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The fatherhood constellation: exploring the representational world of new fathers of pre-oedipal infants

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THE FATHERHOOD CONSTELLATION:

EXPLORING THE REPRESENTATIONAL WORLD OF NEW FATHERS OF PRE-OEDIPAL INFANTS

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Supervisor: Professor Carol Long

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of PhD in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.

Signed: SBERMAN

Sarah Louise Berman

Date: 12 July 2022

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Abstract

This thesis represents a turn to the father himself, as a figure in his own right. It highlights the lack of research on fathers, as well as the tendency of the psychological and psychoanalytic literature to focus on the mother, and on the roles that fathers perform for their infants. In an attempt to cast light on fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood, this research study explored the representational world of new fathers of preoedipal infants. Semi-structured research interviews were conducted with seven white, middle-class, South African fathers of small children, and they were analysed through a psychoanalytic research technique. The research method undertaken in this study led to the collection of rich data about new fathers' experiences of fatherhood; it also revealed how an analysis of the research method itself can offer insight into both fathers' experiences of fatherhood and fatherhood research. These findings are presented in the form of a paper in the methodology section, together with the more general aspects of the research design. The thesis then proceeds with a paper that discusses how the father has been 'forgotten', not only in the literature, but also in his own mind. 'Remembering' the father or, more aptly, the 'conception' of the father takes place when the father sees himself in the eyes of his infant, and experiences his infant as being actively responsive to him. The process of reorganisation of the father's representational world during his emergent fatherhood is then explored in two papers, which examine the possible nature of the fatherhood constellation and the fatherhood trilogy, drawing on Stern's work on the motherhood constellation. Together, all three papers highlight that becoming a father is not a smooth process. It is characterised by feelings of exclusion, anxiety, self-doubt and uncertainty about one's position in relation to the mother-infant dyad. Self-representation as a father is informed by conscious and unconscious intergenerational, intragenerational, matrilineal, patrilineal, Oedipal, social, cultural and historical facets of emergent fatherhood. The papers, therefore, suggest that fatherhood may be overdetermined and that the representation of absence may be a key step towards the father finding presence in his own mind. The project concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and clinical implications of an understanding of fatherhood which situates the father on the outside of the mother-infant dyad, and as having to struggle to find representation of himself as a father in his own mind.

Keywords: Fathers, fatherhood constellation, mental representations, psychoanalytic research interview, thirdness

Chapter 1: Introduction

Fatherhood is transformational - it presents a new life stage, as well as a fundamental reorganisation of the family structure. Prior to the birth of a baby, there are two individuals joined together as a dyadic couple, exclusively available to and for each other. The birth of a baby forever changes this dynamic, transforming the dyad into a parent-infant triad. Thus, there is an introduction of a third, as well as the acquisition of a 'parent' identity. Whether physically present or absent, real or phantasied, fathers always exist in the child's internal world, and there is an increasing psychoanalytic interest in the importance of fathers for children and their intrapsychic development (for example, Freeman, 2008; Joannidis, 2019; Jones, 2007; Kalinich, 2009; Liebman & Abell, 2000; Perelberg, 2015; Rodica, 2019; Trowell, 2002; Von Klitzing, 2019). Despite this, this very same literature is relatively sparse when it comes to the father himself (Gonzalez-Torres & Fernandez-Rivas, 2019). This research subsequently aimed to explore the father himself, as a figure in his own right.

The psychodynamic and psychoanalytic literature on emergent motherhood and maternal ambivalence abound (see Almond, 2010; Beuskens, 2021; Chodorow, 1978; Mariotti, 2012; Parker, 1995; Stern, 1995; Winnicott, 1965). These authors give considerable attention to the production of mothers and the experiences of mothers. Stern (1995), in his book 'The motherhood constellation: A unified view of parent-infant psychotherapy', offers a way of thinking about emergent motherhood that both accounts for the mother's experience of mothering and offers opportunities for psychotherapeutic intervention. He suggests that the newly created parent-infant triad is not the central focus of mothers. Rather, the new mother becomes preoccupied with the relationship between herself, her baby, and her own mother (Stern, 1995). The mother also becomes concerned with themes

related to her ability to support the baby's development, to connect to her baby, to access help from support systems, and to re-organise her self-identity (Stern, 1995). Although it might seem strange that the mother does not appear to focus on the parent-infant triad, perhaps it makes sense in the light of Winnicott's concept of primary maternal preoccupation. Winnicott (1956) describes primary maternal preoccupation as a state of heightened sensitivity, which dominates towards the end of pregnancy and in the first few weeks after the birth of the child. It is a state in which the mother must become attuned to her infant, so that she can adapt sensitively and carefully to the infant's needs. The mother seems to immerse into a world in which she is preoccupied and focused on her infant, and there is arguably little space for thirdness and external reality. At most, she may be drawing on her embodied relationship with her own mother in trying to figure out how she would like to mother (Stern, 1995). Such is the process for mothers. But what about fathers?

While Stern (1995) attempts to capture the changes to the mother's representational world that take place during emergent motherhood, he says very little about fathers. He simply wonders whether fathers, who are primary caregivers, can develop a motherhood constellation, and if the father's need to identify with his own father may alter his representational world. Stern (1995) does not consider the representational world of fathers beyond this, or elaborate the possibility of a fatherhood constellation. Although there has been some research within general psychology on men's psychological transition to fatherhood (see Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009 for a review of the literature between 1989 and 2008), there is relatively little in comparison to mothers and, to the researcher's knowledge, there have only been two research studies that have drawn specifically from Stern's work and that have used the term 'fatherhood constellation' (see Madsen et al., 2007; Matulaite-Horwood & Bieliauskaite, 2005). This research subsequently aims to

contribute to the process of formulating the fatherhood constellation by exploring new fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood. In so doing, this research study presents an opportunity to contribute to both theoretical and clinical work in relation to fathers. Although the small sample size limits the generalisability of the research findings, this exploratory study offers a way to start thinking about the father in his own right.

Aims

The aim of the thesis is to explore new fathers' experiences of becoming and being a father. In so doing, this research project hopes to contribute to the current psychoanalytic literature on emergent fatherhood, through an exploration of the mental representations that new fathers hold of themselves, their partner, their baby, and their own parents in their representational world. In order to address this aim, semi-structured interviews were conducted with South African fathers of children aged between five and twenty-four months old. These interviews were analysed through a psychoanalytic lens, with a focus on the fathers' conscious and unconscious mental representations pertaining to themselves and their immediate family.

Research Questions

1. How do new fathers represent themselves as fathers in their own minds, as well as in the minds of their partner and infant?

2. What themes can be identified in new fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood?

2.1. Using these themes, what might a fatherhood constellation look like?

3. How do new fathers locate themselves intergenerationally in their fathering?

3.1. What might the fatherhood trilogy look like?

4. How might an exploration of the process of research participation offer insight into fatherhood research and contribute towards understanding fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood?

It is important to note that the fourth research question emerged during the research study. The decision to include this research question in the final thesis was taken for three reasons. Firstly, this research question was deemed relevant as it was found to be a key theme that emerged during the process of data analysis. Secondly, the research question was included because the data offered insight into some of the challenges that researchers typically experience when researching fathers, despite this not being the initial intention of the research study. Thirdly, the research question was added because it emerged that the fathers found the experience of research participation to be very significant to them and their process of self-representation as a father.

Conceptualising and contextualising the research study

Fatherhood can be defined in a myriad of ways. Morrell (2006) argues for the importance of fathers, but also suggests that the father does not always need to be the biological father, as the biological father may not always be in the best interests of the child. Morrell (2006) goes on to say that the idea of medically established paternity is less significant than previously thought, motivating for a distinction between biologically and socially endowed paternities. From this perspective, economic fatherhood (the breadwinner role) and social fatherhood (taking care of the child) are terms that delineate two specific ways in which fatherhood can be performed, irrespective of whether the performer is the biological father (Rabe, 2007). While this approach presents a more nuanced and complex understanding of fatherhood, for the purpose of this study, fatherhood has been

conceptualised as biological fatherhood, as it is thought that exploring economic and social fatherhood in the absence of biological fatherhood may elicit quite different representations to the representations of biological fathers. Economic and social fatherhood nonetheless offers a potentially very interesting area worthy of exploration in future research.

Having conceptualised and narrowed the study to biological fatherhood, it is also important to define what is meant by 'new fathers' and, by implication, delineate the age of such fathers' children. Given the interest of this research in emergent fatherhood and the preoedipal father, the researcher sought to include fathers of 6 to 12-month-old children in this research study, as it was thought these fathers would have had some time to adjust to fatherhood, while still having a fresh perspective on their transition to fatherhood. In addition, some theories suggest that this age of the infant is particularly interesting, as it is generally a time when the father helps the infant separate and individuate from the mother (Mahler & LaPerrier, 1965). Added to this, the mother is likely to have already begun emerging from her primary maternal preoccupation with her infant at this time (Winnicott, 1963), and this may have important implications for the father and his ability to perform paternal functions. As such, it was hypothesised that preoedipal father functions may begin to emerge from 6 months of age, making this an important time to explore the father's representational world.

Turning to the father himself, it is necessary to explore what is meant by 'mental representations' and 'the father's representational world'. As a starting point, we know that, in the process of becoming and being a father, a father is tasked with negotiating his newfound identity in relation to both his internal and external world.

> The idea of an internal world is central to object relations theory. It is a world of unconscious phantasy, made up of the self and other internal objects - persons, things, ideas and values that matter to us...it is the world of inner phantasy relationships that provides a template for our interactions with the outside world, is itself shaped by these, and is the wellspring of our psychic well-being and of creativity itself (Davids, 2002, p.61).

Mental representations theory offers a way to explore the interaction between the internal and external world and, more specifically, a person's perceptions or representations of what is internal and external (Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962). Various analytic writers and researchers have used the term 'mental representations', resulting in considerable debate and confusion regarding the meaning of the term (Zelnick & Buchholz, 1990). Mental representation is a central theoretical construct that has been influenced by psychoanalytic thinking, cognitive science, as well as developmental and social research (Blatt & Auerbach, 2001). "The concept appears under many different headings of which the following are only a sample: word-presentations, thing-presentations, self-representation, object-representation, object-constancy, introjected object, internal object, representational world, body image, memory schema, instinctual representative, psychical representation, mnemonic trace" (Beres & Joseph, 1970, p.1). Although there are a myriad of terms, a pan-theoretical perspective of the concept of mental representations suggests that representations develop through repeated interactions with others, and primarily form from early caregiver experiences. These interactions create schemas of self and others, eventually forming templates, which structure how one feels about oneself and others (Auerbach & Diamond, 2017; Blatt & Auerbach, 2001). Importantly, these schemas have conscious and unconscious cognitive, affective, and experiential components. They reflect the individual's

developmental level, as well as impulses, affects, drives, and fantasies (Auerbach & Diamond, 2017; Beres & Joseph, 1970; Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962). They also organise experience and temper affects and behaviours (Blatt et al., 1997).

To further explicate the above, self and object representations operate at two levels of experience, and Sandler and Sandler (1998) draw an important distinction between the experiential content of mental representations (perceptual and ideational content) and the non-experiential content of mental representations (underlying structure). They explain that images of the self, objects, and their interaction play a part in structuring the background non-experiential organisations, and that these, in turn, influence the experiential realm. There is subsequently constant interaction between the experiential and non-experiential realms, and, to reiterate the point, the nonexperiential content forms the *structure* of the representational world, while the experiential content refers to *subjective experience* (Sandler & Sandler, 1998).

In more contemporary work on mental representations, it is interesting to observe an increasing interest in the mental representations which operate at the level of psychic structure, as opposed to those at the level of subjective experience. This is apparent where there has been a 'gradual shift of focus from the identification of psychic presences which have been forgotten, repressed or disguised toward an emphasis on facilitating the creation of psychic structures that are undeveloped, missing, or functionally impaired' (Winborn, 2016, p.388). Here, the emphasis is on unrepresented states and the construction of meaning (See Reed et al., 2013). This perspective is most concerned with individuals who experience failures of representation at the level of psychic structure – they struggle to represent the object in its absence, which then makes the absence of the external object unbearable. This is quite different to the experience of the individual who is able to

represent the object in its external absence, and who is therefore able to tolerate and experience this absence (Reed et al., 2013). Although this area of research sheds light on a previously overlooked aspect of mental representations, it is primarily referring to the capacity for representation at the level of psychic structure, which is not the focus of this research study. This research study is, therefore, rather concerned with experiential representations and subjective experience – the fathers' representational world as it pertains to the fathers' mental representations of themselves, their partner and infant that emerge in their lived experiences of fatherhood.

Stern's (1995) understanding of mental representations is then particularly helpful for thinking about the representations that are relevant to fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood. He says that representations are built up from interactive experiences, and he terms these representations *schemas-of-being-with*, whereas *representations-of-being-with* refer to networks of many *schemas-of-being-with.* In his research on the mother's representational world, Stern (1995) defines the parents' representational world in terms of parents' interactive experiences, as well as their fantasies, hopes, fears, dreams, memories, models of their parents, and their ideas about the infant's future. Stern (1995) states that even though the mother had representations of the baby and of herself as mother long before conception and during the pregnancy, the meeting of the actual baby (and herself as actual mother) forces a reorganisation of her representational world. At the same time, the representational world shifts to accommodate changes in the mother's identity, her shift from daughter-of-her-mother to mother-of-her-daughter, and her representations of herself as a wife, woman, career-person, friend, daughter, granddaughter, etc (Stern, 1995). Furthermore, the shift from dyad to triad also shifts the mother's networks of schemas of her husband, as he is now a man, a husband, and a father, and the representations about

the baby may also necessitate a shift in representation of her husband (Stern, 1995). Lastly, the arrival of the new baby also brings about shifts in the mother's representations of her own mother and father and, as such, there are numerous reorganisations within the mother's representational world (Stern, 1995).

While Stern (1995) argues that motherhood involves a substantial reorganisation of the mother's representational world, fatherhood is said to cause less disruption to the father's representational world, and reorganisation is said to take place over a greater period of time (Stern, 1995). However, at the same time, Stern (1995) also says that mothers move out of the oedipal complex during the motherhood constellation, and he wonders whether the same can be said for fathers, or whether the need to identify with his own father may alter the situation. This is a point of contention, as Stern (1995) appears to simultaneously suggest very little reorganisation of the father's representational world, yet very little seems to be known about the representational world of fathers, and Stern (1995) highlights this as an important area for future research. There is clearly a need then for further research on the father's representational world during emergent fatherhood, and this research aims to fill this gap.

Although the focus of this research is on the representational world of men who are in the process of becoming and being a father, it is important to remember that this process takes place within a broader context. Even though this study does not intend to focus on the ways in which issues related to class, culture, and race may influence the representations of fatherhood, it is acknowledged that a frequent criticism of psychoanalytic theory is that it is acontextual, asocial, and apolitical (Frosh, 2013). Therefore, despite the temptation to focus psychoanalytic work on internal psychological processes, it is important to see individuals as social subjects (Frosh, 2013). As such, it is essential to bear in mind that fathers' experiences

and representations of fatherhood are not isolated from the social, cultural and political context. Fathering is shaped by cultural, political and economic contexts (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).

