make an activity that is taking place become special by making it a “big deal” or doing small things to make it special for the child. Taking an ordinary situation and making it into an event that is a memorable point of connection for a child shows that what you are doing with a child may matter less than how you interact with them while doing it. Such events can vary and involve activities as simple as going on car rides to eating out together to listening to stories. Sharing time together and communicating with each other are the interactions that form the heart of such events and make the connection experience possible.

Patterns of Father-Child Connection Described by Adult Sons

Among men interviewed in the study a variety of major and minor themes emerged that highlight the importance of connection between fathers and sons. The context that emerged as most common in the narratives of parent-child connection among men was memorable occasions, which is similar to the finding that emerged for women. In addition, six other contexts for father-child connection that occurred as minor themes in the narratives were personal interactions, activities, routines, events, relationship patterns and traditions. The specific themes associated with each of these contexts are shared below.

Memorable Occasions as Connection Experiences

The total number of connection experiences shared by adult sons in the study was somewhat less than the total number shared by adult daughters. However, the pattern that emerged as the strongest theme associated with experiences of parent-child connection was similar for both men and women. Memorable occasions also emerged as the contextual category that was most common among the narratives shared by adult sons regarding their connection experiences with fathers. As described earlier, a memorable occasion was defined as an occasion where something takes place that symbolizes connection in the relationship and is remembered as significant by the child. Nine of the ten adult men in the study shared narratives regarding memorable occasions and gave 20 different examples of such experiences that highlighted connecting with their father. As with adult daughters, the connection points for adult sons in this context most often took place during a time of need or transition in which the father was giving support to the child or the child was giving support to the father. Other contexts mentioned by men in this setting included recreational activities, communication, and attending important events. Also similar to the previously discussed findings, nearly all of these experiences were initiated by a circumstance that presented itself and triggered the opportunity for connection to occur, while in a few cases the parent (father) or child initiated the connection experience.

The major theme that was discovered in analyzing the connection experiences of adult sons on memorable occasions was giving or receiving support in a time of need or transition. Support in a time of need or transition was by far the most common pattern in the accounts related by adult sons. The study analysis showed that 16 of the 20 examples (80%) that adult sons shared regarding “memorable occasions” fit this pattern and were

distributed equally between times of support when a child had health or sickness concerns, times of support when a child had anxiety or transition struggles, and times of support when a child gave assistance to a father in need. The primary type of interaction identified in these narratives was giving support and empathy, which was found in all of the examples provided by participants.

Caring for a son after an injury or during a sickness was among the most commonly discussed occasions of support during a time of need. Typically, these occasions of support in a time of need involved a child's injury or illness, school struggles, and challenges moving into adulthood. Giving support to a child during a time of need shows a sense of caring and love for a child. One man recalled this incident with his father:

When I was seven or eight years old I got rheumatic fever, which was serious stuff back then and I remember it was in my groin area, it hurt to move or to walk. I could walk and I remember my dad carried me out to the car to take me to the doctor. I was really scared because you know that was something serious. I could just feel his strong arms carrying me out, and I just remember that it really just felt right, and I knew I was being taken care of too. (M3-9)

This description furnishes a positive example of how cared for and loved a child can feel when a father takes time to show support in times of need. This pattern of attentiveness to personal needs is a central element in this context as a connecting point for fathers and their children. In another case, a son described a positive memory associated with his father helping him with schoolwork:

When I switched from sixth grade into seventh grade I went from private [school] in Grand Forks, to the Public School. They were learning stuff that I had never heard or, I mean, we were so far behind going to that Catholic School it was a joke. I was way behind and my dad sat down with me for a few days and helped me get through things, because I was kind of melting down and didn't know what to do. He kind of tried to help because me and my mom were fighting at the time over not getting homework done. That was one time I felt connected to him. He took the time to sit down and talk to me, and I guess that was one time he sat down and said, "Hey what's going on?" We sat down in the basement, you know, all by ourselves

and he just kind of helped me go through my stuff and priorities. He helped me know life's not going to be that bad, you're going to be alright, and you'll get caught up. (M4-9)

As with examples that daughters shared, these memorable occasions consist of feeling supported and cared for at a vulnerable time when health or other concerns exist.

Memorable occasions of support in which children felt cared for by parents nearly always involved a father giving care during a health need or at times of personal struggle or transition (going to college, etc.). The interaction that characterized these themes was a father giving support and empathy to a child in need.

As with the findings for adult daughters, a portion of the accounts that highlighted connection points during times of support occurred as the sons provided support for their fathers in times of need. Memorable occasions during which adult sons felt a positive connection with their father when giving support to him revolved around needs related to the father's health, life concerns, and relationship issues between parents. Such occasions suggest a sense of giving back the support their fathers gave to them through care and love in times of need. For example, one male recalled:

One other time I probably connected with him a little bit was when mom and dad were fighting at one time, probably I don't know ten years ago or something, and it looked like there were probably going to get divorced. He needed some help so we were trying to help him find an apartment and all that kind of stuff and talk to him, just kind of help him along so he got through life. (M4-9)

Memorable occasions of support when the son can give care and love back to the father seem most likely to occur once a child has reached adulthood. In any case, such occasions show how the connection that is forged between a parent and child can come full circle in times of need.

Several adult men also gave examples of memorable occasions that included activity types involving attendance at important events, recreation, or communication. Two examples focused on the father attending an event that was important to a child. Both of these occasions were parent (father) initiated. Adult sons recalled feeling a sense of connection as they related stories of fathers taking the initiative to come to the child's school or sporting events. Such experiences suggest that children appreciate it when fathers value what is important to them and reinforce their connection with visible support and presence. One son described his experience in this way:

He was not a father that was interested in athletics or sports, which was kind of passed on to me, because I'm not really that way either. He wasn't the kind of guy I would throw a ball to in the back yard. I was in Cub Scouts and then Boy Scouts, and in that transition when you go from being a Cub Scout to being a Boy Scout you get your Arrow of Light award at that time. When that happens you go to an Arrow of Light weekend at camp, and so this was at Camp Wilderness which is two hours from here. It's a father-son thing that you do, and he's not a camper at all, especially with his [bad] back and so sleeping on the ground just isn't a good thing. He didn't even have a sleeping bag. But he went with me, it was miserable, it was in May and it was cold, freezing cold and a drizzling kind of rain, a cold, wet weekend. The one night one of the other boys was crying because he was so cold, so that kept my dad up, so it's one of those things we kind of talk about now and laugh about it. He, I know, did not enjoy himself at all, he was miserable, but he did it just because it was important for me. (M5-7)

This example speaks to the sacrifice made by the father to do something that was important to his son and the symbolic importance that it carried over time. Building a lasting connection is not just about doing things that are convenient or entertaining for the father, but it is about looking at what the child is interested in and demonstrating presence and support. The interactions in such contexts focus on sharing time together and observing a child in an activity. Other memorable occasions mentioned were activities of recreation and communication. Having an activity or circumstance to interact around can sometimes

furnish the motivation a father and son might need to connect with one another. For example, one male described planning his mother's birthday party with his father:

We surprised mom at the park with all of the kids being home and all the relatives and had a picnic. So there were a lot of conversations with dad planning it and keeping it a secret and stuff. Three years later dad's birthday was in November but we met in September because it was still nice outside . . . and we had a surprise party for him and did the same thing all over again. I guess we were getting to the point where there was more of an emotional connection there. (M3-8)

Both activity types cited here involved interactions such as communication with one another and sharing time together. In addition, both activity types provided a context for connection in which the father and son had increased motivation to be engaged. Memorable occasions that adult sons highlight as connection experiences allow fathers taking advantage of a variety of situations and built a lasting sense of connection through communication, sharing time together, observing a child's activities, or giving support and empathy.

Personal Interactions as Connection Experiences

Connection experiences centered in personal interaction between fathers and sons emerged as the most common pattern among the minor themes for adult sons. Narratives involving personal interactions were shared 10 times by five of the adult male participants. Personal interactions were defined as an experience of personal interaction that is close, caring or supportive and generates a sense of personal connection. A variety of activity types such as communication, celebratory/commemorative occasions, support, recreation, attendance at important events, and physical contact were the specific activities that fathers took advantage of in a situation to connect with their sons. All of these experiences were initiated by a context that presented itself and the fathers took steps to heighten the

connection experience that was possible in that context. This finding was similar to what occurred with adult daughters.

Among men who described personal interactions, a father's positive presence at an occasion was perceived as a significant factor in the connecting experiences described. The quality of the father-son interaction was linked to the positive feeling associated with a father's presence. The types of activities mentioned most often in this setting were attendance at important events, celebratory/commemorative occasions, and communication between parent and child, which accounted for 7 of the 10 the examples shared. These activities involved car rides, holidays, or involvement with a child's extracurricular activities. The narrative accounts suggest the personal interactions of a father and son can directly or indirectly have an impact on the sense of connection. One man in the study recalled:

Well, I guess that although he [my father] knew nothing about rodeo and I got into it, he tried to learn about rodeo and tried to be involved to the point of embarrassment. He would pull out his old 1970s western shirts with a whole bunch of fringe on it because it was a western shirt and try to fit in. It got to the point I said, "No, I would rather you were there but wear your khakis and your loafers and don't try to fit in, it's more embarrassing that way." So he traveled quite a bit with the rodeo and he definitely helped financially to support it driving across the state. That would be another experience that I remember—I vividly remember the fringe shirts. [My feeling was] I don't want you to be a rodeo dad, you can just be there and clap when I do well. I appreciated that. (M1-7)

This account provides an example of a personal interaction between a father and a son in which the father made the effort to be present at his son's event even though it was not an interest of his own. While he did not like his father's attempts to "dress the part" this son genuinely appreciated his father's attention to and support of him in this manner. In another case, a son explained driving in the car with his father and noted, "Traveling across the state, at that time we didn't have DVD players and you were forced to talk, and so those are

probably the most memorable experiences and probably the most enjoyable” (M1-5). The value that adult sons perceived in their father’s presence is evident in this story that was shared:

All of us kids were heavily involved in school activities and it didn’t matter how busy he was, he always showed up for our games and stuff. I honestly throughout my whole life, from fifth grade on when I was able to start playing on sports teams and stuff like that, I honestly can’t think of more than maybe two or three times that he actually missed [an event]. I mean, he made it to a lot of stuff, he was committed to that and in fact it was very important for him to be there. There were definitely some times when there were other things that needed to be done, but he made the decision that it was more important to be to those activities. I guess that was something that really sticks with me. (M6-5)

The context of personal interaction thus does not always require direct interaction throughout the activity but instead often includes the father’s positive presence and support. The activities involved may range across communication to attending important events, and be highlighted in things such as talking in the car or going to a child’s game. Other activity types that were identified within the context of personal interactions were support, recreation, and physical contact. One man emphasized that hugging his father when they see each other was an important personal interaction that had emerged in the last ten years. However, the fundamental interactions in this context remain communicating with each other, sharing time together, or simply a father giving support and observing a child’s activities.

Activities as Connection Experiences

The next minor theme that emerged as significant in the adult son narratives was the context of Activities. Nine accounts were shared by five adult males which were categorized in the context of activities that served as connection points. Activities were defined simply as an occasion that involves interaction between two persons in a common

context (hunting together, etc.) and may or may not be repeated over time. Recreation, play and learning/education were all types of activities described by adult children that were common in this context. All but one of these experiences were initiated by the parent (father) while in one case the child played a role in the initiation of the activity.

For adult sons, being personally involved in activities with their father was a common minor theme that facilitated connecting experiences. Recreational activities were mentioned most often and accounted for more than half of the examples that were shared. Typically, these activities of recreation involved doing outdoor activities together, working on projects together, or playing sports. Such activities seem to facilitate a sense of companionship and mutual enjoyment. For example, one man recalled:

Playing football at a young age [was memorable] and he, even with farming late nights and all that, he [my father] would take the time to play with me at least a few times a week. He would always take the time. It wouldn't necessarily be football but I was, sports in general I like them, and he would always take the time to at least try and spend a little bit of time somewhere, ten or fifteen minutes to play with me, all the way through [growing up]. (M6-2, 3)

This account highlights the meaning this son perceived in his father giving him a regular amount of time to connect through a shared activity. Being involved with his father in a common activity gave them a regular and meaningful avenue for personal connection. The shared activity acts as facilitating mechanism for the connection experience. The story also highlights the value of a father taking even a few minutes to make the time to connect with a child. In another case, a son explained the positive memory of hunting with his father:

I would go back to the hunting excursions we [dad and I] would go on, to me you can generalize those as one [common] outing. A lot of times we would go just road hunting for pheasants where you are mostly driving in a car or sometimes we would go out and walk a field together. It was time to spend alone with him. He would ask me about things in my life, and that was where we formed that connection we were just talking about. Those were my best memories, my chance to spend time with him one on one and do those things together that we both enjoyed doing and

enjoyed with each other. He was very into nature and the outdoors and creating those kinds of events for us to share together. (M12-3)

It should not perhaps be surprising that shared activities of recreation were a common mechanism of connection that adult sons discussed. Such activities can vary and involve things from outdoor activities to sporting events, but in each case described they revolve around spending time together and sharing in a common activity.

The other two activity types that were common in this context, learning/education and play, were described in several examples within the male narratives. These experiences occurred around youth activities (Boy Scouts, etc.), home projects, and games played in the car. Such activities also suggest a companionship and add the dimension of teaching or learning a skill. Adult sons expressed feeling a sense of closeness with their fathers during such activities. One adult son described his experience with his father in this fashion:

Sometimes the things that he [my father] and I did together were like handyman kind of things, you know fixing up things around the house. I don't know if I would really say it was a hobby, but if you could say he had a hobby at all it would have been kind of like being a carpenter. He liked working with wood, cutting wood to the right size and putting pieces of wood together to build something. So he would ask me to help him with some kind of project. Those are kind of fun activities that he and I share. Those are the kind of the things that it was just the two of us. He wouldn't have done any of that stuff with the girls or even with my mom. So that was kind of the fun part of it and the important part of it for me. It more like one on one time for us because some of the more stereotypical or traditional things that dads and sons do, like hunting or camping or throwing the ball in the back yard, that wasn't him, but these were other things that we could do together. (M5-8, 9)

This example looks both at the enjoyment of being together and teaching a skill through interaction together. In another case a son describes riding in the car with his father,

Dad and I in front [of the car] and there were a lot of conversations. We would do games, like come up with strange names for people, like book authors, like a book author would be "Seymour Butts" for a book called "Under the Bleachers by Seymour Butts, all kind of bad plays on words and stuff like that. Again, things like that probably shaped my humor today too. (M12-5)

Activities of learning and play-based interactions furnish a setting for spending time together that is interactive and also instructional. Fathers tend to enjoy play and interaction. The primary interactions identified in these activities center around sharing time together, developing a skill and communicating with each other, which are all present and meaningful