During the last few decades, expectations of fathers have shifted in Western society (Dempsey & Hewitt, 2012; Hunter et al., 2017). Fathers were previously seen as being the financial providers of the family (breadwinners), but this has moved towards an expectation of fathers as being highly involved and caring figures for their children (Crespi & Ruspini, 2015). Fathering in contemporary societies demands that men simultaneously play the role of provider, guide, friend, playmate, carer and nurturer; and these multiple demands challenge men's identities, their relationships, work responsibilities and sense of self (Crespi & Ruspini, 2015). Nonetheless, research seems to suggest better outcomes for children with involved fathers (for example, Amato & Rivera, 1999; Craig, 2020; Sarkadi et al., 2008), so researchers have focused on exploring factors that may promote paternal involvement in child-rearing. Paternal involvement and participation in the home as an equitable partner has, therefore, become the 'new fatherhood ideal' (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012).

Although there has been a shift towards the 'new fatherhood ideal', the expectations associated with fatherhood cannot be isolated from hegemonic masculinity (Petts et al., 2018). In fact, Petts et al. (2018) found that fathers may struggle to balance hegemonic masculine norms with the ideals of fatherhood. In particular, their research demonstrated that fathers who show greater adherence to masculine norms are less likely to embrace the new fatherhood ideal. They are less likely to be involved in instrumental and expressive parenting, and they are also more likely to engage in harsher forms of discipline. As such, Petts et al. (2018) argue that, even though expectations of fathers are changing, hegemonic masculine norms continue to shape fathers' behaviour. In response to the

problems associated with hegemonic masculinities, Elliot (2015) proposes that a space has emerged for theorising 'caring masculinities' – masculine identities which 'reject domination and its associated traits and embrace values of care such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality' (p. 240). However, Hunter et al. (2017) contend that the adoption of a 'caring masculinity' has been slower than previously thought, and they suggest that there is a complex interplay between the ideologies of the traditional father as provider and the new and involved father.

In light of the above, it is apparent that there may be considerable tension between what is expected of men as fathers, masculinity and fathers lived experiences of fatherhood. It is also important to remember that masculinities, like the ideals of fatherhood, vary across the globe and are very much a product of the contexts within which they are found. A turn to the father subsequently requires an exploration of the father himself, together with his lived experiences of fatherhood, that takes into account the context within which the father performs fatherhood.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter One is the current chapter. Given that the papers will provide an extensive review of the historical and contemporary literature pertaining to fatherhood, chapter one presents a brief review of the available literature on fathers, the gaps in the literature, and the importance of further research. The chapter also situates the research within the literature on mental representations, so as to orient the reader to the object of study. It therefore provides contextualisation of the overall project, the rationale, research aims and research questions addressed by the study.

Chapter Two outlines the research design, together with the methods of data collection and analysis which were used in the research study. The psychoanalytically informed research interview method is described, and the threats to reliability and validity are addressed. It also discusses the ethical considerations informing the project, as well as researcher reflexivity.

In addition, the chapter presents a journal article, entitled: 'Foregrounding fathers: Reflections on a psychoanalytic research process'. This paper has been accepted for publication in *Qualitative Psychology* and it is currently in production. The paper was the fourth paper to be written, yet it is presented in chapter two, as it offers a comprehensive outline of the research methods, including the process of sample selection and the process of data collection and data analysis. Including the paper at this point in the thesis avoids unnecessary repetition about the research methodology within the thesis, and it also demonstrates how an analysis of the research method can, itself, offer insight into both fathers' experiences of fatherhood and fatherhood research. More specifically, it shows how the research participants' mental representations changed across the interviews, therefore illustrating the process of self-representation as a father. It also summarises the findings of the three papers which follow and can, therefore, offer the reader something of a roadmap for what is to come.

This paper in the methods section, together with the three papers that follow, make up the total of four journal articles which were submitted for publication. The publication of four journal articles was a requirement for the degree to be conferred. All four of the papers were submitted to peer-reviewed psychoanalytic and psychological journals. Given that each of the papers is expected to stand as an article in its own right, there is a degree of

repetition across the papers, especially with regard to the contextualisation of the research study and the description of the research methods. The methodology paper has already been discussed; attention will now be turned to the first three papers that were published. A prescript for each paper is presented in order to introduce the paper and to contextualise it within the overall thesis.

Chapter Three

The first paper entitled: 'Beyond remembering the forgotten parent: The conception of the father' was published in *Psychoanalytic Social Work* in 2021. The paper explores the way in which the father has been 'forgotten' and has struggled to find representation in psychoanalytic theory, and it uses the research findings to explore the ways in which fathers may, similarly, struggle to represent themselves. In both the literature and fathers' accounts of fatherhood there seems to be an inevitable pull towards the mother and infant when thinking about the father. However, the research findings suggest that the experience of seeing the self as a father in the infant's eyes sparks the representation of the father to and for himself.

Chapter Four

The second paper entitled: 'Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation: Representing absence' was published in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* in 2021. The paper uses the research findings to begin formulating the fatherhood constellation. Two main points are presented. Firstly, the fatherhood constellation is constituted by the fathers' wish to protect and support the mother and baby. Secondly, the fatherhood constellation is characterised by what fatherhood is not, as opposed to what it is to be a

father. The paper concludes by suggesting that the representation of absence may be a key step to the father's presence in his own mind.

Chapter Five

The third paper entitled: 'Rethinking the fatherhood trilogy: Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation' was published in *Psychoanalytic Practice* in 2021. The paper explores the sets of relationships which fathers may draw on in the process of self-representation as a father. Although the motherhood trilogy focuses on the relationship between the mother's mother, the mother and her infant, the fatherhood trilogy appears to be multifaceted, with various overlapping trilogies involved in emergent fatherhood. These trilogies can take multiple forms, reflecting both conscious and unconscious intergenerational, intragenerational, matrilineal, patrilineal, Oedipal, social, cultural and historical facets of emergent fatherhood. Subsequently, the paper argues that fatherhood may be overdetermined and that the fatherhood trilogy may be more accurately framed as the fatherhood trilogies.

Chapter Six

This chapter forms the discussion of the thesis. It highlights the relationship between the four papers, as well as their contributions to psychoanalytic theory and practice. It reflects on the research process, as well as on the problem of binaries within the psychoanalytic literature and research on mothers and fathers. It argues that one needs to embrace paradox as a means to overcome binary thinking. This chapter also reflects on the limitations of the research and the implications thereof, while offering recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Research method and ethical considerations

Introduction

This chapter describes and explores the methodological facets of this study. The chapter begins with an introduction of the research method; a journal article is then embedded into the chapter, after which the chapter returns to issues of research reflexivity, methodological rigour and ethical considerations.

The article which has been embedded in the chapter provides a comprehensive description of the research method used in this study, as well as an analysis of the research process. It is included in this chapter for the contribution that it makes towards both explaining and extending the possibilities of psychoanalytically-oriented research. It also offers the reader insight into how the fathers' mental representations changed across the research interviews, as well as summarises the research findings, thereby setting the foundation for the three papers which follow.

Research Design

This research is located within the qualitative tradition. Qualitative research is different from quantitative research in its philosophical assumptions, methods of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2009). It is itself varied, with there being various approaches to qualitative research (Merriam, 2016). In general, qualitative researchers talk directly to people in their natural setting, focusing on people's experiences and the meanings that they make about particular issues or problems (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Merriam, 2016). This approach dictates that the 'researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis' – the researcher develops in-depth understandings through access to verbal and non-verbal communication, immediately

clarifies and summarises material, as well as checks the accuracy of interpretations directly with the participants (Merriam, 2016, p. 16). Of course, Merriam (2016) highlights that the use of the researcher as instrument has shortcomings and biases that may have an impact on the research. It is important to acknowledge and fully explore these biases, as opposed to trying to eliminate them. Nonetheless, a qualitative approach offers researchers an opportunity to perform an in-depth and comprehensive study, with rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences, and an opportunity for interpretation (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Given that the term 'qualitative' can be associated with such a wide range of ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies (Merriam, 2016; Midgley, 2006), it is important to clarify the way in which qualitative research will be undertaken in this research project.

This research is specifically located within the interpretivist paradigm; this approach seeks to explore the minds of individuals; how individuals think and make meaning of their context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The focus is on the individual's interpretation of the world in which he lives, and this paradigm holds that reality is socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). It therefore 'assumes a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33).

Ontology "raises basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 183). In other words, we must ask whether things exist independently of our minds, or is reality in existence only through our thoughts? (Levers, 2013). A relativist ontology proposes multiple realities, and that meaning of these realities can be made or reconstructed through human interactions, such as between the researcher and research participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (2005) highlight that, from this perspective, reality is not distinguishable from the

subjective experience of it. Put another way, 'reality is human experience and human experience is reality' (Levers, 2013, p.2).

Epistemology, or the study of knowledge, looks at the relationship between the knower and the knowledge. It asks "how do I know the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 183). A subjectivist epistemology sees the researcher and research subjects as engaged in an interactive process, and the researcher uses his or her own thinking to make meaning of the data. Knowledge is, therefore, "always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). This also means that knowledge of an external reality will always be mediated by individual reflections and interpretations (Levers, 2013).

Using a naturalist methodology, the researcher obtains data through interviews, discourses, text and the like, and the researcher acts as a participant observer (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For the purpose of this research study, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews. Finally, a balanced axiology assumes that the researcher will try to present a balanced report, although it acknowledges that the outcome of the research will reflect the researcher's values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Although there has been much debate about the compatibility of psychoanalytic approaches and qualitative paradigms, Midgley (2006) suggests that greater interaction between these two fields could be mutually beneficial, as a psychoanalytic perspective can enrich qualitative interviews and methods of data analysis. More specifically, a psychoanalytic focus on transference and counter-transference usefully prioritises the emotional interaction between interviewer and interviewee. It acknowledges that participants are 'defended subjects' (see Hollway & Jefferson, 2013), and offers a potential model to think about anxieties and defences underlying narratives, as well as a means to

explore how individuals may use certain discourse positions to manage conflict (Midgley, 2006). The combination of these two perspectives therefore allows for an in-depth exploration of the way in which individuals make meaning of their world. However, this claim does not come without criticism. There are concerns about the theoretical assumptions pertaining to the unconscious. There is unease about the researcher's use of counter-transference to interpret data, and there is scepticism about the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations of interview data (Midgley, 2006). Given that a psychoanalytic approach has much to offer qualitative research, these concerns were addressed throughout the process of data collection and data analysis. Particular attention was given to the design of the qualitative research interview, the approach to data analysis, and to the use of member checks, supervision and peer review to enhance the validity of the research findings.

Given the focus of this research project on the representational world of the father, the interpretivist paradigm, combined with a psychoanalytic approach, was deemed appropriate. A psychoanalytic approach gives a particular hue to the nature of reality and knowledge that is arguably well suited to this research endeavour. It views the relationship between reality and knowledge through the study of the psychoanalytic object, i.e. the 'crystallisation of a process in the moment' (Figlio, 2018, p.19). For example, a psychoanalytic object may be the relationship between the superego, ego, the id and reality, which is projected into the analytic relationship, and thereby rendered observable and analysable, especially in transferential moments (Figlio, 2018). Notably, the means to find this psychoanalytic object is through the social. In other words, the place to confirm the existence of the psychoanalytic object, and to study it in detail, is in social interactions. This is because the study of the psychoanalytic object requires two minds (Figlio, 2018). This

understanding of the nature of reality and knowledge is therefore well-suited to this research endeavour, as it allows for an exploration of the fathers' representations as they emerge in relation to the research interviewer.

Methodologically, the psychoanalytic research interview method (adapted from Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Kvale, 1999; Stromme et al., 2010) was used to guide the process of data collection and data analysis. This method enabled an exploration of the unconscious meanings and intrapsychic phenomena in the interview material of the research participants (Cartwright, 2004). Although the assumptions of a psychoanalytic approach have been considered briefly, there are four key epistemological assumptions that underpin the psychoanalytic research interview which require further explication. Cartwright's (2004) first assumption refers to the way in which meaning is constructed. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the point of an interview is not to find any historical or factual truth; but rather to explore the way in which the participant constructs a particular event. From this perspective, both content and form of the narrative is of importance and even though narratives do not elicit an entrenched, absolute structure in the positivistic sense, repetitive narrative structures are considered reflective of the central factors that contribute to the intrapsychic life of the participant (Cartwright, 2004). The second assumption refers to the generally accepted notion within psychoanalysis that association is a part of everyday communication through which meaning is constructed. As such, of interest is the way that interviewees talk about themselves, suddenly change topic, alter their tone, and describe different things, as these aspects may indicate unconscious elements of the communication. Thus, it is how the narrative is constructed that is thought to create understanding about unconscious processes. Both the form and content of the

fathers' narratives about their representational world is salient, under the assumption that this provides information about both conscious and unconscious representations.

Cartwright's (2004) third assumption refers to both internal and external contextual factors that may influence the interview. Unlike clinical settings, the presence of an audio recorder, the reason given for the interview, interviewer characteristics and interview technique are just some of the factors that may influence the interaction, communication, and understanding of the interview. Cartwright (2004) acknowledges that contextual issues can make understanding unconscious communication difficult, but he says that this can be managed through the explicit acknowledgement and exploration of the interview context.

Lastly, Cartwright (2004) explores rudimentary transference-countertransference impressions, and he highlights their utility for evaluating and understanding the interview material. Importantly, Cartwright (2004) argues for a distinction to be made between observer bias, i.e. the interviewer's own motivations, feelings, conflicts, etc. related to the research, and transference-countertransference interaction during the research process. Regarding the former, it is essential for the researcher to acknowledge and be aware of any personal bias that may intrude on the interview. Concerning the latter, it is important to explore the feeling states elicited during the interview by the interviewee (Cartwright, 2004). However, it is not always simple to distinguish the two. As such, although transference-countertransference feeling states can contribute to the analysis of the data, they cannot be used independently of the data (Cartwright, 2004). In an attempt to minimise the researcher’s own bias in the interpretation of the data, research impressions were discussed in the researcher’s own personal therapy, as well as with two research supervisors. In addition, the researcher shared some of these interpretations with the interviewees so as to obtain their views. This enabled the researcher, as much as reasonably

possible, to minimise intrusions from personal bias and to make interpretations that reflected the data. Furthermore, for the purpose of reporting the findings and maintaining transparency, the researcher has dedicated a section entitled 'researcher reflexivity' to explore how her personhood may have influenced the process of data collection and data analysis.

Having introduced the research design of this study, the fourth paper is now presented, so as to offer further insight into the research sample, as well as into the process of data collection and data analysis. The paper also highlights how an analysis of the research process can, itself, offer insight into both fathers' experiences of fatherhood and fatherhood research. The paper presented in this chapter is the fourth paper to have been written using the data obtained in this research study. It was co-authored by the researcher, Sarah Berman, and the researcher's supervisor, Prof. Carol Long, and it was submitted to the accredited Journal "Qualitative Psychology", which publishes three times a year. The journal is a publication of The Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (a Section of APA Division 5). The paper was accepted for publication on 7 February 2022 and it is currently in the production process.