Routines as Connection Experiences

Another minor theme context that was mentioned in a significant manner by adult sons in the study narratives was Routines. This study defined a routine as a repeated similar activity over time. Four male adult children gave four examples of involvement in routines that highlighted father-child connection. The activity types associated with these accounts were communication, recreation, family time, and play as routines in their childhood. A majority of the routines were initiated by the parent while in one situation it was initiated by the child. Among men, not one of these activity types stood out from the others but they all were associated with a consistent recurrence of an interaction. These activity types involved things such as talking in the car, going with dad on work trips, doing things as a family, and playing games in the car. Such events suggest a sense of stability and consistency in the relationship between father and son. For example, one man recalled:

Sundays [focused on] having our family time. He [my father] wouldn't, he was a farmer full time but never on a Sunday, except during beet harvest, and the rest of the year Sunday was family time. It was Church and family—period. He's always been that way, he still is, he will not work on Sundays, except for beet harvest, that's it. In the evening he'd come in, on a summer evening he would quit a little earlier and he'd take us all out to Dairy Queen. Whenever we went to Dairy Queen we always got a cone and he would bring it and just as he was going to give us the cone he would lick off the tip. (M9-1)

This account is a nice example of how a sense of consistency and enjoyment in the activity is intentional by the father as he nurtures the relationship with his son and other family

members. The routine is not complicated but rather it is consistent and enjoyable. In another account a son describes his experience in going with his father and watching his father work:

Occasionally he [my father] would take me on his visits to schools, especially later when he didn't have as much territory to cover and he could come home at night. So he would take me on his tours and visits to other schools, and that was kind of neat as an elementary school student to see how other schools looked and how they operated. To me, what I learned from that was his dedication to his job and how good he was at it. He could connect to teachers and administrators at schools and that's why he became so successful at the job was because of that. It was interesting [go with him] and to watch him. (M7-4, 5)

Father-child interaction that occurs through routines can vary from riding with a father in the car to playing video games together on a regular basis. The key to this pattern is the consistency of the activity which offers a reliable mechanism for personal time and interaction between father and child (as well as other family members). Again, this theme speaks to the concept that simple things such as regular talks with a child or engaging in family routines can strengthen parent-child connection and such little moments make a difference in sustaining such connection. Key interactions that were common during routines were communication, sharing time together, observing a father's activities, and expressing appreciation.

Events, Traditions, and Relationship Patterns as Connection Experiences

The next set of themes involved minor occurrences in the study narratives of adult sons but deserve some attention since they were described. Three activity contexts that were each described one to three times by participants were events, traditions, and relationship patterns. Events involve a father's efforts to make an ordinary experience into something memorable and special. Traditions involve an established activity with an associated sense of historic and family meaning. Finally, relationship patterns are focused

on interactional quality as father and child engage in consistent and meaningful exchanges that foster a sense of connection. While these themes were not dominant in the study narratives they were also not irrelevant. A brief description of the connection experiences linked with these themes is given here.

Two male adult children shared accounts of recreational activities as experiences that their fathers made into a memorable event. In each case, the father's efforts to take the time to make something ordinary into something special and memorable initiated both experiences. These recreational activities involved family vacations and family activities. For one man, his father's efforts to involve him actively in planning family vacation trips made the experience a memorable event. They would plan the vacation routes together and then even at a young age the son was given a primary role as the "navigator" for the family vacation:

I would sit there with the maps and I would tell him [my father], well, you have to take this exit up here. Then every night along the trip, at night we would find a hotel, we didn't have hotels planned out ahead of time, we just would go and drive around until, we found a place. My sister and I would always beg for a place with a pool. So, at night we would get out the maps and he and I would plan the route for the next day. (M5-4, 5)

This account furnished an example of how a father's initiative in taking an activity and involving his son in a meaningful way made it into something special by going above the necessary measures for the activity. Making something into an event can be important in adding extra impact to the father-child connection. Another example shared by an adult son focused on how his father made going out for ice cream a fun and lasting memory. The activities described in each case revolve around going the extra step to make the experience memorable while sharing time together, teaching a child a skill and communicating.

Traditions also emerged a couple of times as a minor theme in interviews with the participants. In each case the tradition activity was initiated by the parent (father). In one case, an adult male child gave an example of a connection point that was facilitated made through holiday tradition. This tradition suggests a sense of connection linked with family togetherness and the enjoyment of each other's presence. The activity was described in this way:

The most enjoyable [experiences were] probably the ones that created traditions. We always went down and got our Christmas tree in the woods in northern South Dakota. That is something that we do today with our children that is exactly the same way we did it then. It was one of those things you had to get away from town or you wouldn't have been able to do it. . . . I probably enjoyed my father and my family more when we were forced to stay at home, Christmas specifically. That is probably when I felt, I don't know if I felt the closest at that point in my life, but in hind sight that is when I feel the closest is when we were doing family things without the rest of the extended family. (M1-5, 7)

This example describes a tradition that was started by his father and the son has carried it on with his children. This account highlights the power of a lasting connection that the child felt during the interaction with his father in this tradition while growing up and its permanence over time. A tradition is an established (or repetitive) activity associated with particular meaning (cultural, family, etc.) and this account nicely dramatizes how a tradition can be a context for lasting connection in family life. Interactions associated with tradition as an activity included sharing time together, celebrating an occasion, and communicating with each other.

A final activity context that emerged as a minor theme among men was the occurrence of a consistent relationship pattern over time. Two sons shared examples of this pattern. Both of these cases were initiated by the father. The focus in these accounts was primarily on the relationship pattern that was fostered between the father and child. For

example, one man shared how his father involved him in different work projects around the home in a manner that involved extending trust and confidence to him. He recalled:

I would end up doing a lot of the chores like mowing the lawn and stuff. At the same time I came to feel like dad trusted me with those things. I never felt bad doing it, maybe once or twice, but then after a while I realized there was a reason he was asking me to do it. He was trusting me with it. I actually remember one time he was trying to assemble a barbeque grill and kind of got lost and handed me the instructions. I was fairly young and he said, "Help me out and read these." Again, it was just part of that trust thing. (M12-4, 5)

This example shows how a father's pattern of interaction with his son can stimulate the connection between them to grow stronger. In the case of a relationship pattern, the theme is linked to a type of interaction the child has found that makes him feel closer to his father. The pattern can involve interactions such as sharing time together or building a character virtue. These minor themes are important complementary types of activities that also generate opportunities for connection between fathers and children.

Obstacles to Father-Child Connection

In addition to be asked about connection experiences, adult children were also asked about times that the connection between them and their fathers was strained or challenged. Each experience described was mapped out using the same coding process as was used for connection experiences but applied to the context of experiences in which connection was challenged. Overall for both males and females there were far fewer examples of blocks to parent-child connection than were given for positive connection experiences. This result was expected due to the fact one of the qualifications for the study was that the adult child thought he or she had a positive relationship with his or her father. No major themes were found in the analysis of obstacles to connection. However, there

were two minor themes that emerged for both males and females and both of them involved the contexts of memorable occasions and personal interactions.

Obstacles to Father-Child Connection Described by Adult Daughters

Adult daughters who were interviewed in the study articulated two primary themes that highlighted obstacles to the sense of connection between fathers and daughters. The two contexts associated most clearly with obstacles to connection were memorable occasions and personal interactions. Clearly, the themes suggest that the patterns of a father's reactions during such contexts were much more critical to the obstacle occurring than the contexts themselves. The specific themes associated with obstacles to connection within each of these contexts are shared below.

Obstacles to Connection During Memorable Occasions

As with positive connections described by adult women, memorable occasions emerged as the most discussed context related to obstacles to connection. Nine of the female participants shared examples of such obstacles to connection and provided 15 examples that occurred between them and their father during memorable occasions. The three specific activity types described by women in this context included support in a time of need, communication and recreation. A majority of those experiences were circumstance-initiated while in a few cases the child or context played a role in the initiation of what occurred.

For women, negative or non-supportive interactions with their fathers during a memorable time were a minor theme associated with obstacles to connection. The type of experiences mentioned most often were times were times of need or transition when a father's desired support was not perceived to be present. Such occasions accounted for 7 of

the 15 examples that were shared. Usually, these activities where the daughter perceived a lack of support involved important personal transitions such as a family move or a daughter's actions and choices in pursuing autonomy and independence. In such cases the adult daughters suggested there was a sense of disapproval and distance between themselves and their fathers at the time. For example, one woman recalled:

I think maybe there were times that his [my father's] disappointment more than anything, when I did something stupid every now and then. I still think [of his comment], "You know, for a smart girl you do some stupid things." Maybe a boyfriend or whatever, you know, [him thinking] this guy is not all you think he is or whatever. Years later you think, hey, he was sort right, but something like that, you are expecting to feel that support you always have and then it's not there. I suppose probably that it does kind of put some kind of rift there, at least for the time that that is going on. There are a lot of other things that have been under the bridge too, so you expect ups and downs, hills and valleys in any relationship. (F3-5)

This account showcases the sense of disappointment and distance that a child can feel for a time when a father is not supportive of a child in a way that the child expects. This pattern of perceived lack of support from a father when a child feels a need for it is central to this context as an obstacle to connection between fathers and children. In another case, a daughter explained her search for independence that was met with resistance:

As I started getting older and wanting more and more independence, he [my father] pulled back even harder, because he wasn't ready to let me grow up. At that age I didn't understand it. I just couldn't understand why he treated me like a baby or why he couldn't see how old I was or be happy that I was growing up. (F10-5)

Transition points in a child's growth represent significant occasions when a need for parental guidance and support may be strongly felt by the child. This seems to create a natural tension between fathers who wish to guide a child and a child's feelings or decisions that may contrast with a father's stance. Daughters who perceived a lack of support or empathy at such times framed such experiences as "distant" or "disappointing" and connection was more limited. The interactions that adult daughters recalled as lacking

were communicating with their father and the father giving desired support and empathy when the child felt it was needed.

A few additional experiences were shared by adult daughters in which obstacles to connection were perceived between a father and child. These experiences tended to occur in the contexts of recreation and communication. The two patterns that were important involved divergent interests between the father and daughter and conflict between the father and daughter about family relationships. At times the context of recreation created divergent interests between a father and daughter and so a daughter did not feel supported. An adult daughter discussed the lack of support she felt in her recreational activities in this way:

I was a hockey cheerleader and that's what I did, and he [my father] always wanted me to play basketball. Well, I am four feet eleven when I was in ninth grade, and I just wasn't going to be a basketball player. So I always felt like he was disappointed that I wasn't a basketball player. I loved cheerleading, so I was a cheerleader and I was a hockey cheerleader. Well, he didn't like hockey either, so he didn't come and watch me cheer. I mean, I cheered from the time I was in seventh grade to a senior for hockey and he came maybe to two games and watched me. So, I always felt like he didn't support anything I did when it came to things like that. (F5-8)

This pattern corresponds closely with the previous finding related to support during a transition or time of need. Again, if recreational or other activities are involved and there is not a feeling of being “in sync” between the father and daughter, the perceived lack of support can be an obstacle in the connection between a father and a child.

Patterns of communication and family relationships were also a setting for challenges to connection. Four examples were shared that highlighted a daughter's conflict with her father over his treatment of her or others in family relationships. Two of them involved the father's relationship with a spouse, one of them involved the father's relationship with a sibling, and one of them involved the father and daughter directly.

These experiences involved different perspectives between the daughter and her father and times of anger and frustration. The daughters suggested a sense of hurt and distance between father and child in these situations. One woman explained her conflict and the negative communication in this way:

I remember him [my father] coming in the car and grabbing a couple of us and knocking our heads together. He said, "Stop making so much noise." He was trying so hard to concentrate and everything else and we thought how unfair that was. You know, you can't knock heads together if you only have one head. I wasn't doing anything so, and I think you're like the perfect child and you never do anything, and then all of a sudden he just picked me and one of my sisters and knocked our heads together so we'd behave. I sat there a little star-gazed, trying to figure out what had happened but I think that was my big first lack of connectedness with him because it was like, how dare he pick on me. (F1-11, 12)

This example gives insight on how a moment of frustration by a father can cause both hurt feelings and a sense of distance between a father and child. The other examples shared also reflected frustration and a lack of connection due to communication difficulties by the father in a family setting. In particular, these cases did not involve the daughter directly but instead resulted from the daughter's observation of her father's negative communication with a sibling or spouse and expressing disagreement with it. Thus, a father's actions in the family setting can indirectly discourage or become an obstacle to connection when it is simply observed by a daughter. Again, the interactions perceived as lacking were communication, empathy, and support.

Obstacles to Connection During Personal Interactions

Personal interactions were the only other context discussed by adult women as a setting for obstacles to connection between themselves and their father. Seven females described such experiences and provided eight examples of obstacles to connection between fathers and children. All of these experiences were circumstance-initiated

occasions when the father had an opportunity to communicate differently or provide support. Similar to the previous category, these occasions all occurred in the context of a daughter's perceived need for support in a time of personal or family-related transition. They could be classified as one-time, memorable occasions focused around a time of need or transition. However, the narratives each reflected an emphasis on the personal interactions between father and daughter and thus were classified under that coding category.

Seven of the eight experiences described by women represented a time of personal or family-related transition and involved either dating, marriage, birth of a child or having a miscarriage. These transition experiences during a daughter's life typically occurred in late adolescence or early adulthood and were accompanied by a desire for positive support and communication from the father. Instead, the examples highlighted a sense of strain and lack of support from the father in the relationship. For example, one woman recalled of her dating experience:

I guess the example I'm thinking is as I was getting older, into upper high school or college age, and starting to seriously date, having serious boyfriends. I would say those types of connection situations were hard with my dad. I think, just him thinking I was out with a boy doing who knows what. I lived at home my first two years in college and so there would be conversations about you can't be out all night, even though you are technically an adult but you live at home. So, I think that created a tension in a sense. I'm eighteen or nineteen years old, trying to be an adult and go out and have fun in college and he was still trying to protect me. I think during those couple of years there was a sense of some tension, but nothing that I say created any difficulties in the long term. The effect that I see is that he just cared and he was concerned. (F9-6)

In this instance, the example shows how a father is pulling back his support as his daughter is dating and trying to become her own person. At the time it caused some distance and strain in the relationship but it was not long lasting although it was an obstacle for a period.

The personal interaction was not perceived as caring or supportive despite the father's intentions. In another context the strain and distance were magnified due to the father's negative personal interactions that did not appear caring or supportive. When her baby was born an adult daughter recounted her experience:

He [my father] kept making all these comments about how we should just go home, let's just take the baby and go home. I always felt like it was, it had nothing to do with what was best for me or what was best for my daughter. It was that he didn't like sitting up at the hospital. So, let's just go home so I don't have to come up here, or feel like I have to be up here sitting at the hospital, and that is a very common theme through our whole lives too, everything is always all about my dad. So whatever you did, or whatever we had going on, it's always what is dad going to think of that, or will dad want to do that, or like when we all get together it's like what's going to keep dad entertained, cause if he isn't doing what he wants to do then he will make it miserable for everybody else. (F5-8)

The father's interaction here is perceived as indifferent rather than supportive, callous instead of caring, and thus as an obstacle to personal connection. These examples illustrate that a father's lack of support and empathy during personal interactions can act as a major obstacle to parent-child connection. In addition, the context of personal and family-related transitions such as dating, marriage or having a child seem to be critical periods for daughters when they actively seek to discern a father's demeanor and support.