The paper is entitled "Foregrounding fathers: Reflections on a psychoanalytic research process". It was written in response to a fourth research question which arose during the course of the research - How might an exploration of the process of research participation offer insight into fatherhood research and contribute towards understanding fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood?

This research question was included in the research as it was found to be a key theme that emerged during the process of data analysis. The paper subsequently engages with how an exploration of the research process offers insight into some of the difficulties

related to recruiting fathers for fatherhood research, as well as insight into fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood. The paper then explores how the research participants used the research interviews to develop their sense of themselves as fathers.

Foregrounding fathers: Reflections on a psychoanalytic research process

Abstract

Despite acknowledgement of the underrepresentation of fathers in research, the perspective of fathers remains somewhat spectral. For fathers of young infants, sometimes referred to as the forgotten parents, the maternal perspective tends to dominate. This paper reflects on a research process inviting South African fathers of young infants to participate in psychoanalytically informed interview-based research and to reflect on their experience of becoming and being a father. The struggle to recruit fathers is explored. Fathers' experiences of participating in the research are then discussed in relation to their appreciation of a space to open up, their experience of thinking about themselves from the perspective of the other, and their unexpected discoveries during the interview process. We suggest that fatherhood can be studied not only through what fathers say in interviews, but also through how they approach and, subsequently, integrate the interview encounter. Reflection on their engagement with this space contributes towards understanding the process of representing themselves as fathers in their own minds.

Keywords: Father, fatherhood, psychoanalytic research interview, representation

Introduction

Qualitative research interviews hold the potential to explore not only the perspectives, but also the experiences, internal representations and subjectivities of research participants. Analysis of research interviews typically focuses on what participants have said or how they have responded to the interview questions. Equally significant, we argue, is the way in which participants experience the research process itself, and how both the process

and content of research interviews enables participants to make sense of themselves. Reflexivity in qualitative research typically focuses on the experience of the researcher, although the research encounter has been noted to be reciprocal and intersubjective (Finlay, 2002; 2017). In this paper, we focus our reflexive analysis on the participant, reflecting on how fathers of young infants experienced participating in research aimed at exploring their internal representations of themselves as fathers. The process of agreeing to take part in the research, and of talking about themselves as fathers, is outlined. We explore fathers' evaluations of the interview experience with a female interviewer, their use of the researcher's questions to interrogate their perspectives of themselves, and their experience of the interviews as an opportunity for self-reflection and discovery. Psychoanalytic interview methodology is well placed to explore internal experiences and object relations (Cartwright, 2004), as well as the relationship between researcher and researched (Holmes, 2013b). The process-focus of this method, in particular, offers an approach to observing shifts and changes in self and object representations through the process of talking and exploring one's own mind.

The focus of the broader research study, on which this paper was based, was on the experiences of fathers themselves, rather than the more common research focus on the impact of fathers on children and families. In general, there has been a lack of focus on fathers within the psychoanalytic and psychological literature (Davies & Eagle, 2013; Diamond, 1998; Diamond, 2017; Etchegoyen, 2002; Glasser, 1985; Greenson, 1968; Lindegger, 2006; Trowell, 2002). Where there has been some interest in the father, the tendency has been to focus on the symbolic and actual importance of the father for the infant and the mother, with relatively

little attention given to the father himself (Diamond, 2017). Fathers were thus the subjects rather than the objects of this research.

The research study was primarily concerned with exploring the process by which fathers come to represent themselves as fathers in their own minds. This focus was informed by psychoanalytic methodology, with its interest in object relations and in how fathers represent the self and other in their internal world. Expecting descriptions of the experience of fatherhood, we were confronted instead with fathers significantly struggling to represent themselves internally or in the interactive encounter of the interview (Berman, 2021a; Grossmark, 2019). Fathers 'found' themselves in the minds of their partners and their infants, and thereby derived their self-representations from the other (Berman, 2021a). Fathers therefore 'became' fathers not through a process of self-identification, but through an uncertain process of identification with the other (see Berman, 2021a). Interestingly, this highlights how important the other is in building identity. The uncertainty of this process suggests the possibility of uncertain identities built upon identification with the other. Furthermore, we have suggested that fathers constellate themselves not around a present identity, but around an experience of absence and exclusion - from the overt bodily changes associated with bearing a child, as well as from the mother-infant dyad (Berman & Long, 2021; see also Green, 1997; 2009; Jessner, Weigert, & Foy, 1970). The process of becoming a father was characterised by definitions of what they are not: not able to be pregnant, give birth or breastfeed, and not able to be the mother or the baby (Berman & Long, 2021; Herrera, 2020). In wishing to protect the mother-infant dyad, the fathers in this research study were positioned as auxiliary, and they experienced anxiety about situating themselves in relation to this dyad, as the fathers feared being an envious presence (Berman, 2021a). Both

intergenerationally and intragenerationally, fathers located themselves in relation to multiple others. In trying to figure out whether they should be another kind of mother, in line with the social assumption that parents are mothers (Leach et al., 2019), a superman-type protective figure, or a panicked dad, it is difficult for fathers to simply represent themselves as fathers (Berman, 2021b). At the same time, the father has to develop his identity as a father within a very particular social and cultural context that tends to hold an over-generalised negative view of the previous generations of fathers, who are seen as having been uninvolved (Bosoni & Mazzucchelli, 2019), and growing expectations that fathers should be more involved (Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lamb & Tannis-Lemonde, 2004 in Nicholas et al., 2020). Although this paper is concerned with the research process rather than the research outcomes, and the above offers only a brief summary, these findings help us to understand how fathers experienced participation in this research study.

The focus of this paper is on how fathers used research interviews as reflexive tools, despite their struggles to represent themselves as fathers. This process shows their striving for connectedness and emotional involvement. Way (2011; 2013) has shown how adolescent boys are far more connected and intimate than the typical stereotypes of boyhood imply and resist norms of masculinity (Way et al., 2014), but that as they enter later adolescence, they experience a loss of this connectedness. Marsiglio and Roy (2012) and Roy (2014), working with marginalized fathers, demonstrate how, contrary to dominant social constructions, the majority of fathers seek closer connectedness with their children, but are not always sure how to accomplish this. Roy, Palkovitz and Waters (2015) note that, contrary to stereotypes, fathers prioritize ‘being there’ and striving to show up. It is possible that fatherhood, like adolescent boyhood, involves a struggle for connectedness. If this is the case, an analysis of

how fathers discover relatedness offers important insights into the potential for fathers to connect. More specifically, the challenges associated with self-representation as a father may play a part in fathers' experiences of a research process. In focusing this paper on how fathers navigated coming into the research and using the research to think about themselves as fathers, we explore the implications for fatherhood research, and we also draw on the fathers' experiences of the research to shed light on the process of becoming a father. In this way, their experience of research participation helps us to understand their experience of fatherhood, and also offers an in-situ glimpse into the active grappling with becoming a father.

Method

Research design

The research was based on a qualitative research design, and it is located specifically within the psychoanalytic paradigm (see e.g. Cartwright, 2004; Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; Kvale, 1999; Strømme et al., 2010) because of its focus on fathers' representational worlds. This paradigm offers the possibility of exploring 'intrapsychic processes and unconscious meaning associated with situations, phenomena, or behavioural acts not necessarily linked to the clinical setting' (Cartwright, 2004, p.210). As such, the psychoanalytic research interview method enabled an exploration of the research participants' conscious and unconscious representations of fatherhood, as well as a focus on the unconscious meanings and intrapsychic phenomena in the interview material of the research participants (Holmes, 2017; Midgley, 2006).

Sample selection

The research participants were selected using non-probability purposive, volunteer and snowball sampling strategies, and the sample consisted of white, middle to upper class, South African men, all of whom were residing with their partner and child at the time of the interviews. Seven men participated in the research and their ages ranged from 24 to 37 years old, while the ages of their children ranged from 5 to 24 months of age. All of the participants, except one, had a child below the age of 12 months. Six of the research participants were first-time fathers, while one of the research participants was a second-time father. The older child was below 24 months of age, while the younger child was below 12 months of age. The process of recruitment is described and discussed in the section below.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were guided by psychoanalytic interview methodology (e.g. Cartwright, 2004; Frosh & Saville-Young, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Kvale, 1999). This method enabled the researcher to access the fathers' conscious and unconscious representations of themselves as fathers in their own minds, in the minds of their partners and in the minds of their infants. It is important to recognise that unlike psychologists, who are able to observe behaviour or access states of mind through questionnaires, 'psychoanalysis has a more difficult problem in that *unconscious* states of mind are not so easily accessed and not clearly identifiable by questionnaire data without a considerable degree of inference' (Walker & Hinshelwood, 2018, p.172). In order to deal with this problem, a particular approach to the interview and the analysis of data is required. Psychoanalytic studies therefore tend to use questions that are more open-ended and the interview tends to be led by the participant's free associations (Cartwright, 2004; Kvale, 1999). Hollway and

Jefferson (2012) also recommend avoiding 'why' questions because they may encourage intellectualisation, and they, too, prefer to allow the participant to lead the discussion, even when it may seem as though the participant is going 'off-topic'. Hollway and Jefferson (2012) argue that such adaptations to the qualitative research interview allow for the emergence and foregrounding of unconscious dynamics, leading the researcher to draw on these perspectives in the process of data collection. For the purpose of data analysis in relation to unconscious material, the researcher explored any thoughts or affects of which participants were either seemingly unaware or appeared to be defended against, but which nonetheless became apparent during the course of the interview, as possible sites for unconscious material. The researcher paid particular attention to slips of the tongue, forgetting, repetitions, digressions, pauses and the like, as being possible moments during which unconscious material may be present (Cartwright, 2004; Frosh & Saville Young, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). This research approach will be elaborated upon below.

Once ethics approval was obtained for the study, two psychoanalytic research interviews were held with each participant, such that a total of 14 research interviews were conducted. Psychoanalytic research interviews are guided by the principle that an element of free association allows participants to stumble into the surprising and the unexpected (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Participants in this study were therefore invited to begin the first interview in a free-associative manner and were invited to include whatever came to mind, even if seemingly irrelevant. Specific questions aimed to explore how fathers represented themselves, their partners and their babies in their minds, as well as how they imagined they were represented in the minds of their partners and babies.

Offering two interviews, following the recommendation of Cartwright (2004), invited participants to reflect on their research experience in between interviews and allowed for analysis of how representations may have changed from one interview to another. The second interview was largely focused on participants' experience of the first interview and any thoughts and feelings that may have subsequently arisen, as well as testing out any interpretations arising from analysis of the first interview. This offered the opportunity of identifying potential shifts, developments, contradictions and representational failures from one interview to the next.

Specific interview questions designed to invite participants to reflect on their experience were included, so that both implicit and explicit analysis of participants' reflections could be undertaken. At the end of each interview, a series of questions was posed in order to explore how the interview was experienced and how the participant responded to what he had explored. The second interview also included explicit questions about participants' experiences of the first interview. Similarly, the interviewer reflected on her experience of each interview, keeping a journal and sharing her responses in conversation with two supervisors. This encouraged focus on the affective experience of the interview and on how the interviewer's responses may interact to create meaning in the interview.

Reflexivity was therefore not only included in the analysis but as part of the data collection process. Furthermore, the practice of reflexivity entailed reflecting not only on the researcher's experience but also on the experience of participants (the focus of this paper). Reflexivity has become a pillar of qualitative research, and has been defined in many ways (see Finlay, 2017). Finlay's (2002) concept of intersubjective reflexivity is particularly relevant here: what happens between researcher and researched is worth reflecting on.

Psychotherapy research has found that inviting clients to reflect on their experience of psychotherapy deepens their own understanding of the therapeutic encounter (e.g. Hill, 1990; Larsen et al., 2008), and it has been suggested that this interpersonal process can facilitate a deeper understanding of the intersubjective nature of research as well (Macaskie, Lees & Freshwater, 2015).

Analysis of transcribed interviews and researcher reflections paid attention to both manifest and latent content. Data were analysed with specific focus on object relational patterns (Cartwright, 2004) as well as patterns of anxiety and defence (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The affective valence, as well as what was not said (either because it was defended against or because it was unexpectedly absent and therefore represented an interesting silence), were also systematically noted (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). In addition, analysis paid attention to moments of rupture in the interviews. Although interview ruptures may be of interest to qualitative researchers, more generally, they are analysed within a psychoanalytic framework with reference to psychoanalytic theories of rupture and repair (see Blithe & Wolfe, 2018). Contradictions, digressions, moments of confusion, forgetting or lost trains of thought, hesitations and inconsistencies (Cartwright, 2004; Frosh & Saville Young, 2008) were also noted. In this way, a psychoanalytic analysis pays attention to what is present, what is spectral and what is absent. The focus of this paper is on the reflections of participants; other aspects of the analysis have been reported elsewhere (Berman, 2021a; Berman, 2021b; Berman & Long, 2021). For this paper, analysis paid particular attention to how participants reflected on the interview experience as well as shifts and changes over time. Such shifts were particularly noted in relation to representations of self and other (both partner and baby). Analysis focused on what was explicitly said, as well as what spontaneously

emerged or what was difficult to represent. Psychoanalytic methodology characteristically employs analysis of the researcher's transference-countertransference impressions as an additional source of information to make sense of findings (Holmes, 2014). This involved scrutinizing the interviewer's affective responses, identifications and disidentifications that arose in relation to the research participants, their partner and baby during and after the interview, with reference to each participant's material. These responses were used to raise questions about the analysis. With reference to this paper, a sustained focus on potential transference-countertransference responses has the advantage of centralizing the analysis around an intersubjective encounter in which interviewer and participant enter into a relational exchange. The potential links between reflexivity and countertransference have been noted elsewhere (Hollway, 2016; Holmes, 2013b; Finlay, 2002; Goldstein, 2017) and other qualitative methods have employed countertransference, borrowing from psychoanalytic theory, to inform their analysis; we focus here on the participant's experience of the interview, using the interviewer's responses, where relevant, to triangulate this experience.

Recruiting fathers

Given the above-mentioned complexities of fatherhood, there is clearly a need to turn to the father himself and to explore his emergent fatherhood. However, it is interesting to note that the general prioritisation of the mother and the mother-infant dyad in clinical practice and in psychological research is not the sole reason for the apparent silencing of the father. It has been found that even when fathers are given the opportunity to speak, they may exclude themselves from narrative accounts. For example, from a clinical perspective, it is not uncommon for parent-infant therapists to remark about the ongoing absence of fathers

in the consulting room, even when these fathers are known to be active participants in the home (Baradon, 2019). Similarly, from a research perspective, fathers have generally been found to be harder to recruit than mothers (Davison et al., 2017; Keys et al., 2019). There may be very practical and logistical reasons for this, such as financial and/or time constraints (Macfadyen et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2007). However, there may also be social and psychological barriers which preclude participation. Some of these include fathers assuming that the mother's opinion is more relevant, a general difficulty with sharing their thoughts and feelings, as well as not wanting to openly disagree with or upset their partners (Macfadyen et al., 2011). Research may also be experienced as alienating to fathers, who may not assume that they are the subjects of interest. Nicholas et al. (2020) stress the need for research to be father-focused in order to encourage recruitment. Interestingly, given the argument that the father's perspective is often subsumed by that of the mother and baby, Davis et al. (2019) praise Morgan et al.'s (2017) "unique" and "novel" approach of taking the time to engage fathers. This praise foregrounds the extent to which fathers' perspectives are not held in mind in much research. These findings in both clinical work and research reiterate the need to explore the challenges that fathers may experience with accessing a space to think about their fatherhood. Special consideration needs to be given to the kinds of contexts which are most likely to give fathers the opportunity to develop their sense of themselves as fathers.