Obstacles to Father-Child Connection Described by Adult Sons

Adult sons interviewed in this study highlighted two contexts that were common as they experienced obstacles to the sense of connection between fathers and themselves. The two contexts that were common as they described obstacles to connection were memorable occasions and personal interactions. However, once again the themes analyzed suggest that the patterns of a father's reactions during such contexts were much more critical to the obstacle occurring than the contexts themselves. The specific themes associated with obstacles to connection within each of these contexts are shared below.

Obstacles to Connection During Memorable Occasions

As with daughters, sons also described memorable occasions as the most common context associated with obstacles to connection. Ten male participants gave 17 examples of obstacles to connection that occurred during a memorable occasion. Similar to women, the main activity types described by men in this context included support in a time of need or transition and communication. A majority of those experiences were circumstance-initiated while in a few cases the context played a role in the experience.

Among the narratives shared by men, 12 of the 17 accounts of obstacles to connection involved the context of support during a time of need or transition. Adult sons were thus similar to daughters as two thirds of the examples shared dealt primarily with a perceived lack of support from the father during a time of need or transition. A time of need or transition creates an opportunity for fathers to express clear support and the desire for such support seems heightened in children at those times. The different examples included family moves, a father's illness, a son's personal struggles, and other critical times. A sense of distance or strain during the described period was common and was similar to what adult daughters explained. Times of personal transition or stress in family life may push children to feel an increased need for such support. One man in the study described his feelings during a relationship break-up and his fathers' reaction:

I just think of a couple things, one was kind of in the middle of my college years. I had a break-up with a girlfriend, who I had been seeing for a long time, and it was a pretty serious relationship. My parents, both of them, just didn't seem to really recognize how deeply it affected me at the time. It was just kind of like, oh, just brush it off and no big deal. I think that's the best example. I think I try to be more helpful and more open emotionally with my children then they were. (M5-9)

This example highlights the need this young man felt for support and the perceived lack of support and positive communication from his father at the time. Instead of taking

advantage of the circumstance that presented itself to lend increased support and empathy, the father's reaction of seeming indifference and lack of support contributed to a diminished sense of connection. It is the father's reaction in this setting that diminishes connection while the setting primarily establishes the context of need felt by the child. The experiences shared by sons suggest that men and women are similar in their desire for support during a time of need or transition and lack of support is often perceived as an obstacle to connection in such circumstances.

Five of the examples shared by male participants regarding memorable occasions in this context were characterized by difficulties in the communication context. In nearly all of these cases the episode involved a discipline situation. A father's negative or harsh communication in such circumstances was likely to be remembered as an obstacle to connection in the narrative accounts. Instead of connection these experiences led to a sense of hurt, frustration and distance between fathers and their sons. One male described his experience in this way:

I don't even know what I got in trouble for, but mom was upset about something and he [my father] came chasing after and hit me with a stick or something one time when I was, I don't know, fifteen or whatever. That time I was like, I wasn't even involved in something that my other brothers were getting in trouble for and it was the whole thing. I was like, you don't even bother to stop and find out what was going on, you're just listening to mom and taking after us. . . .With the spanking and all that kind of stuff, I didn't feel that that did anything, it didn't help fix any problems, it made me mad and it didn't solve the problem. It didn't bring us back together.

(M4-12, 13)

Communication moments are often memorable when they involve more intense feelings such as anger or indignation. Another son noted his experience of driving the car into the ditch late at night and his father's disappointment and frustration because of the incident. The obstacles to connection can be due to feelings of frustration or simply a sense of

distance between each other. However, in each case described the obstacle to connection was associated with communication difficulties during a discipline situation or other time of concern.

Obstacles to Connection During Personal Interactions

Personal interaction between adult sons and fathers was the only other context that emerged as a setting for obstacles to connection. This was a minor theme. Four men provided examples of involvement in personal interactions that resulted in a diminished sense of connection with their fathers. The activity types that they engaged in during these interactions were work and recreation. The examples provided were somewhat dissimilar to those that women shared as they primarily focused on divergent interests between fathers and sons and the limited support that sons perceived for their interests. While the son in each example expressed a desire for support, it was not necessarily triggered by a critical time of need or personal transition. Instead, sons found themselves with interests that diverged from a father and sought his approval and support but did not feel it strongly. One son described it in this way:

With my sister being really into sports and her being older than me, he [my father] kind of had high expectations for me and I was average. I was okay in most things but not great, not a standout like her. There was a while I felt like he was almost a little disappointed in that, and that was a little hard for me, but then after a while that kind of went away and he realized that I was pretty good student compared to my sister. So my path was more of an academic one and later on he was really proud of me. I think it was a little bit of floundering as he figured out what I was, just a little bit for a while there when I was younger in early junior high to early high school. I felt that a little bit but then again it went away because he trusted me with other things. (M12-6)

This account highlights an example of the sense of distance that may occur in a relationship during times of personal interaction when a child wants support but does not feel it. In contexts of recreation, this can happen when fathers desire their sons (or daughters) to

participate in certain sports or activities but the child has divergent interests. The interactions desired by sons in this context include sharing time together and receiving support and empathy. Fathers who do not meet a son's expectation in this regard may find obstacles to connection as a result.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide a summary and discussion of the key findings from this study and examine their implications. It will also include explore theoretical implications, study limitations, future directions for research, practical applications, and concluding ideas.

Findings of the Study

The intent of this study was to examine what fathers are actually doing to connect with their children from the perspective of adult children and gain an understanding of what connection means in the father-child relationship. This research project generated findings that provide insight into how connection is defined in the father child relationship as well as many findings regarding how connection is established as well as diminished through father-child interactions. These findings and their implications are discussed below.

Meaning of Connection

Participant responses in this study suggested there is a need for connection between a father and a child. In addition, the definition of parent-child connection from a phenomenological perspective was enhanced in this study.

These findings indicated one major element of connection involves a sense of knowing the other person through being bonded together. A sense of mutual understanding is crucial in feeling a connection between father and child. Similar ideas were reflected in the definition by Brotherson et al. (2005), which defined connection between a father and child as involving “both a sense of feeling emotionally and psychically connected with a

son or daughter and the father's efforts to create and maintain healthy bonds between the child, himself, and others in the child's environment" (p.5).

Along with a sense of knowing each other, other elements that emerged in the way adult children describe connection are emotional closeness and love, shared history and similar interests, and a sense of security and trust. Other ideas that some men and women found to be important to a sense of connection included being comfortable around one another, having shared values, and expressing support. These findings are quite similar to the definition given by Dollahite et al (1997) regarding connection, that connection will "connect generations, instill values, increase affection and provide for mutual support" (p.27).

Men and women gave a few differences in defining connection. Women identified and emphasized the importance of respect, fulfilling expectations and security as key elements in connection. The idea of the father providing security to daughters was also found to be important by Kavalier (1988). In general, most elements of connection were described by both men and women. Each individual has a different way of describing what connection means in their own words. However, overall the definition came down to having an emotional bond between two people by getting to know them and sharing a sense of understanding, security, common interests, and fulfilled expectations. The idea of what connection means to someone may also vary depending on what they need from the relationship or the child's stage of development. Thus, nuances may arise due to differences according to gender, life stage, or particular condition. Increasing our insight into what connection means to individuals will help in the process of figuring out how to go about making and maintaining meaningful connections between father and child.

Connection Points and Obstacles

The accounts described by adult children of the varied experiences they remembered of connecting with their fathers were insightful. There were similarities as well as differences within the experiences shared. There were some important over-arching factors that were identified in the experiences that emerged from the narratives. As described by Dollahite et al. (1997) in their ideas on generative fathering, such experiences provide examples of the work fathers do through activities to build connections with their children. The common themes identified by adult children and their significance are discussed below.

This study was a phenomenological investigation that did not intend to create new theory. However, some of the coding patterns that emerged in the analysis process may provide building blocks for future efforts in building theory and concepts that apply to father-child relationships and parent-child connection. These concepts are discussed later.

Memorable occasions, activities, personal interactions, routines and events were the five similar contexts of connection described by both men and women. The activities used in building the connection were not always similar between daughters and sons but the contexts were basically the same. Many of the experiences involved interaction between the child and father. Such a pattern was also found to be central in building connection by Brotherson et al. (2003) and Brotherson et al. (2005).

The context of Memorable Occasions was the most commonly cited context for connection among both men and women. In particular, the theme of supporting a child during a time of need was first in significance for both men and women. All of the examples given by both men and women included some kind of positive interaction

between the child and the father. Women and men both gave examples of their father caring for them when they were ill or lending support while moving in to adulthood. Another example that was brought up by multiple men and women was the idea of being able to care for their father in a time of health need or other challenge. In a sense, this pattern was meaningful for adult children because they were able to do for their father what he did for them when they were young. Participants who described a sense of connection during memorable occasions noted that the initiation of the connection was most often due to a circumstance that presented itself and was taken advantage by the parent.

Recreation was expressed as the most common activity type in the Activities context. However, the recreational activities used as examples were sometimes different between men and women. Males discussed outdoor activities or sporting events. The examples shared of fathers and sons spending time doing outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing or engaging in some kind of sporting event seen as masculine reinforce findings of Raley & Bianchi (2006). The outdoor activities were also described by some men in the study as an opportunity for one on one time with their fathers, which corresponds well with how men describe such activities in findings from Crouter and Crowley (1990) as well as Yeung et al. (2001). The father's involvement in the child's sporting interest has also been found by many other researchers (Coakley, 2005; Harrington, 2005; Shakib & Dunbar, 2004). Women also discussed outdoor activities in their accounts but they expanded into other areas such as going on vacations, playing instruments together, attending sporting events and being in a father-daughter program. In all cases the idea of an involved father used in research by Marks and Palkovitz (2004) to classify a "good" father was described by adult children in the study. In the context of

Activities, the parent (father) initiated the event as an opportunity for connection more often than not for both men and women.

Personal Interactions for both men and women involved the context of a father attending important events and other activity types. The presence of the father at an event of the child, be it sport-related, academic, or otherwise, was remembered as significant and adult children felt it was important to have the father in attendance. Attendance at events gives a good example of a father's willingness to be present and involved in a child's life. Jain et al. (1996) have studied two types of fathers, "progressive" and traditional, and would indicate that "progressive" fathers are more nurturing and focus on being present for a child. This finding also parallels to the findings of Brotherson and Dollahite (1997) in that attendance at important events was a pattern of personal involvement used to connect with children. In all cases of personal interaction shared in the narratives, the initiation of the connection occurred through taking advantage of an existing context where fathers and children could connect.

Routines were a context described by participants that involved the activity types of family time and communication. The pattern of activities used to connect through a routine somewhat differed for men and women. Routines centered around family time such as evening activities, bedtime activities, dinner time and homework were memorable for women. Men only discussed family time routines as related to outings. Communication was discussed by both men and women as important and involved things such as a father telling stories or talking with dad in the car. The parent most often initiated the routines that were discussed in the accounts.

Events that were described by both men and women involved a father's efforts to make an ordinary interaction into a special occasion. Events were highlighted by both men and women that involved recreation, although for women there were other activities made into events as well. In all cases the parent initiated the interaction and took the steps to make the interaction special for the child.

Both routines and events represent positive activity types that can contribute to the repertoire of activities available for fathers to employ in connecting with children. The concept of "relationship work" in the generative fathering framework emphasizes such activities and their value as mechanisms for connection. These findings highlight the addition of routines and events as activity types that fathers can employ in taking their responsibility as a parent seriously and nurturing the development of their relationship with a child. Those additional activity types add to the research on the topic by Dollahite et al. (1997) and Brotherson et al. (2005).

As with experiences that build connection, there are also those experiences that can either be an obstacle to connection or have a negative impact on connection. Adult daughters and sons both described the contexts of memorable occasions and personal interactions as settings for connection challenges. The themes that emerged for men and women were both similar and distinctive.

For men and women a majority of the experiences related concerning obstacles to connection involved memorable occasions. The vast majority of examples occurred during times of transition and need when the support that a child needed or desired was not given. In particular, for women such times were usually linked with significant personal or family transitions. This was also common for men. There were activity types that seemed more

common for men, such as communication difficulties with a father in a discipline situation. Times of significant need or transition were cited by both men and women as critical points for support from a father. If the support was not present then the connection was strained. For a child who is used to having the support of a father, a lack of support can be difficult and some participants described feeling hurt or distant from their father. Others felt they had disappointed their father through their actions. Nearly all of the examples involving obstacles to connection were initiated by a circumstance that presented itself to the father and child and according to the child's perception they were handled in a negative or non-supportive way.

Personal interactions that involved obstacles to connection also differed. Women mentioned more often that there was either a breakdown in communication or what was being communicated by the father was not supportive. For men, the obstacle to connection in personal interactions revolved around differences in interest and not receiving support for things they liked to do recreationally or otherwise. For both men and women, the lack of connection came down to not feeling supported by their father at certain times. As with memorable occasions, when a child is used to having positive conversations with the father and then the communication between them is not seen as positive this can be hurtful to the child.

Gender Differences in the Findings

Just as men and women described similarities in their experiences of connection with their fathers there were also differences. As discussed previously, men and women shared five similar themes regarding patterns of connection with their fathers. The specific activity types done within those contexts differed to some degree for men and women.

Also, men described two additional themes that were not discussed by women in the same context.

The two contexts of connection that emerged in the male narratives that differed from females were the minor themes of relationship pattern and tradition. While these were not included as key themes for women, this may simply be due to the fact that the study had a limited sample size and therefore the accounts did not emerge from those who participated. For men, the activity types of work and celebrating an occasion were important to relationship patterns that fathers and son established. Also, the importance of traditions emerged for fathers and sons. These were both parent (father) initiated patterns that made a connection with the child.

The biggest differences by gender in the findings were found by looking within particular themes. The activity types used in forging the parent-child connection may have been similar but the actual content of the activity was sometimes quite different for sons and daughters. At other times the activity used to achieve the connection differed as well between men and women.

Comparing the context of memorable occasions, both in times of connection with fathers as well as in times when connection was difficult, women found support to be highly important during “big moments” in life linked to the family setting. Stories about marriage, engagement, or birth of a child were the primary experiences that women recounted in accounts of connection with their fathers. This finding does not suggest that men do not remember these experiences or did not connect with their fathers during such times. However, they did not discuss them or use big, family-related transitions as a common theme in their narratives. Men did give examples of getting support from fathers

during changes or struggles in life. In a sense, women talked more often about relational transitions linked with family life that required support while men spoke more often about individual transitions that required support. In addition, many of the examples men gave were from childhood while women often gave examples from early adulthood.

Personal interactions as context for connection between fathers and children also highlighted a couple of differences in men and women. The activity types that males discussed were times of support and celebrations as connecting points. Females discussed learning/education as the main activity used to connect with a child in this context.