In this study, the recruitment of fathers posed significant challenges to the research. We initially approached six vaccination clinics across Johannesburg, South Africa in order to invite the clinics to participate in the research. Four out of the six vaccination clinics were keen to participate, with all four clinics expressing strong views on the value of the research,

as well as a willingness to assist in obtaining participants. However, despite their willingness to assist, no participants were obtained via these efforts. We subsequently approached two paediatricians, as well as a medical doctor who provides ante-natal classes, all of whom were willing to inform their patients of the research. Once again, no participants were forthcoming. We then turned to social media, posting the invitation for participation on a general community forum, parenting forums and on the South African Psychological Society LinkedIn page. Invitations to participate were also sent to around 150 clinical psychologists who had trained at our host institution, the University of the Witwatersrand. No participants were recruited in this way. We cannot speak for the fathers who chose not to participate, but the extent to which we were unable to recruit participants clearly suggests that fathers are unmotivated to participate in fatherhood research. Finally, the first author asked close colleagues and relatives to send the research information letter to their personal contact lists. Three research participants came forward and snowball sampling was then used to ask these research participants to refer other fathers that they knew, resulting in the recruitment of four more participants.

The number of fathers who saw the invitation to participate, but chose not to do so, must therefore have been large. Doyle et al. (2016) and Lindsay et al. (2020) have noted that direct face-to-face recruitment is by far the most effective way of recruiting fathers. In this study, it was close contact with the interviewer and snowball sampling that resulted, after much effort, in participation. The reluctance of fathers to participate in research is perhaps understandable given the theme arising from this research about how difficult it is for fathers to represent themselves as fathers. Despite Keys et al.'s (2019) observation that many fathers want to participate in research, the act of agreeing to come forward and talk about oneself

as a father is potentially daunting. If fathers constellate themselves around an experience of absence rather than presence (Berman, 2021a; Berman & Long, 2021), it is clear that being present takes some effort. However, it is interesting that the researcher was able to ascertain a greater number of participants through snowball sampling, possibly suggesting that prospective participants might feel more comfortable agreeing to participate in fatherhood research if the request comes from another father who has already taken part.

It has also been noted that the majority of fathers recruited for research are white, in a heterosexual relationship, living with their partner and middle class, and that there are particular challenges in recruiting other kinds of fathers (Doyle et al., 2016; Leach et al., 2019; Lindsay et al., 2020). In the context of South Africa, where the majority of fathers are black and where the country is characterized by a diverse and largely economically challenged population, there is particular need for research that encompasses this diversity. South Africa's apartheid history has also resulted in a situation where many fathers are absent and where black fathers in particular face a legacy of exclusion and removal from the family unit (Richter & Morrell, 2006; van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). The dominant perception of black fathers as absent has impacted on children's experiences (Kamau & Davies, 2018). It has also been suggested that a dominant social discourse that black fathers are absent has constructed these fathers as recalcitrant and 'bad' (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). The intention of the current study, therefore, was to include as much diversity in the sample as possible and to include the perspectives of fathers themselves. Despite this intention, all of the fathers who volunteered for this study were white and middle class. The first author, who was also the interviewer, is a white middle-class woman and this no doubt had an impact on the final sample, particularly because the final sample was ultimately generated through close

connections. The difficulty of accessing experiences of fatherhood on the margins is apparent. This study cannot therefore necessarily speak to the experiences of these fathers. Given the feeling of absence that characterized the fathers who did participate in the study, however, it is likely that this feeling may be stronger for fathers who are not white and middle class (Roy, 2006; Way, 2013).

It is also possible that potential participants were deterred because the recruiter, who also conducted the interviews (the first author, Sarah), is a white, middle-class woman herself. A woman is likely to be associated with motherhood rather than fatherhood, and mothers are largely assumed to be the 'real' parents (Mitchell et al., 2007). It has also been found that one barrier to father participation in research is that mothers act as gatekeepers, deterring their partners from participation (Doyle et al., 2016; Keys et al., 2019). Once fathers had agreed to participate in the interviews, however, the fact that Sarah is a woman seemed to be very significant to them. Five of the research participants commented that they had felt more at ease speaking to a woman than they may have felt had they spoken to a man. One participant raised the idea that Sarah's 'soft' nature made it easier to 'open up' and he said that he may have felt more judged by a man and less able to speak openly about his fatherhood. Another participant said that he feels like a woman is better able to relate to the experiences of parenthood, so this made it easier for him to talk about his fatherhood. Yet another participant said that it is easier to speak to a woman than a man because 'you can only talk to the person who sings the same song as you'. As such, for these research participants, it seems Sarah's gender created a sense of feeling safe, supported and understood. This suggests that, for many of the research participants, there was something important about working out their fatherhood in the presence of a woman. Way (2011) similarly found that

some male adolescents prefer to speak to female interviewers. This may, of course, not be the same for all fathers. Nonetheless, the findings reiterate the importance of examining the researcher's subjectivity and its part in the construction of psychoanalytic knowledge and the associated transference-countertransference feeling states that are evoked during the course of the research. In all, the question of why recruitment was so difficult points to the difficulty of accessing fathers' subjectivities and may be understood through the lens of social expectations of fatherhood uninvolvement (Roy, 2006). The question is interesting not only in terms of implications for recruitment methods but also for the understanding of the lived experience of fatherhood.

Fathers in mind: A space to 'open up' and 'get it out'

Nicholas et al. (2020) noted that fathers who agreed to participate in research often did so on the basis of an expectation that it would be cathartic to talk about their experiences, an expectation that for many participants was also fulfilled. This implies that fatherhood research needs to allow the space for participants to tell their stories and to be heard – to gain some therapeutic benefit from participation. Others have also noted the potentially therapeutic effects of research interviews (e.g. Colbourne & Sque, 2005; Gale, 1992; Grace et al., 2016; Rossetto, 2014). Long and Eagle (2009), who have explored the potentially therapeutic experience of having one's thoughts heard and thought about, caution however that the idea of a research interview as therapeutic raises a number of ethical tensions. For example, participants may not always be able to anticipate what emerges in an interview, and the expectation that participation will bring therapeutic benefit can be inadequately fulfilled. Holmes (2014) cautions that psychoanalytic research interviews can potentially impede as well as facilitate emotional connectedness. A research interview is not therapy (Harvey,

2017a). In this study, the interviewer is also a psychologist with therapeutic skills, and Long and Eagle (2009) explore the difficulties of holding the line between therapy and research when the researcher is a therapist too. Harvey (2017a; 2017b) also notes that research interviews can be emotionally demanding on both participant and researcher, and that it is difficult to anticipate what unconscious material may surface and what emotions may accompany the process of exploration. Harvey suggests that interviews, particularly psychoanalytic interviews, should be undertaken by a therapist given the potential for therapeutic benefit. Finlay (2017) and Goldstein (2017) similarly highlight the advantages of therapeutic training. Potential therapeutic benefit is not unique to a psychoanalytic interview, however, or to an interview conducted by a therapist. Indeed, Rosetto (2014) goes as far as to say that the act of talking alone is therapeutic.

The poor response rate observed in this research, however, suggests that fathers generally do not want or anticipate a therapeutic research interaction, and that catharsis is not routinely welcomed: far too many fathers chose not to participate in this research. On the contrary, the struggle to recruit fathers suggests that fathers may be distinctly uncomfortable talking about themselves as fathers. One wonders whether the expectation is of a judgemental rather than a supportive space. This possibility is supported by the experiences of fathers who did agree to participate in the study: before the interviews began, many of the fathers in this study expressed some discomfort and possible anxiety. The fathers were anxious to know how the interview material would be used and, during the interviews, many of the fathers told the researcher that they hoped their responses were adequate.

Once interviews were underway, however, fathers engaged with enthusiasm in the research and expressed enjoyment about being given a space to speak about their

fatherhood. David wanted to give himself more time to speak: he said at the start of the first interview that he needed to end the interview at exactly 13:30, yet at 13:30 he said that he could stay until 13:45. He informed the researcher: 'I'm enjoying it so much, it's so interesting to, you know, open up a bit, you know'. Similarly, Jonathan said 'it's nice to just to get it out' and that it is 'uh, quite cathartic, I think, just to talk about your experience. I think a lot of people, you don't really always have time to do that and also people aren't always that interested'. Likewise, Gary stated that 'this period is such a blur (pause)… you don't really almost have time to sit and reflect on everything that's happening', while Ryan shared that he found the interview 'thought-provoking'. In these excerpts, the research participants convey their enjoyment of the research interview process and their interest in the material that emerged. They were clearly appreciative of the opportunity to 'open up' and 'get it out'.

While on the surface this may imply that they experienced the interviews as cathartic, their choice of words is particularly interesting. Beneath expressions of openness are hints that there are aspects of fatherhood which have a tendency to be closed off or kept inside. It is possible that this may be because of the fathers' sustained focus on the well-being of the mother-infant dyad, and the consequent lack of space available for the fathers' own vulnerabilities (Berman, 2021a). At the same time, it appears as though the act of talking about fatherhood can make a father feel vulnerable. Jonathan seemed to feel as though others showed little interest in talking about such matters and, later in the interview, he raised concerns about other fathers becoming critical of him when he shared that he gets up with his wife during night feeds. In his words, "other fathers used to HATE it when I would, when that would come out - like 'what are you doing? You've got a nurse. Why would you do this? You're like crazy'". It seems then that the experience of having a safe, non-judgmental

space to talk about fatherhood is cathartic. The experience of fatherhood may be one that is often not articulated – or heard – and a space to 'open up' may also open up possibilities for fathers to represent themselves to themselves.

Fathers in mind: Discovering oneself in the mind of the other

Fathers also used the interview process to explore an unfolding understanding of themselves as fathers. Anticipating the general tendency to see fatherhood through the prism of partner and baby, we included two questions specifically aimed at exploring fatherhood from the perspective of mother and baby, which made fathers the object of scrutiny. These research questions, which seemed to be the most striking to fathers and the most difficult for them to answer, were 'how do you think your child sees you as a father' and 'how do you think your partner sees you as a father' (see also Berman, 2021a). These research questions invite self-reflection and mentalization. Interestingly, we found that the process of answering these questions, as it shifted and changed through the interviews, helped us to understand the process of discovery of oneself as a father.

Questions of this nature are generally difficult to answer for many possible reasons. Firstly, they require parental reflective functioning, i.e. the ability for the father to explore his own mind, as well as the minds of his partner and baby (Slade et al., 2005). This capacity originates in the parent's own early childhood experiences of being parented, and it is promoted by having an experience of a mentalizing other who recognises and can hold the child's feelings, desires and intentions in mind (Fonagy et al., 2002). Importantly, these white, middle-class fathers were, themselves, children during a very particular point in history, when South Africa was in the early stages of transitioning from being an Apartheid state towards becoming a more democratic society. While these fathers and their families may have been

protected from poverty, inequality and unemployment, it is nonetheless important to reflect on their parenting in the light of their own experiences of being parented during an apartheid and a nascent, post-apartheid South Africa, as white, middle-class boys. Notably, reflective functioning represents the very antithesis of an Apartheid 'mindset', which separates and disconnects 'us' from 'them'. Furthermore, the research participants were children during a time in history when fathers (confirmed by the participants' own accounts) tended to be less involved and mothers took responsibility for child-care activities (Bosoni & Mazzucchelli, 2019). This, too, could be seen to represent a failure in reflective functioning, particularly in being able to hold fathers in mind. It is against this backdrop that we need to make sense of how and why these fathers struggled with the exploration of their own mind (and that of their partner and child) - they were doing so for the first time, without precedent from their own fathers. Each father had to struggle in order to discover the self from the object position.

Additionally, the act of seeing the other is deeply gendered, as Berger's (2008) seminal photo essay so powerfully conveys: men are accustomed to train their gaze on the female other as object, but may be less accustomed to entertaining the reverse: that women and children also see them in a particular way. It was thus helpful to analyse not only what fathers said in response to this question, but also how their responses shifted as they explored the question in their own minds, both initially and over the course of the interviews. In this regard, conducting two interviews instead of one can help the researcher to track shifts over time. We also included reflection questions at the end of both interviews (inviting participants to reflect on what had emerged in the interview) and at the beginning of the second interview (tracking what had spontaneously emerged in between the two interviews). These questions

helped to identify what had spontaneously taken shape in the minds of participants, offering a reflexive analysis of their experience of the research process.

In their immediate response to the question 'how do you think your child sees you as a father?', participants struggled to answer. For example, David said 'gees, that I, that I don't know', Warren said 'you never know what's going on in that little head', while Gary shared 'hmm (long pause) sho, (Gary laughs), (pause), ya, I have no clue'. It is apparent that the fathers did not know where to start. However, even though the research participants were unsure of how to answer the question at first, the fathers appeared to connect with the idea that they may have a space in their child's mind and this generated curiosity and a willingness to further reflect on how they may be perceived by their child. The fathers started searching for evidence of their baby's feelings towards them and it is interesting that many of the participants turned to their baby's observable behaviour as a key indicator. Their baby's behaviour was no longer seen as irrelevant. It had become meaningful and fathers were suddenly interested in the meaning being communicated by their baby. As fathers contemplated the question further, there seemed to be a process of discovery of more articulable answers. For example:

> **David:** Every time I come home there's a massive smile on her face, so I sort of, that sort of like answers it.
>
> **Warren:** If you could judge by her, basically I mean her, um, sort of level of, you know, comfortability or comfort with me, and her, um, (pause), uh, kind of, I don't know what you would call it, ya, like willingness to, to come to me if she's upset, etc, etc. I mean if you can, if you want, if you can use that as like a bit of a gauge, then, then probably quite, probably quite good.

Steven: I come from work and I can just see that she's, she's smiling and that she wants to come to me… so I think she, she is excited when I'm around.

Gary: There's like some moments… like my mom was holding my daughter and she was just crying and then literally, like as I hold her, she just stopped…so I guess (pause) I don't know, it's like, it's like very difficult to say other than those tangible instances…I mean, I guess just how excited she is, like I'll get home and she just goes crazy and like just excited, like do you know what I mean those, those moments, um ya, other than that it's quite difficult (laughs) to really tell.

Anthony: Um, like I think good, like I think she's like particularly comfortable with me, until it like gets to that point of like just too over-tired or like um, but she's generally a lot more comfortable with me than like say my mom, or our maid, or so I'm quite up there on the pecking order.

The above extracts poignantly capture the process of coming to think about the self as a father in the mind of the baby. Even though these representations may be unknown and vague at first, thinking about the self as a father from the perspective of the infant seemingly enabled the research participants to begin to find representation. Initial hesitancies and inarticulations, through reflection, took shape. This was a most profound experience for many of the fathers, so much so that the question stayed with many of them. When asked to reflect on their interview experience at the end, this question was frequently raised as being particularly interesting and challenging, also prompting continued self-reflection between interviews, which the fathers then raised in the follow-up interview.

As an example, David shared in the second interview that, since the first interview, he had attended a parent-infant class in which he was tasked with placing a peg on himself. To his surprise, his daughter tried to take it off because it's:

> a protective part of the brain I believe, that they want to look after the father also. So, like, since it irritates them, that's how you know there's a certain love that the child has for the father. So that I picked up straight away, that was amazing, but if we never had the session before just to analyse 'what do I think my child thinks of me?', I wouldn't like know, wouldn't have like been able to figure that out. Um, so ya, so that's, so how, the question that you asked before 'how does my daughter view me?' and like every time I come home she gives a smile, she, she, she definitely loves me, definitely.

In this excerpt, David shows how his experience of the first research interview generated a curiosity in his daughter's mind and its implications for his self-representation as a father. David shares that this increased interest in his daughter's mind enabled him to begin to notice previously unseen behaviours. He could then draw on these behaviours as a means to think about how his daughter might view him and put something previously outside his awareness into words. He came to the conclusion that he does indeed have a place in her mind. He could say with delight 'she definitely loves me, definitely'. Thus, even though it may be challenging for fathers to think about themselves in the minds of their infants, it seems that doing so provides the opportunity to develop the sense of the self as a father.

Similar to the above, in response to the question 'how do you think your partner sees you as a father?', many of the research participants were once again taken aback. After initial interviews, participants drew on the material that emerged to stimulate conversations about

their fatherhood with their partners. They could then test their representations against reality. For example, Gary explored his representations of himself as a father in his partner's mind during the research interview and he then used the material that emerged in the interview as a means to foster conversation about his fatherhood with his wife. He shared in the follow-up interview that:

> my wife and I reflected on a lot of questions you asked, and like nice hearing her view and what she would have said, um, and just like a huge thing for her to hear what I had to say.

Here Gary demonstrates how impactful it was for him to use the research interview, not in terms of catharsis, but as a prompt to begin a conversation with his wife about his fatherhood. He thereby discovered something of himself in the mind of the other and generated conversations that were novel. He used this conversation to gain insight into her thoughts, as well as to share his thoughts, both of which felt significant to him. Interestingly, he also realised that his representations of himself in the mind of his wife and infant were projections which he could then test against reality. He shared:

> we were just talking about how it's really a reflection of how I see myself portrayed through them… I was asking my wife the same questions, like 'what would you, um, say conversely?'… ya that, that was probably, I would think, the most interesting part of it.

Hence, it is apparent that not only did the research interviews provide Gary with an opportunity to deepen his sense of himself as a father through an exploration of his

representations of himself as a father, they also prompted him to discuss and test these representations in conversations with his wife.

The invitation to think about the mind of the other, then, prompted participants to explore their fatherhood from a different vantage point. Doing so helped the fathers to actively think about the minds of their infants and to consider the possibility of their baby's behaviour being meaningful. It also provided the fathers with a language with which to start a conversation with their partners about their fatherhood, offering the opportunity for the fathers to test their representations against reality. Thinking about the mind of the other, in turn, prompted fathers to discover themselves as fathers through the mind of the other. They could transcend the typical representations of the self as subject and of the other as object, towards a view of the other as a subject for whom the self is an object. Their experience of interviews was in this respect enriching of their sense of self, suggesting that being prompted to think about the self in the mind of the other may play an important part in a father coming to develop his sense of himself as a father. This may be especially salient to consider in patriarchal cultures, which the research participants find themselves trying to transcend, but which set up the father as a particular kind of object within the family, i.e. the powerful yet uninvolved father who provides for his family. It is important to recognise that these cultural norms run the risk of positioning the father as separate and on the periphery of the mother-infant dyad. Thinking about the self as a father from the perspective of one's child and partner may then help enrich fathers' subjective sense of self, as well their sense of the subjectivities of their partner and child.

Fathers in mind: Unexpected discoveries

A psychoanalytic interview approach leaves space for surprises: for anxieties, for what is unsaid, for hesitancies and contradictions, and for potentially listening to what may be unconscious as well as what is conscious (Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Holmes, 2013b). This is no doubt the case for other qualitative methodologies as well (see Gilligan & Eddy, 2021), but a psychoanalytic methodology puts this front and centre, and actively encourages research participants to reflect on that which is surprising or unexpected. We found it particularly useful to analyse how fathers engaged with the interview process and how they came across unexpected discoveries along the way. Identification of these discoveries helped us in turn to understand, in situ, the process of exploring oneself as a father. One particular technique used to capture the unexpected was to explicitly ask fathers at the end of each interview what had been unexpected or surprising to them about what they found themselves discussing during the interview. This is a technique that the second author has used across a number of different qualitative interview projects, and a question that often offers unanticipated avenues into the analysis of interview material as well. As fathers used the interview to think about themselves and their families, they made some unexpected discoveries.

Jonathan reported that, after his first interview, he came to the realisation that he has a closer relationship with Dylan (21 months old) than he has with Lance (5.5 months old). He attributes this to his needing to be more involved in the care of Dylan, so that his wife can attend to Lance's needs. However, the result of this is that Jonathan feels like he does not have the same quality of relationship with Lance as he did with Dylan at the same age, i.e. when Dylan was 5.5. months old. In fact, when he was asked at the end of the first interview

‘did anything surprise you that came up today?’, Jonathan said ‘um, uh, ya, I mean I suppose, I suppose I felt a little bit of a welling up of emotion inside. Um, maybe crystallised a little bit that I need to spend a little bit more time with Lance’. This was a profound realisation for Jonathan and, at the start of the second interview, he reflected on the first interview and shared

> hmm (laughs), I the, the one thing I noticed was that, um, was that I, I, I don’t know if I did it, I probably did it subconsciously, but kept referring to my older son by his name, and my second son as ‘the second one’, so I don't know if I did that (laughs) consciously or subconsciously, so maybe I need to, I subconsciously thought maybe I need to spend a bit more time with, with Lance than, than, than I am at the moment. So I've actually (laughs) I've tried to do that over the past couple of weeks since I saw you last. Thought maybe I hadn't bonded with him as, as, as well as I should have, cause I was calling him ‘the second one’ as opposed to ‘Lance’, so it's just something I like noticed as we were talking.

Jonathan reflects on himself as a father and turns towards his curiosity about what may not have been fully known to him. The hesitations and tentativeness in the quote suggest a cautious exploration of an emerging aspect of his fatherhood and a shift towards thinking about himself and his children in a different light.

Just as it is helpful to identify what is surprising for research participants, so too is it helpful to reflect on the researcher’s affective experience of hearing it. It was moving for Sarah to hear Jonathan’s reflections on his experience of the first interview and to see him come to the realisation that he had unconsciously been giving less attention to Lance than to Dylan. Sarah had had similar thoughts when reflecting on the first interview but she had kept

these to herself. After the interview she noted her lingering discomfort. She was therefore surprised when it became apparent that she and Jonathan both had similar reflections following the first interview. It also felt particularly significant that Sarah did not make the interpretation for Jonathan. Jonathan did it alone, simply by being given a space to talk about his experience of fathering. Furthermore, even though coming to this realisation wasn't necessarily easy for Jonathan, Jonathan used the research interview to try to become the kind of father that he would like to be to both of his children.

In another example, Anthony spoke in the first session about his dislike of bathing or feeding his daughter, because he worries that she could slip in the bath or choke on some food. As Anthony spoke, the researcher had a truly visceral experience of his anxiety. She could sense his absolute terror and his fear of being a damaging object for his daughter. In response to this terror, Sarah felt a deep sense of sadness, as Anthony's efforts to protect his daughter (by excluding himself) may, ironically, also hurt her. Furthermore, as Sarah observed how Anthony's anxiety made him feel little or helpless, Sarah also felt helpless and conflicted, because she saw a father and daughter in need of a robust figure who could normalise rupture and facilitate repair, yet she herself felt anxious about causing possible harm should she say or do something. Interestingly, simply being present as a sounding board, reflecting and acknowledging Anthony's fears, seemed to be enough. In response to the question at the end of the interview about what had surprised him, Anthony replied:

> what did I, I was saying something to you and I was like, sorry I'm just thinking out loud, um, I can't remember what it was. Oh, maybe like my fears about like hurting my daughter or being in a position where she's hurt and like my feelings of helplessness. Um, which are not surprising, I know that they're there, I just didn't

> realise maybe how much they holding me back, and I just gotta make an effort to get over them…it's, it's gonna happen. She's gonna fall, she's gonna trip, she's gonna break her arm, she's gonna, so I suppose the sooner I deal with the reality that that is gonna happen, I just don't want to yet, ya so we'll get there.

This excerpt captures the extent of Anthony's anxiety and his difficulty with the idea of his daughter getting hurt. The act of thinking about his anxieties is, in itself, very unsettling for Anthony, so much so that he initially forgot what he wanted to say. After a short time however, he managed to remember and he began to use the interview to muddle his way through his anxieties in order to start trying to come to terms with them. This seems to have been prompted by his realisation, during the research interview, of the extent to which his anxieties inhibit his fathering. While these anxieties are not necessarily easy to tackle, being aware of them has made it more possible for Anthony to begin to do so. His reflections happened in situ, and the process of his awareness of his anxieties and his challenges of these anxieties could be observed. In turn, this process potentially sheds light on the difficult process of fathers representing themselves in their own minds, especially in relation to their potentially more damaging parts of themselves.

From a slightly different vantage point, it was also apparent that the interviews were used by the research participants to gain insight into their feelings about the mother-infant dyad. This is evident where Anthony shared, in the second interview, that in the period between his first and second interview

> I went through like a very different thought process, I don't know if it's related or not, or normal or whatever, but we spoke a lot about breastfeeding and that bond, and I went through a phase where I was (pause) like almost resentful and jealous and, um,

> like I was very aware of the bond that my wife and my daughter have as a result of that, and I was very positive about it, but then (switches off heater) I was like jealous, I was very, very jealous, um, and since then I've sort of levelled out. Um, but it was quite a difficult thing to go through.

Here, Anthony describes a rather challenging experience of having difficult feelings emerge as a result of the first interview. Although uncomfortable, Anthony used his new awareness of these feelings as a means to begin to work through them. The interview seems to have helped Anthony in this regard, as it provided the space for Anthony to put his thoughts into words, which he then discussed with his wife, and this was enormously helpful for him. Once again, Anthony reflected on and engaged with what emerged in the research interview on his own accord, without any prompting or interpretation from the interviewer. Analysis of surprises and discoveries in interviews, then, enrich our understanding of participants' experiences of the interview, as well as their experiences of themselves and the live process of coming to represent themselves as fathers.

Conclusion

This paper has offered an analysis of fathers' experiences of participating in research interviews. Juxtaposed against the findings of the study that fathers seem to constellate their subjectivity around absence, their experience of research participation contributes to our understanding of the process of paternal subjectivity. Starting with the overwhelming absence of fathers encountered in the recruitment phase and ending with experiences of interviews as a space to open up, to explore the mind of the other and to entertain unexpected discoveries, fathers seemed to move from a position of absence to one of presence. The question of why the topic of fatherhood is potentially threatening for fathers,

and therefore avoided, can be understood through the anxiety and uncertainty participants expressed about participating and about having something to say. Paradoxically, however, it can also be understood through the subsequent willingness of fathers to explore their subjectivities. As Way's (2011) and Roy's (2006; 2014) work suggests, we may not hear males' relational narratives because we are not listening. The struggle to represent themselves in their own minds and in the minds of others suggests the difficulty, but also the possibility, of fatherhood.

This paper has argued that participants' experiences are important nodes of reflection in qualitative research, and has suggested some potential methods for accessing this experience. Examining the process of discovery through a psychoanalytic methodology helps to hone focus on participants' research experiences. We do not claim that psychoanalytic methodology has special status in this regard: qualitative methodologies in general offer tools for such reflexive praxis. Psychoanalytic methodology does, however, help us to hone in on process as well as on the unexpected and what is affectively loaded.

We also do not claim that interviews are necessarily therapeutic in nature. Indeed, the purpose of interviews is to understand experience and not to provide therapy, and it is unethical to set up an expectation that an interview will be therapeutic (Long & Eagle, 2009), not least because there is ample potential for an interview to be experienced in less benign ways. Furthermore, while it is fruitful to undertake a systematic analysis of shifts and changes in participants' interview experiences, it is important to focus not only on what is generative but also on what is potentially unsaid, undone or unmetabolized: it is quite possible that degenerative shifts may be observed in an interview process. When analysis points to generative shifts and discoveries such as those explored in this paper, however, researchers

are offered an opportunity to understand the possibilities of movement in internal representations, and to contemplate the implications of this for our understanding of the phenomenon under study. Most significantly for the fathers in this study, the experience of thinking about the self as a father meant that the father could be foregrounded in his own mind, precisely because this experience could be witnessed and heard in a safe, non-judgmental and non-rivalrous space.

Researcher reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher is a part of the research process and, as such, the researcher is required to be conscious and mindful about what is influencing her internal and external responses, as well as aware of her relationship to the research topic and the participants (Etherington 2004; Kleinsasser, 2000). This approach helps the researcher to minimise the influence of prior conceptions or biases on the process of data collection and data analysis. Given the psychoanalytic nature of this research, an added level of awareness was required. As such, after each interview, the researcher documented her thoughts and feelings about the interview, along with transference-countertransference interactions, as well as any potential bias that may have intruded on the interview (Cartwright, 2004). Importantly, this exploration of reflexivity seems to prioritise what has been termed 'prospective reflexivity' – the effect of the researcher as person on the research (Attia & Edge, 2017). Interestingly, there is currently a move towards recognising 'retrospective reflexivity' – the effect of the research on the researcher (Attia & Edge, 2017). The researcher found both prospective and retrospective reflexivity to be key elements of the research process, and the researcher often found herself moving between

prospective and retrospective reflexivity throughout the research. This process is explored below, along with the implications for the research.

From the outset, I tried to be mindful about how my own interest in fathers may influence my orientation to the research and data collection. In particular, I was cognisant of my personal interest in the experiences of fathers, given my own experience of a relatively absent father in my childhood. I was also aware that my personal characteristics may influence the fathers' experiences of the interviews. For example, I am a young, married woman and I was aware that the participants may have particular thoughts or feelings about this, and about what they feel comfortable sharing with me. In order to account for this potential problem, I attempted to create a comfortable environment for the participants to speak freely, while acknowledging the difficulties that particular topics may cause.