The accounts that focused on Activities as a context for connection between a father and child were very similar for men and women. While most of the patterns were similar, one difference noticed was that found was women more often used the example of how working together can become a connection point. Working with a father was seen a positive experience by women and was not mentioned by men in this context.

In looking at the contexts of Routines and Events, there seemed to be few meaningful differences. Men shared examples of a few additional activities they remember their father using with them during routines, while women gave some additional activities used to make a connection during an event.

Similarities and differences by gender related to obstacles to connection have already been discussed in the findings portion of the study.

Implications for Research and Theory

Qualitative research can be extremely useful in helping to develop theoretical concepts based on exploratory research. As a result, it becomes an important part of this project to point out some possible theoretical implications of this study. Also, it is

important to consider how this study has added to the area of fathering research. This section identifies some ideas that present theoretical possibilities.

The first theoretical concept that presents itself when analyzing the data was the idea of initiation. This theoretical idea suggests that someone or something must initiate a connection point for it to occur in a relationship. When a connection opportunity occurs it may be initiated first by one or more of four things that emerged in the study analysis: the parent, child, circumstance, or context. This initiation mechanism identified by the researchers represents a starting point for the connection experience and for it to work the child and/or parent (father) has to be responsive. If the parent or child is responsive it could lead to a connection; however, a negative response or a non-response could limit or strain the connection. This theoretical implication may be helpful as a concept in the fact that initiation of a connection point can happen in many different ways. This concept leads toward another theoretical concept—the context of the event.

The context of the connection experience is the thing that happens to be the setting for the experience. Many different things can be looked at as contexts for parent-child connection. The theoretical and research possibilities include what contexts are most common and their linkages to different patterns of initiation or activity types. Themes that emerged as common contexts of the connection experience were personal interactions, memorable occasions, activities, routines and many more. These contexts represent the grounding of the experience in a certain setting. In these contexts an activity of some kind typically occurs to either build or block connection between fathers and children. These defined contexts furnish another possibility for further theory and research on parent-child connection. The activity types that take place in these contexts provide concrete ideas of

things that fathers can do and situations for fathers to be responsive to in connecting with their child.

The activities that were actually occurring between fathers and children were the key findings of this study. These patterns can provide both theoretical understanding of how fathers connect with children, as perceived by children themselves, and also give practical examples to fathers of things that have worked to build connection in the father-child relationship. The themes described by adult children can be helpful in teaching fathers ways to connect with their own children. The activity types identified may also be useful in expanding the theoretical understanding of involvement with the child. The generative fathering concept of relationship work can be further fleshed out through identifying specific activity types and interactions that fathers are implementing. Looking at the similarities and differences in experiences discussed by men and women also brings more insight to gendered patterns that may be linked with connection. For example, the contexts in which men and women have connections with their fathers may be similar but the content of activities involved in the connection experience may be different in many cases.

This study has helped to further knowledge of connection in the generative fathering framework. It has provided a better picture of the meaning of connection in the father-child relationship. This research has also given voice to a retrospective look at connection experiences and obstacles as seen by adult children and how it differs between men and women. The project identified what fathers are doing, the actual activities, to be involved with their child and that are perceived by the child as connection points. Finally,

this research has found areas fathers need to be aware of when interacting with their children that can become obstacles to connection.

These theoretical and research implications suggest the potential value of the findings on father-child connection and how they may be broadened to be useful in more in-depth theory and research. Beyond these suggestions there are other theoretical possibilities embedded within the findings for this study. The phenomenological definition of connection presents the opportunity for constructing a more rounded, multi-faceted construct of parent-child connection. Significant theoretical work on the idea of parent-child connection remains to be done. In addition, the specific findings that emerged regarding contexts for connection and activity types that seem to provide meaningful settings for connection can continue to be explored. The exploration of theoretical possibilities is an important avenue of investigation to be pursued regarding this research.

Practical Applications of the Research

The practical applications of this study provide some useful insight into the question of what is that fathers can do with children to form a lasting connection. The findings of the study may have practical applications for research, education, or clinical settings.

Possible practical applications of the study findings in the area of research are many. This research gives insight and understanding of what builds connection between fathers and their children. It also provides actual examples of things that fathers did according to adult children help build a positive connection. Instead of the research telling us that fathers are important and need to do things with their children, this research identifies some specific patterns and ideas regarding what to do. The findings also help to

identify situations that need to be handled carefully so as not to hurt the connection.

Additionally, this research has the potential to aid research efforts regarding the impact a good relationship with a father can have on a child. Such understating can aid in the development of better instruments of research in order to gather more useful data that will give insight as to how to help fathers understand the importance of connection with their children as well as how to go about achieving that connection. Finally, I believe this study will spark theoretical ideas that can have an impact on research done in the future and how to meaningfully provide assistance to fathers.

Another potential arena of application for these findings is in education. I believe this research can aid in the development of educational programs, resources, and opportunities. As the knowledge base about the importance of father involvement and the impact it has on children continues to expand, educators will be able to take this material and use it in training other professionals, communities, and most importantly families. This research can also be formulated or adapted for use in seminars, classrooms, retreats, newspaper articles, magazines, books, pamphlets and many other media opportunities in order to further everyone's knowledge and understanding and better help fathers and families as a whole.

The final arena I would like to suggest this study has application in is the realm of therapy and clinical application. In doing this research many participants made comments about the "bad rap" fathers often get on television shows and how they are thought to be the passive parent. This research helps to provide a look into the lives of adult children who believe their father played a vital role in their life both as a child and as an adult. The knowledge this research provides may allow mental health professionals to see the impact

fathers have on children as well as what fathers did or did not do to make that impact in their child's life. If clinicians are informed about the importance of fathers making the effort to be connected to their children, they can take that information to their clients as well as to the public. The study findings can also give clinicians some practical examples to take to families, especially fathers in therapeutic work.

Narrative accounts have been gathered for this study. The presentation of the results and the study in general is in a narrative form. The findings in this study may assist clinicians in understanding how to guide fathers in learning both the importance of a connection with their child as well as how to go about building that connection. Narrative therapy with fathers struggling with being involved with their children could be a powerful experience. All the participants in this study shared their stories and experiences in narrative form. The narratives represent how each individual made sense of their experience and gave meaning to it as an important element of their lives. By telling stories people are able to put into context their thoughts and give meaning to their memories. This process allows them to apply this meaning to their lives. Through listening to their stories clinicians can assist the person in their journey and understand more clearly how to help them. Clinicians may benefit from this study because it can give insight into how the experience of being fathered is storied and how adult children are affected in that process.

These three domains make up the main areas of practical applications of the study findings. This research has the potential to be useful and make a difference in how the professional world and the general public sees and approaches father-child connection and its importance in a child's life.

Limitations of the Study

This study provides needed insight into how connection is defined in relationships, how connections are both made and blocked, and the differences in ways fathers connect with a daughter or son. There are also certain limitations to this study that need to be recognized. One of the limitations to this study is the small group of adult children interviewed for this study. To make this study more applicable to a diversity of families then more adult children would need to be interviewed. Also, the geographical area would need to be extended to other parts of the United States. A majority of the participants for this study were found and interviewed within a general area of southeastern North Dakota and southeast Minnesota.