When reflecting on the research interviews, I noticed that my age and gender felt particularly relevant to the data collection process (this discussion is intentionally limited to a discussion of age, as an exploration of the impact of my gender on the research process has been already been addressed in paper four). Exploring the impact of my age on the research process, the research participants seemed particularly interested in, and made comments about, my being of a child-bearing age. A few of the research participants commented that they had wondered whether I had my own children and some asked this question outright. I found this to be a difficult question to manage on two levels. Firstly, being a psychologist, I felt unsure of whether or not to answer this question, as I did not wish to intrude on the research participants' space. If I did share my personal information, what would this mean for the research participants and the research? This is not an

uncommon problem in qualitative and psychoanalytic research and Harvey (2017b) experienced a similar dilemma. Given that the research participants raised these questions of their own accord, I chose to answer them briefly and this response seemed to be appreciated by the research participants. At the same time, however, I also explored possible reasons for these questions and I checked these against the views of the participants. This process often proved helpful in furthering my understanding of some of the intrapsychic processes of the research participants. Secondly, I also found this question rather challenging because, during the process of data collection, I was diagnosed with fertility issues, I began treatment for infertility and I became newly pregnant with twins. While the research participants were not consciously made aware of my infertility journey, I very much had my own babies in mind throughout the process. It is interesting then that the research participants clearly had my children in mind too. My attempts to be aware of the impact of my own subjectivity on the research process, through personal therapy and supervision, enabled me to look beyond my personal conflicts and to explore what the fathers' thoughts or wishes about my having children could mean for their internal world. For example, it was important to think about one of the father's responses in light of the fact that he wanted to make sure that he wasn't putting me 'off' motherhood; while another father shared that he had been able to speak more freely knowing that I did not have children, as he felt that there could be no judgement. These feelings were very meaningful when explored in relation to each father's particular material, and so this information proved useful in corroborating previous interpretations.

Having thought about some of the ways in which my personhood may have influenced the research, I have also come to see the influence of this research project on

me. As the fathers in this research study shared with me their own experiences of being fathered, I was led to think more deeply about my own father. This had, of course, occurred to me before, but the research stirred in me a desire and courage to ask similar questions of my own father and to get a richer sense of his own experience. This led to a deeper personal engagement with some rather painful truths about my own family, which I will share below:

My paternal great grandparents, Martha and Otto Stadler, were murdered in the holocaust. My grandfather, Robert Stadler, was rescued from Nazi Germany by Sir Nicholas George Winton, a man who enabled 669 children to be relocated to the United Kingdom, in the operation known as *Kindertransport.* My grandfather spoke very little of the holocaust; my father sensed it was too painful for him to recollect the death of his parents. As the main provider of the family, my grandfather dedicated himself to working hard and he worked long hours - my father experienced him as being predominantly absent during his childhood. My father shared that my grandfather was never home for dinner and that he spent little time with his children. Even when he was home, and there was some possibility of my grandfather taking my father and his siblings out for the day, my father recalls that my grandmother would insist that my grandfather rather dedicate his time to socialising with their peers. In this way, my father felt that his mother limited his relationship with his father. Interestingly, my father also describes his father as being emotionally absent, and he says that they did not share a close relationship - my grandfather passed away when my father was in his early thirties. Like my grandfather, my father also works hard and, as a child, I found that he, too, was relatively absent. Even when he was present, I wished for a stronger emotional connection with him. As an adult, I have grappled with my childhood relationship with my father, and I have had the opportunity to forge a better relationship

with him. During the process of this research, I have come to have a better understanding of my father and his own wounds - he was once a child too.

Upon reflection, perhaps the research initially served as a means for me to try to give voice to the parts of me that want the father to be remembered, as well as to the parts of me that wish to understand fathers and the factors which may promote and inhibit their performance of fatherhood. As the research progressed, I realised that if I were to fully live and embrace the notion of 'remembering the forgotten parent', then I needed to start with myself and how I had forgotten my own father as a person in his own right. This level of researcher reflexivity was not necessarily easy; however, I believe that it deepened my ability to engage with the data. At the same time, I frequently relied on personal therapy and clinical supervision as a means to ensure that the data analysis reflected the data, as opposed to my own personal biases.

Methodological rigour

Having explored the research design of this study, it is now important to assess the overall methodological rigour, and the issues of reliability and validity of this research in particular. Rigour refers to the legitimacy of the research process, and there has been much debate about how and if typical conceptualisations of rigour in quantitative research should be applied to qualitative research (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Given the importance of methodological rigour, Tobin and Begley (2004) argue that instead of discarding the concept in qualitative approaches, it needs to be epistemologically located and redefined within qualitative research, so that it can be made better suited to the aims of qualitative research.

In an attempt to ensure methodological rigour of qualitative research, Guba & Lincoln developed criteria which have become the cornerstone of qualitative inquiry. In

their view, the rigour (trustworthiness) of a qualitative research endeavour rests on the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the final research product (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1989). Interestingly, these criteria have been used extensively for the last four decades, but there has been little interrogation of the usefulness of these criteria in and of themselves (Morse, 2015). In particular, Morse (2015) highlights that these criteria require researchers to commit to a number of endeavours which may not be suitable to all research projects (for example, some strategies may apply to unstructured research interviews, whereas other strategies are more suited to semi-structured interviews). As such, it is apparent that there should be thoughtful engagement with the strategies required to determine the methodological rigour of the specific research study in question. The four criteria, along with the strategies employed, will be briefly discussed in relation to this research project.

'Credibility', akin to internal validity, evaluates whether the findings of a research study are true, credible and believable (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The strategies employed included the use of two research interviews and member checks - the second research interview was used to check the interpretations that arose from a preliminary analysis of the first research interview with the research participants. Triangulation and peer debriefing also ensured that the conceptualisation and implementation of the entire research project was overseen by a panel of supervisors and peers - in monthly doctoral seminars which took place at the University of the Witwatersrand. In addition, the researcher's supervisors (Professor Carol Long and Dr Nick Davies) and the researcher independently analysed the data for themes, and the process of submitting four journal articles to peer-reviewed journals served as another form of peer review.

'Transferability', akin to external validity or generalisability, requires detailed information about the context in which the research was conducted, so that the reader can make a judgment about whether or not the findings are applicable to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Although this study was undertaken in a particular context and sampling difficulties resulted in a relatively homogenous sample, papers included as much verbatim material as possible in order to allow the reader to test out the possibilities of resonance with other contexts and settings. At the same time, the difficulty experienced with recruiting the sample became a site of analysis in and of itself. This has been explored more fully in all of the papers.

'Dependability' typically refers to being able to ensure that 'the findings of this qualitative inquiry are repeatable if the inquiry occurred within the same cohort of participants, coders and context (Forero et al., 2018). Given that psychoanalytic research interview is so dependent on the meaning that is made within a particular context, and the person of the interviewer plays an integral part in the data that is elicited (see Cartwright, 2004), it is not possible to ensure that the findings would be exactly the same if the study were to be repeated. Although, Lincoln and Guba (1985) do argue that such a study is still dependable as long as the differences arising in subsequent research can be explained. Therefore, in this study, a careful attempt has been made to provide a rich description of the study methods, so that the research could be repeated by other researchers in different contexts.

'Confirmability' refers to the extent to which the findings would be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Forero et al., 2018). Once again, the researcher's interpretations were checked against those of two supervisors and peers. Furthermore, the researcher has thoroughly engaged with researcher reflexivity, so as to demonstrate how

her own personhood may have influenced the data that was elicited and the research findings.

Beyond the typical difficulties with methodological rigour of qualitative approaches that has been discussed above, attention must be given to two added problems associated with psychoanalytic research. In particular, Midgley (2006) cautions that the research interview is not the same as a clinical interview, and that the researcher needs to be mindful of the use of interpretation during a research interview. Midgley (2006) also expresses concern regarding the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations of qualitative data (Midgley, 2006). With regard to the former, the researcher was particular mindful about the research interview not being a clinical space. This created some tension between needing to verify interpretations with the research participants (in order to enhance the methodological rigour of the study) and preferring to avoid interpretations that may transcend the boundaries of research (See Harvey, 2017b for more information regarding the ethical challenges encountered in psychoanalytic research). Interestingly, the researcher often had the experience of the research participants offering interpretations which were in accordance with those that the researcher had in mind. This then also helped to address the second concern that Midgley (2006) raised. However, it is still important to recognise that a psychoanalytic approach may create difficulty for the evaluation of interpretive validity, as it is primarily concerned with exploring unconscious meaning (Cartwright, 2004).

Cartwright (2004) attempts to tackle the issue of validity using four criteria, namely internal consistency and coherence, comprehensiveness, external consistency, and independent validation. Using these criteria, Cartwright (2004) is interested in the extent to which the account makes sense and seems plausible. He argues that proposed interpretations need to be checked against competing interpretations, that an account

needs to be able to capture and explain all aspects of the participant's history and life experience, that an account needs to be tested against other theoretical perspectives and modes of understanding, and that independent evaluators should analyse and interpret interview material. As such, throughout the research process, the plausibility and explanatory power of interpretations were checked. The interview material was also worked through in a circular manner, thereby building a more complex and accurate picture of the data. The researcher and her supervisors were involved in the analysis of the interview material, and the researcher also took careful note of transference-countertransference interactions, which facilitated the process of analysis. In addition, the researcher tried to be particularly mindful of her own personal biases, to limit their intrusion on the research process. This relates to the importance of researcher reflexivity, which is another method that is used within qualitative research to enhance validity (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Non-Medical Ethics Committee (Ethics clearance certificate protocol number: H16/02/33). Further to the ethical issues that have already been discussed, a few additional ethical considerations of the research study will be discussed below.

Informed consent

For the purpose of this study, informed consent was obtained from the relevant vaccination clinics and healthcare professionals to publicise the research study (Appendix I). Prospective participants were then informed about the nature of the study. They were told that participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study up until the publication of any journal articles and/or the submission of the

final thesis. Participants were also informed of the right to refuse to answer any questions. They were informed that there were no direct benefits involved in participation (i.e. no direct incentives), but that participation in the research may offer fathers the benefit of reflecting on their experiences of fatherhood, as well as the opportunity to contribute to current research on fathers within the field of psychology. There were no foreseen risks associated with participation, but in the event that the research evoked any distress, the participants were informed about the option to attend free counselling at FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa – a non-profit organisation which provides counselling). This did not prove necessary or relevant. Informed consent to audio-record the interviews and to report the findings in the final thesis, academic journals and/or academic conferences was also obtained. Participants were informed that direct quotes may be used in writing up the research findings (Confidentiality will be explored more fully below).

Confidentiality

Given the qualitative nature of the research study, there were significant limitations to anonymity and confidentiality which were explained to the research participants. Because the researcher conducted the interviews, the complete anonymity of the participants could not be guaranteed, as at least one person knew the identifying information of the participants (Saunders et al., 2015). However, the research participants were informed that every effort would be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. As such, even though direct quotes were used in the final research report, in the publication of journal articles, and in presentations at academic conferences, the data was sanitised of all identifying information, pseudonyms were used, as well as ‘thick disguise’ (Gabbard, 2000). This meant that all identifying details were either removed or altered so as to protect the confidentiality of the research participants. At the same time, when thick disguise was used,

every effort was made not to change any information that could compromise the integrity of the data. Furthermore, access to the audio-recordings and transcripts was restricted to the researcher and the researcher's two supervisors. This data is digitally stored and password protected, and it will be kept digitally for five years after the completion of the study, after which time it will be destroyed.

Chapter Three

Introduction

This chapter and the two chapters which follow are structured in two parts. The first part is an introduction, which gives some background to each paper and which situates the paper in relation to the broader research question(s) of the study that it aimed to address. The second part of each chapter contains the paper itself.

The paper presented in this chapter was the first paper to be written and published. It was submitted to the accredited Journal "Psychoanalytic Social Work", a biannual publication that is available on Taylor & Francis Online (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15228878.2020.1755700). It was accepted for online publication on 30 April 2020 and it was published in Volume 28 (issue 1) of Psychoanalytic Social Work in 2021. The paper is re-printed here with the journal's permission.

The paper is entitled "Beyond remembering the forgotten parent: The conception of the father". It arose in order to address the first research question, namely: How do new fathers represent themselves as fathers in their own minds, as well as in the minds of their partner and infant?

The paper represents an attempt to remember the 'forgotten parent' by exposing how the pre-oedipal father has been forgotten in both theory and practice, and by using data from in-depth qualitative research interviews with fathers to turn the focus to the father himself, as a figure in his own right. When exploring the research participants' experiences of fatherhood, it emerged that calling the father the 'forgotten parent' may be an inadequate description of the father, as this makes the forgetting of the father sound

incidental. It also fails to capture how the father may forget himself, and it is does not consider the purpose that this forgetting of the father may serve for both the father and the mother-infant dyad. The paper engages with this problem and it also highlights the implications of forgetting the father for the father himself, his partner and infant. In addition, the findings from the research interviews offered a way to begin thinking about how to 'remember the father'. The paper subsequently explores how the fathers' experiences of their infants becoming more interactive with them seemed to represent a key turning point for these men and their emerging self-representations as fathers.

Beyond remembering the forgotten parent: The conception of the father

Abstract

While it is true that the father occupies the third position and that he is excluded from the mother-infant dyad, he does not have to be the "forgotten" parent, and, in the last few decades, there has been an increased interest in remembering the father. However, in both theory and practice, the focus seems to be on remembering the importance of the father for the mother and infant, while comparatively little attention has been given to the father himself. In particular, there is a lack of research on the father's representation of himself as a father. In an effort to explore the representational world of the father, psychoanalytic research interviews were conducted with South African fathers whose infants were in the phase of pre-oedipal development. The findings suggest that, for the fathers in this research study, rudimentary and inchoate representations of the self as a father predominate until the father experiences his infant as actively responsive to him. At this point, the father appears to undergo a highly affective, internal reconstitution which binds him to his infant and which begins to enrich his representation of himself as a father. Through the mirroring gaze of the infant, the father is conceived.

Keywords: Father; fatherhood; infant; pre-oedipal, thirdness, representation

Introduction

The focus and interest of psychoanalytic theory and practice has largely been matricentric (Sarkar, 2018). The mother-infant dyad has occupied center stage while the father has been relegated to the background, to the extent that the father has even been termed the 'forgotten parent' (Ross, 1979). Fortunately, there has been a slow but steadily increasing interest in the importance of fathers in the psychoanalytic and gender-oriented literature over the past two decades (Etchegoyen, 2002), but there is still a paucity of material in contrast to the available theory and research on mothers (Liebman & Abell, 2000; Madsen et al., 2007). For example, a search of the electronic Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP-Web, 2020) database, conducted on 14 January 2020, yielded 614 articles with the term 'mother' in the title and 300 results with the term 'father' in the title. A search of the phrase 'mother-infant' returned 3589 articles, while only 58 articles were

found for ‘father-infant’. It is subsequently evident that there is a comparative lack of research on fathers in relation to mothers, and that the time is ripe to turn to the father himself.

A turn to the father

The original father and the origin of civilization

The earliest trace of reference to the father in psychoanalytic theory is to Freud’s myth of the original father of the primal horde. The original father was considered to be essential for the beginning of civilization and, somewhat ironically, he was deemed to be more powerful in death than in life, as it was his death that enabled society to survive (Perelberg, 2015). In *Totem and Taboo,* Freud explains that the primal horde, faced with having killed and devoured their father, were confronted with a situation in which each of the brothers wanted all of the women for himself (Freud, 1913). The law of incest was henceforth instituted in order to prevent the destruction of the group and humankind. In death, the original father could come to represent both an ideal and a prohibition, and he could be used by the sons to initiate a social order and the beginnings of civilization (Perelberg, 2015). It might be argued that the original father could not have performed a more important function than ensuring the survival of society, yet it is quite remarkable that not much thought has been given to the original father himself. Perhaps it is time to start asking about this father of the primal horde. Who was he? What part did he play in his ultimate death? Can he be seen as embodying anything more than a symbolic function for his progeny? This paper argues that it is time to give more thought to the father himself, both in relation to the myth of the original father and in relation to present-day fathers.

The Oedipal father: Where is Laius?

For Freud, the Oedipal father is a central figure in child development, and specifically in the organization of the child's Oedipus complex. In the myth of Oedipus Rex, Oedipus transgresses the prohibition against incest that was established by the primal horde. Oedipus kills his father and lies with his mother. Freud (1900) states that the destiny of Oedipus "moves us only because it might have been ours – because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse toward our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father" (p. 262). Oedipus "merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes" (Freud, 1900, p. 262). Hence, Freud considered the Oedipus complex to be a "universal, intrapsychic conflict, a nuclear organizing phantasy in sexual development, and of great significance to emotional growth" (Etchegoyen, 2002, p. 22). Given the supreme importance of the Oedipal father in the child's Oedipus complex, it is once again rather strange that little attention has been given to the father as a figure in his own right. In the myth of Oedipus Rex, it is clearly apparent that Oedipus' father, Laius, brings his own history and traumatic experiences that play a part in the unfolding of the Oedipal drama (Kancyper, 2006). However, Laius seems to have been largely forgotten in contrast to his sons (Ross, 1982). Going a step further, not only has the father himself been forgotten, but the very nature of the Oedipus complex dictates that the father gets set up as an absent, symbolic figure as opposed to a present, involved father. Freud explains that the dissolution of the Oedipus Complex comes about when "the object-cathexes are given up and replaced by identifications" (Freud, 1924, p.175). The father then comes to be characterized by a "symbolic presence and substantive absence" (Freeman, 2008, p.113) in relation to his infant; he is relegated to the periphery of the family and, historically, he has come to stand

as a patriarchal symbolic figure, excluded from the intimate and emotional aspects of the family (Sarkar, 2018). To complicate matters further, the fresh interest in the importance of the mother and the mother-infant bond in the early 1940s further minimized the level of interest in the father (Kalinich, 2009; Jones, 2005; Oberholzer, 2002). As such, the forgetting of the Oedipal father has been threefold. Firstly, his own personal history and intrapsychic dynamics have been largely overlooked; secondly, he has been made a symbolically present but physically absent figure in his infant's Oedipus complex and, thirdly, he has been made secondary to the mother, who has taken center stage in the theorization of psychic development. Thus, it could be argued that it is not enough to say that the father has been the forgotten parent. Rather, it is important to interrogate the ways in which the father has been and continues to be forgotten.

The pre-oedipal father: Beyond a function?

The notion of the pre-oedipal father has helped to cast more light onto the father, however, the representation of the father as a 'pre-oedipal' figure, like the notion of the 'oedipal father', is child-centric, as it refers to a period of psychosexual development preceding the Oedipus complex that is defined by the child's developmental capacities and conflicts (Freud, 1932). Thus, the pre-oedipal phase is considered to be a time during which a child's attachment is predominantly aimed toward the mother, and it is specifically the father's unique position of being a third, excluded from the mother-infant dyad, that is said to enable him the opportunity to function as a container, holder, protector, separator, and facilitator of the mother-infant dyad (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Although the pre-oedipal phase of development emphasizes the importance of the mother-infant dyad, the notion of the pre-oedipal father has undoubtedly brought about increased recognition of the importance of the father for the mother and infant. However, it could still be argued that the emphasis

is on the functions that the father performs for the mother and infant. Relatively little attention is given to the father himself in relation to his experience and negotiation of the transition to fatherhood.

The 'new, nurturing and involved father': Social constructions of fatherhood

It is impossible to think about fatherhood as separate from the social and cultural context in which it occurs. Social constructions of fatherhood vary across time, between cultures and within subcultural contexts (Lamb, 2010). Lamb (2010) highlights the shift in the conceptualization of father roles over time, from that of "moral teacher" to "breadwinner" to "sex role model" to "new nurturant father" (pp. 4–6). Most recently, there has been a strong emphasis on the idea of a "new fatherhood" which emphasizes increased father involvement and the sharing of childcare responsibilities with the mother (Gregory & Milner, 2011). However, Gregory and Milner (2011) also state that the extent to which "new fatherhood" is reflected in real social change is debatable, and Lamb (2010) suggests that there is a move toward recognizing that a father should ideally perform multiple roles and that "only by considering fathers' performance of these various roles, and by taking into account their relative importance in the socioecological contexts concerned, can fathers' impact on child development be evaluated" (Lamb, 2010, p3). Thus, the importance of turning to the father himself in order to explore and understand the ways in which the father constructs his own fatherhood within a particular social and cultural context is clearly apparent.

A turn to the father as an individual in his own right

From a biological perspective, the process of becoming a father is generally considered to be very different to the process of becoming a mother. Although there is increased recognition of the hormonal changes that take place in fathers in order to

promote their relationship with their baby (Berg & Wynne-Edwards, 2001; Rilling & Mascaro, 2017), pregnancy initiates far more easily observable changes in the mother's body, which are said to stimulate psychological adaptation and the developing mother-infant relationship (Etchegoyen, 2002; Jessner et al., 1970). Bodily changes arouse very strong feelings for the mother that confront her with her impending motherhood. As such, the mother is considered to be at the center of the experience. She is the link between her partner and baby, able to exclude either of them but never excluded herself (Trowell, 2002). In contrast, men become fathers as outside observers (Etchegoyen, 2002; Jessner et al., 1970).

Interestingly, the notion of the father being an outside observer is not limited to the biological realm, as the available psychoanalytic literature on fathers has explored it as a psychological phenomenon as well. For example, Diamond (1995) argues that protecting the mother-infant dyad is not always an easy task for the father. He says that fathers may struggle to perform a holding function for the mother-infant dyad, because of their simultaneous exclusion and wish to be a part of the mother-infant dyad (Diamond, 1995; 1998). From another perspective, Green (2009) highlights the complexity of being a separating third, as the father has to simultaneously offer himself as compensation for the mother, while tolerating the child's aggression and hatred toward him for playing the role of separator. Added to the above, it has also been said that becoming a father can give rise to problems related to the father's own experiences of being fathered, unresolved oedipal issues, jealousy and rivalry toward the infant, as well as envy of the mother's reproductive capacity (for example, Diamond, 1986; Ross, 1982; Trowell, 2002). Thus, it is apparent that fatherhood can evoke multiple conflicts for men, suggesting the

importance of bringing focus to the experiences of fathers as persons in their own right. As such, this research study aimed to explore the representational world of new fathers.

Given that the notion of representation is central to this paper, the use of this term for the purpose of this paper needs to be delineated. At the outset, it is important to note that various different analytic writers and researchers have used the term 'mental representations', which has resulted in considerable debate and confusion regarding the meaning of the term (Zelnick & Buchholz, 1990). Mental representation as a theoretical construct has been influenced by psychoanalytic thinking, cognitive science, as well as developmental and social research (Blatt & Auerbach, 2001). In this research study, the researcher has adopted a pan-theoretical perspective of the concept of mental representations, as this approach suggests that representations develop through repeated interactions with others and primarily form from early caregiver experiences. These interactions create schemas of self and others, eventually forming templates, which structure how one feels about oneself and others (Blatt & Auerbach, 2001). Importantly, these schemas have conscious and unconscious cognitive, affective, and experiential components. They reflect the individual's developmental level, as well as impulses, affects, drives, and fantasies (Beres & Joseph, 1970; Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962). They also organize experience and temper affects and behaviors (Blatt et al., 1997). This understanding of mental representations was selected for this research study, as it enabled the researcher to explore the research participants' conscious and unconscious representations of fatherhood and of the self as a father.

Method

Freud's ideas on the unconscious, repression and resistance have been core to psychoanalytic theory ever since they were first proposed (Freud, 1915a; Freud, 1915b).

Curiously, there has been a so-called “forgetting” of the preoedipal father, as a figure in his own right, within the psychoanalytic literature itself (Ross, 1979). Given that this research stemmed from an interest in this apparent “forgetting” of the father, a psychoanalytic paradigm located within a qualitative research design was deemed best positioned to explore the representation of the father to and for himself. In particular, a psychoanalytically informed research interview method (adapted from Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Kvale, 1999) was selected in order to account for both conscious and unconscious processes in the representation of the self as a father. This method elicited data that went beyond verbal communication alone. It made it possible for the researcher to make sense of what was said and what was not said through an exploration of core narratives, key identifications and object relations, as well as transference-countertransference reactions (Cartwright, 2004; Stromme et al., 2010).

Sample selection

The research participants were selected using non-probability purposive, volunteer and snowball sampling strategies. The researcher initially intended to recruit research participants from vaccination clinics but, in the absence of interest in research participation, the researcher also approached paediatrician’s offices, antenatal class providers and online parenting community forums. Interestingly, no fathers volunteered from any of these sites and the final sample was largely accessed through word of mouth and snowball sampling. The final sample consisted of white, middle to upper class, South African men, all of whom were residing with their partner and child at the time of the interviews. Seven men participated in the research and their ages ranged from 24 to 37 years old, with the ages of their children ranging from 5 to 24 months of age. The researcher specifically limited participation to fathers having at least one child between the age of 6 and 24 months so as

to allow fathers time to settle into their new role, but to still be fathers to preoedipal infants. All of the participants, except one, had a child below the age of 12 months. Six of the research participants were first-time fathers, while one of the research participants has two children aged 24 months and under.

Data collection and data analysis

Two research interviews were held with each participant at a time and place convenient to them, such that a total of 14 research interviews were conducted. The first interview was guided by an interview schedule designed to explore fathers' experiences of fatherhood and their representations of themselves, their infants and their partners. The first interview was transcribed before the second interview took place. The second interview invited fathers to reflect on the first interview and subsequent thoughts that may have emerged, and to clarify and further explore material that had emerged in the first interview. Given that the interviews were designed to explore the fathers' internal representations, a psychoanalytic approach to interviews and data analysis was undertaken. The analysis involved an exploration of both the content and form of the interviews, the underlying feeling states and associated thoughts, repetitive and core narratives, associations, digressions, seemingly omitted information, as well as identifications and key object relations. The researcher also used transference-countertransference impressions as an additional source of information to make sense of preliminary findings (Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Kvale, 1999). Key themes were identified by multiple readings of the interview material, and the data analysis was conducted independently by the researcher and two supervisors in order to enhance interpretive validity (Cartwright, 2004). Themes that were identified by the researcher and the two supervisors were noted and discussed in depth. The analysis in this paper focused in particular on two themes that

emerged: the father's prioritization of the mother, and the representation of the self as a father. These themes were chosen as a result of their frequency across research participants, as well as because of the affective valence that prevailed. In presenting the findings, it is acknowledged that an element in a person's story can be best understood by taking into account everything that has been said by the person (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Given that the researcher has chosen to present relevant quotes across a range of participants for the purpose of this paper, there is inevitably a lack of individual context within which to read each participant's account. The researcher has subsequently tried to provide full and direct quotes in the hope that this will enable the reader a clearer context with which to evaluate the interpretive validity of the research findings (Cartwright, 2004). One of the implications thereof is that some of the quotes are relatively lengthy.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Non-Medical Ethics Committee. Prior to participation, the participants were given detailed information pertaining to the nature and purpose of the research study. They were informed that there were no benefits or risks to participation and that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time, although none of the participants chose to do so. All of the participants provided informed consent for the research interviews, the audio-recording of the interviews and the use of direct quotes in publication. The research participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained and that pseudonyms would be used.

Research findings

Situating myself in the research process

Qualitative research in general, and the psychoanalytically informed research interview in particular, recognizes that the researcher plays a central role in accessing and understanding the personal experiences of participants, as well as in the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process (Harvey, 2017; Palaganas et al., 2017). Given the key part played by the researcher, researcher reflexivity and researcher subjectivity are essential aspects requiring consideration throughout the research (Palaganas et al., 2017; Parker, 2005). Although subjectivity is typically viewed as an obstacle to objectivity within quantitative research, subjectivity is viewed by many within qualitative research and psychoanalysis as a resource, as opposed to a problem (Parker, 2005). In fact, drawing on one's subjectivity is a means to come closer to a truer account of the data, through having explored the researcher's own 'investment' in the research (Cartwright, 2004; Frosh & Saville-Young, 2008). During the course of the research, it became apparent that my own lived experience, age, gender and race were all important aspects of my subjectivity requiring in-depth and meaningful reflexivity. My personal lived experience is deemed most relevant for the purpose of this paper and will be explored below.

Given that this study highlights the challenge of keeping the father in mind, it must be mentioned that this is something that I am passionate about precisely because of my own personal experiences. Having had a lived experience of my own father being largely absent and having had the experience of there being little sense of a father in my mother's mind, the notion of keeping the father in mind holds deep meaning and significance for me. I was acutely aware of the impact that this personal investment may have on the research

itself and I used Cartwright's (2004) guidelines in an attempt to present findings that are close to the data. Subsequently, throughout the research process, I was engaged in my own personal psychotherapy and research supervision. These two spaces offered a context for me to explore my perceptions, thoughts and feelings, so as to minimize the intrusion of my own personal investment in the research on the data. In addition, I made every effort to be aware of my own feeling states, as well as those of the research participants, that were evoked during the research interviews. These transference-countertransference impressions were then discussed extensively in supervision. I found it particularly noteworthy that many of the fathers commented on how certain aspects of my identity may have influenced their ability to speak freely during the research interviews. For example, many of the fathers, though not all, commented that they felt more comfortable speaking to a woman, as opposed to a man. Experiences of this nature were discussed in detail with the research participants. These discussions enabled me to have a greater understanding of how the fathers experienced the research process itself and they also helped me to reflect on how my presence enabled particular data to emerge. As such, I found that my subjectivity was not simply an accessory to the research, it was core to the research process.

The foregrounding of the mother in the father's representational world

It is somewhat ironic, although not necessarily unexpected, that in a research study on the fathers' representational world, the mother occupied center stage in the fathers' minds. For some of the research participants, the focus on the mother seemed to be shrouded in anxiety and concern about her physical and psychological health during pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum, as well as her capacity to mother. These fathers considered it their duty to care for the mother and, by implication, the baby. The extracts

below demonstrate this emphasis on the mother, and the father's attempt to suspend his own needs in order to offer support to the mother:

Jonathan: There are lots of people who are going to take care of the baby, and the, the, the mom will by, by nature take care of the child, and you have a nurse, and you have mom, you know moms and moms-in-law, and that helps if you've got that, but you need to concentrate on your, on the wife more.