Other limitations to the study include the focus on adult children who had a good relationship with their father, were married, were between the ages of 30 and 60 and had children of their own. The sampling frame did not include all adult children. It was a selective sample which was biased towards positive experiences, which also leads to fewer examples of obstacles to connection. Opening the subject pool up to all adult children could provide valuable insight into how different dynamics influence the father child relationship. A person may also be influenced in their answers by where they are at in the life cycle. A large age range was used which in turn lead to interviewing people at different life stages. Some participants gave examples of connection experiences with their father later in life. Such examples are still connection building experiences but they are not as helpful with looking at what fathers did with their young children to develop connection. Continuation of this research with diverse populations of children at different life stages could be useful in overcoming these limitations. The sample that was used had little to no

diversity in race and ethnicity. These limitations do not allow for generalizability of this study to all fathers.

This study provides a basis for research on the meaning of connection, connection points between fathers and children, obstacles to connection, and gender differences in connection. However, it does have limitations and there are topics that could be built upon for future research and to make the research more generalizable to the public as a whole.

Future Directions for Research

Areas of significance that may provide further information might include looking at how patterns of connection with their own children were influenced by their father. For example, how has the way an adult son or daughter parents their children been influenced by the way they were fathered? Are there any particular experiences they remember or shared in connecting with their father that they also try to share with their children? Are there any particular experiences connecting with their own father that were important in the ways they connect with their own children? Another important topic to explore in future research is what aspect of being fathered made them want to use similar connection points with their own children. For example, what were some of the activities or interactions they had with their father they share with their own children? What was it about these activities or interactions that they chose to use it with their own children? What meaning do these interactions have for them in their life now? Such research would aid in understanding the impact a father's relationship with their child has on future generations. Another idea for future research is looking at how having a non-resident father affects children's idea of connection and the connection experiences they had with their father. Due to the amount of

time and accessibility of the child, the way fathers are involved and connect with the child may be unique from custodial fathers.

This area of research may hold value and could be helpful to fathers and families. Further research may also provide information useful for developing parent education, strengthening support for fathers, and showing fathers the impact they have on their children and their children's children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the connection between fathers and children is regarded as important and meaningful in children's lives. Adult children perceive this connection to be important and share many examples of how it has impacted their lives. Also, there seem to be more similarities than differences when it comes to how fathers interact with children of different genders. The findings in this study suggest that the process of fathers seeing the importance of connecting with their child and taking steps to do so is fundamental to having a good connection.

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Previous research on father involvement has done a good job providing awareness of the fact that father involvement with a child is important. However, this current research does more to show what fathers need to do to be involved in their children's lives to form a connection. This study furnished insight into the narratives and genuine experiences of adult children who have experienced having a positive and connected relationship with their father. The findings indicate there are many different ways a father can connect with his child. The results also show that males and females do describe similar connection points in different ways, but that what a father is doing to connect during these experiences

is similar. Also, the essential meaning of connection for men and women is similar.

Connection between fathers and their children really is about each individual relationship and what the child needs from the father in that moment. It is the willingness of the father to engage in the experience with the child or not engage that makes the connection stronger or creates a connection challenge.

The role of being someone's father is a challenging but rewarding role when the relationship work is put in to build a connection. I thank those fathers of the adult children I interviewed for providing their children with positive experiences that led to a good connection between them and their children. I would also like to thank the adult children for their willingness to share their experiences of being fathered in order to advance this research on fathers. I hope it will help to give other fathers positive examples of ways to build a lasting connection with their children.

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APPENDIX A

Section I- Introduction and Informed Consent

Thank you so much for being willing to come in and meet and talk with me today. I feel privileged and excited to learn about your memories and thoughts regarding times your father connected with you as a child. This interview should last about 1 to 2 hours. Our interview today is focused on looking at what connection means to you, as well as memories you have of your father connecting with you as a child and what it meant to you as a child, and what it means to you now. Furthermore, we will look at how the way your father connected to you impacts the way you connect with your own children and the relationship between these connection points.

First, do you have any questions about the process before we proceed? (I will clarify any questions if presented at this time.)

We need to go over and have you sign an informed consent form to proceed. I will give a copy to keep in your records and I will take a signed copy for my records.

- **Informed Consent- Introduce and take 5-10 minutes to go over the project and informed consent document in detail.**

As we have reviewed, at some point we may wish to use the information that you have provided during our interview in presentations, papers, or projects done as a result of this research project. Your privacy will be fully protected and in order to ensure confidentiality your name and any other identifying information details will be changed.

Other Items to Complete

Please fill out and give back to me the following form (needs to be provided):

- **Participant Personal Information Form**

Provide this form to participants to be completed if he/she has not already completed it beforehand or it has not been provided.

Section II- Adult Child Interview

Now I'd like to visit with you. With your permission, I'll be tape-recording our interview for research purposes and also taking notes. If at any time you do not want something to be recorded, just let me know and we can turn the recorder off during that time.

- **Introduction- Spend about 15-20 minutes interviewing the participant about the different sections on the Personal Information Form and learning about his/her personal history and their history with their father. Ask them to tell me about her/his experience growing up as well as being a parent.**

Research Question #1 - How do adult children define connection or connectedness with their father (or father figure)? What is the meaning of a connection point to them?

- **#1 - Can you tell me what the term "connection" means to you?**
- **#2 - What does the term "connection" mean to you when looking at relationships?**

Research Question #2 - What are the connection points that adult children remember having with their fathers? What was the meaning of those experiences for them?

- **#3 – Can you tell me about the most enjoyable experience you ever had with your father? What meaning does that have experience have for you now?**

- **#4 - Can you tell me about an experience when you felt especially close emotionally to your father? What meaning does that experience have for you now?**
- **#5 - Can you tell me about an experience when you felt especially cared for and nurtured by your father? What meaning does that experience have for you now?**
- **#6 - Was there ever a time when your connection with your father was difficult? How did this affect your relationship with your father?**

Research Question #3 - What are the similarities or differences between adult sons and daughters in their ideas of connecting with their fathers? What are the similarities or differences between adult sons and daughters in the connection experiences that they described?

- **#7 - Can you share as a son/daughter how your experiences with your father affected you?**
- **#8 - Are there any activities you did or did not do together that can help us understand your relationship with your father? What did this mean to your relationship?**
- **#9 - Was there anything unique as a daughter/son you did with your father?**
- **#10 - Were there any unique connections or experiences you have as a son/daughter with your father that were important to you? What does this mean to you as son or daughter (man or woman)?**

Research Question #4 - Do the connection points that adult children remember with their fathers impact the way they connect with their own children?

- **#11 - How has the way you parent your child(ren) been influenced by the way you were fathered?**
- **#12 - Are there any particular experiences you remember or you shared when connecting with your father that you also have shared or try to share with your children?**
- **#13 - Are there any particular experiences connecting with your own father that have been particularly important in the ways you connect with your own children?**

Research Question #5 - What connections point or experiences are adult children using with their own children that their father used with them? What is the relationship between the connection points that adult children are using with their children and the connection points that their father used with them?

- **#14 - Can you share an activity or interaction you had with your father you share with your own children?**
- **#15 - Can you explain to me what it was about this activity or interaction that you chose to use it with your own children?**
- **#16 - What meaning do these interactions have for you in your life now?**

Conclusion

Ask the following questions to conclude and thank the participants:

- **What was the experience like for you?**
- **Why were you interested in or willing to participate in this project?**

APPENDIX B

Generative Fathering Form

Personal Information Form

Prompting Questions for Interview

Please answer each question completely? Your answers will be kept confidential? When completed, keep this until the interview and then give it to the researcher. Thank you.

Name

What is your name?

Address and Phone Number

What is your address and phone number?

Current Age

How old are you?

Occupation

What is your occupation?

Level of Education

What is the highest level of education you received?

Number of children and gender

How many children do you have and what gender are they?

Current Working Status

Are you currently employed?

Ethnic Background?

What is your ethnic background?

Faith Community (if any)

What is your faith community?