Steven: Obviously she was going through her stuff and still is, so I mean I have to, you know, put on a brave face. I guess that's part of, part of it.

Gary: You steadying the ship, you kind of got a little bit of control and a bit of direction on how things are going and, cause I think particularly for the mom, like hormones are crazy, like you on the other extreme of like, everything like is a bigger deal like than it should be, but it is like a crazy big deal you know, you almost got a bigger bond, not a bigger but a different type of bond than the father and the kid, and you need to, ya, as a dad I think it's important to have that.

Looking at the above excerpts, it is apparent that the wellbeing of the mother is at the forefront of these fathers' minds. The mothers are seen as being in a greater position of vulnerability and chaos, and the fathers consider it their duty to support and 'steady the ship'. However, this sometimes means having to 'put on a brave face', and it is easy to see how the focus on the mother can result in the father's own needs and anxieties being overlooked. In this instance, it is most interesting that the representation of the father is characterized by the role that he performs for the mother.

The representation of the self as a father and the problem of 'involved fatherhood'

The research participants were all asked the question 'How do you see yourself as a father?', and it was found that this was a very difficult question for many of them to answer. While questions of this nature may generally be experienced as rather challenging, it seems significant that the fathers in this research study really struggled to provide nuanced representations of themselves as fathers, preferring to draw on stereotypical notions of involved fatherhood instead. This research finding suggests that seeing oneself as an involved father does not necessarily mean that there is a representation of the self as a father in the father's mind, and the significance thereof will be explored using the quotes below:

David: How do I see, I mean I see myself as a (pause) you know obviously we're all biased and we all say I see myself as a fantastic, wonderful, good father, but I definitely do see myself as, um, you can't really say, like I am definitely there for my child, which makes you a wonderful father.

Warren: (Sighs) Um, I don't know, look I mean, again, it's like, it's still early days, but I mean, I think that we're at least are already (pause), we're in a sort of phase where (pause) uh, for me what's very important is to, to, to, to create an environment at home that is wholesome and healthy and happy for all of us.

Steven: (Pause) I guess that's a difficult question, I mean I, I think I'm a, I'm a, I'm a good father I would say, um, you know I try spend as much time as I can with, uh, with my child.

Anthony: Um, I'm doing my best, um I think that I would like to be more involved, but I'm at work in the day. Stacey works for like two or three hours a day, so she's got that luxury of being around. Um and it like, I become aware of it like when Jenna's screaming and I just

can't settle her, and then she'll go to Stacey and five seconds later she's settled, or um, ya, like that's really (pause) some like, ya. Also like they do like fun stuff in the day.

The excerpts above demonstrate the difficulty that many of the research participants experienced when trying to discuss how they see themselves as fathers. The fathers appeared to be unsure of how to respond, as if they did not know what to draw on in forming a representation of themselves as fathers. Their answers tended to be filled with repetition, hesitation, stuttering, and pauses. It seems like many of the research participants eventually managed to grab on to the representation of 'involved fatherhood' and that this could then help them to answer the research question. However, the notion of being an involved father might be more obscure than it seems, and it can be quite stereotypical and generalized, failing to really present a picture of each of these fathers as individuals. In fact, Lamb (2010) proposed a revised conceptualization of the construct of paternal involvement that goes far beyond the idea of 'positive engagement activities' to address this very issue. Paternal involvement has subsequently been expanded to include warmth and responsiveness, control (parental monitoring and decision-making), as well as indirect care and process responsibility - which refers to ensuring that the child is taken care of and has adequate resources (Lamb, 2010, p.58). Lamb (2010) states that the definition was operationalized in this way because of the tendency for the term to be taken up and operationalized in a myriad of different ways since its inception.

It is interesting that the research participants have taken up a rather narrow idea of paternal involvement and that they appear to make a link between being an involved father and a good father. For these research participants, being a 'good father' seems to mean being physically present for one's child, and the fathers spoke about how important it is for

them to play a part in changing nappies and bathing their children. As an example, Jonathan shared that “dads are much more involved than they, than they were a generation back, so this like stigma of like ‘oh my goodness you left the baby with, with, with the father, like they, you, you must have come home and the house was like upside down, and the, you know, the child’s like got you know socks on his hands and vomit all over’, that’s not like the way dads are anymore you know, I, at least in the circle that I mix in, dads are much more involved”. This notion was shared by many of the research participants, and it seems like men may be trying to undo the representation of uninvolved fatherhood, which they feel they have inherited from their own father’s generation. As such, the fathers in this research study appear to be very invested in being more practically involved in the care of their baby than their own fathers were. However, it is important to remember that drawing on a narrow idea of involved fatherhood means that there might be other aspects of involvement that are ignored. This extends beyond aspects of the practical care of the child to the intrapsychic counterpart of the father’s involvement. It is so poignant that both David and Steven make an effort to be involved fathers, yet they really struggled to provide representations of themselves as fathers. For these two fathers, being an involved father does not necessarily translate into a representation of the self as a father in his own mind. As such, perhaps it could be said that actual presence does not always equate to intrapsychic presence, and the implications of this for both the father and the infant need to be held in mind.

Similar to the above-mentioned problem of erroneously assuming that being an involved father equates to having an intrapsychic sense of oneself as a father, Anthony uses physical unavailability to explain difficulties related to being emotionally present for his child. Anthony feels like he is not as physically available to his child as he would like to be,

and he uses these circumstances to account for his taking second place to his wife when his daughter is distressed. The concern here is that Anthony might then be unable to consider that there may be other factors in his own internal world that contribute to his difficulty consoling his daughter, and that it might still be possible to become able to emotionally comfort his child, even if he is not as physically present as he would like to be. Once again, it seems that physical availability is foregrounded at the risk of ignoring the father's capacity to see himself as a father and being conscious of his own intrapsychic dynamics, ideas, wishes and fears related to being a father. Thus, it could be argued that the notion of involved fatherhood can be problematic at times, as it emphasizes the actual presence or absence of the father for the child, and it does not sufficiently interrogate the presence and quality of the intrapsychic representation of the self as a father.

The representation of the self as a father in the mind of the mother

As with the previous question, the fathers really struggled to answer the question, 'How does your partner see you as a father?'. This question seemed to catch the fathers off guard and it created anxiety for the research participants. It was just so difficult for many of the fathers to imagine a place for themselves as a father in the mind of the mother, as opposed perhaps to a partner or husband. They struggled to imagine how they might be represented as fathers to infants, in the minds of their partners. The idea almost seemed absurd to them. So much so that some of the research participants suggested that the researcher contact their partners directly to establish the answer to this question. This was an interesting suggestion as the research is not about the father in the mind of the mother herself; rather, it is about the father's representation of himself as a father in the mother's mind. Yet, once again, it seems as if it is almost impossible to stay with the father and not to veer off in the direction of the mother. Nonetheless, the researcher tried to stay with

exploring the fathers' self-representations as fathers in their partner's minds, irrespective of what is actually in the minds of their partners. This is evident in the excerpts below:

David: I don't know hey, you'll have to ask her (David laughs). I don't know, I have no idea, I definitely think she's, she, she, she's, um, supportive and I'm there and things like that, but I couldn't answer that (David laughs), I really couldn't answer that.

Warren: (Warren laughs) ask, you can take her number if you want (Warren laughs). I don't know I mean (Warren laughs) I, I think pretty positively, uh, ya, and again sometimes it's an unfair advantage because she you know, uh like it's quite easy to be, to be the, the father who comes home and you know like is easy to (pause) is happy to be around … I mean most of the time she, she appreciates it, sometimes it's even more frustrating for her (Warren laughs), she probably resents me for it, but (Warren laughs), ya I think, I think, I think, I mean generally she's, she's happy (Warren laughs) with, with my role, you can call it.

Steven: Ya, I think she's, uh, she's happy I would say, ya she's, ya I'd say she, she would say I put in uh enough work with the baby, so she's uh she's comfortable with that, she, ya she would probably be comfortable to, to leave me with the child for the whole day and not worry that, uh, I'd get something wrong so (Steven laughs) she's happy ya.

It is not surprising, given the fathers' difficulty finding representation in their own minds, that they also struggled to think about the representation of the self as a father in their partners' minds. However, there do seem to be particular nuances distinguishing the representations of the self as a father to and for himself, and the representations of the self as a father in the mind of the mother. Looking at the excerpts above, three central issues emerge when thinking about the representation of self as the father in the mind of the mother. Firstly, the fathers really struggled to think about how their partners might view

them as fathers. Secondly, the representations tended to be quite evaluative in nature and there appeared to be significant anxiety and self-doubt underlying these representations. Unlike the previous section, in which the research participants could think about whether or not they themselves were satisfied with their performance as fathers, the fathers were now concerned with whether or not their partners were happy with the way in which they perform their role. This is understandably more anxiety-provoking and difficult to think about. Thirdly, Warren also raised the issue of resentment and rivalry, demonstrating his personal difficulty with being in the third position in relation to his wife and baby. Warren highlights the tension that fathers might experience between wanting to be seen as good enough, but also feeling concerned about the mother resenting the father for being too good, or too appealing to the infant in this instance. It is poignant that not only do the fathers struggle to think about a space for themselves in their partners' minds, but they may view the space that they do occupy as being a place for judgment and potential rivalry.

The representation of the self as a father in the mind of the infant

Similar to the question related to the father's representation of the self as a father in the mother's mind, the fathers also really struggled when asked, 'How do you think your child sees you as a father?'. Their responses are captured in the excerpts below:

David: Gees, that I, that I don't know. Put it this way, put it this way, when she comes to me, she doesn't cry (okay), put it that way. You know and obviously men, uh, you know the, her first words were actually 'mama', her second words were 'dada', but every time I come home there's a massive smile on her face, so I sort of, that sort of like answers it.

Warren: Ya, so I mean, you know, look first of all she's young, um, so you never know what's going on in that little head (Warren laughs, pause). Um, I mean she (pause), ya, it's, it's like

a, it's a bit difficult that one you know, because, because she, well it, I mean it, it's interesting, ya I mean, I don't know what, what she knows me as… I mean maybe the (Warren laughs), if you could judge by her, basically I mean her um sort of level of you know comfortability or comfort with me, and her um, (pause) uh kind of, I don't know what you would call it, ya, like willingness to, to come to me if she's upset, etc, etc. I mean if you can, if you want, if you can use that as like a bit of a gauge, then, then probably quite, probably quite good.

Steven: Ya, I mean I can't talk for her, she can't talk for herself, but uh, uh, ya like I say, I come from work and I can just see that she's, she's smiling and that she wants to come to me… so I think she, she is excited when I'm around.

Gary: Hmm (long pause) sho, (Gary laughs), (pause), ya I have no clue (long pause), you sometimes wonder whether your baby really, like with her mom I guess it's like always like, there's that like mom-baby bond that, that happens and I guess the dad, you are always left wondering a little bit if like the baby knows exactly who you are.

Anthony: Um like I think good, like I think she's like particularly comfortable with me, until it like gets to that point of like just too over-tired or like um, but she's generally a lot more comfortable with me than like say my mom, or our maid, or so I'm quite up there on the pecking order.

From the above quotes, it is apparent that the research participants had to give considerable thought to how their babies might see them as fathers. Their answers were once again populated with hesitations, pauses, stutters and uncomfortable laughing, which seemingly conveyed their struggle to find representation of themselves as fathers in the

minds of their infants. Instead of being able to provide detailed, descriptive representations of the self as a father, the fathers answered by looking at how their children physically respond to them. The fathers appeared to use physical displays of affection and facial expression as a stepping stone toward thinking about their child's feelings. While it is useful for a father to be able to read his child's body language and communication, there are two potential problems. Firstly, it seems quite difficult for the father to think about his child's mind beyond what he can observe. Secondly, David appears to be making an assumption that a child's mood and outward behavior is directly related to the child's feelings toward him. This could be a problematic assumption, as it may prevent the father from being able to think about other reasons for his child's behavior. Nonetheless, both of these points illustrate just how difficult it is for the father to think about how his infant might see him as a father. In fact, Gary sometimes wonders whether his baby knows who he is, and this really demonstrates how difficult it can be for a father to feel like he can be held in his infant's mind at all. This anxiety may explain why fathers may be so reliant on overt, physical displays of affection from their baby, and why this developmental achievement is so significant for the fathers in this research study. Similar to Gary, David and Warren also seemed to feel enormously relieved upon realizing that their infants see them as safe and comforting figures, while Steven and Anthony showed how their children's displays of pleasure bring them pleasure. Thus, it is apparent that the child's physical response may offer a way for the father to see himself as a place of safety in his child's mind. More specifically, the father's experience of his child as actively responsive to him seems to be a key moment in the process of representation of the self as a father.

Remembering the forgotten parent: A father is conceived - 'when that child knows who you are and she looks up at you, your whole world melts'

"What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there" (*Winnicott, 1971*, p. 112)*

In ordinary circumstances, when the baby looks at the mother, the baby will see himself or herself reflected back (Winnicott, 1971). In such a situation, the mother is predominantly able to see her baby, as opposed to reflecting her own mood back at the baby. This is a remarkable idea which suggests that the baby starts to get a sense of itself through the eyes of its mother, and this process requires a mother who can see her baby. It is fascinating that the fathers in this research study seemed to require a similar sort of mirroring in order to see themselves as fathers more clearly. The moment of transition is captured in an extraordinary manner by the research participants in the passages below:

David: The thing is when the child starts to interact and become more of a person and more of a personality, then definitely the relationship between the father and the child, if it's a boy or a girl, definitely grows much more.

Warren: I mean she's, she's more, she knows me much better now… um, say a few months down the line, she now is very much aware of who I am and who and, and that I'm you know kind of important to her, um so, so that's changed, um that I'm not just like a sort of another like babysitter (hmm), um, which I think when at the beginning it's, there's you know, there's that imbalance in a sense, um so ya, so, so now I have a bit more of a, uh, more of a sort of actual relationship with her, um cause she's a bit older and etcetera.

Warren: People say like you instantly fall in love with your child, it's different for a father. It's hard to have that instantaneous bond, but when that child knows who you are and she looks up at you, your whole world melts.

Ryan: It takes a while, I mean I'll be honest, even with the father, it takes a while to have this in-depth emotional connection with the child. Most women can have it straight away, um, it takes a long time until you, you have that deep connection. Maybe because the baby doesn't react to you, or can, or I thought the baby didn't react to me, or couldn't recognize me, or didn't know who I was, or but those change, it changes quickly, couple of weeks in you start realizing she knows who you are. Couple of months, her face lights up when she sees you, so you know there's that connection and it just gets better and better.

Anthony: I get that winning smile that no one else gets. Like she genuinely, she genuinely like gets excited to see me thank G-d, and um (pause), ya I mean she's not uh much more expressive than that smile and that laugh but.

Warren and Ryan painfully shared that it takes time for the father to become a father and to connect to the baby. They attribute this phenomenon to the fact that the baby is initially bonded to the mother through her body, and they contrast it with the father, who feels like he is better able to bond with his baby once his infant is seen to be interactive and responsive in relation to him. In other words, when the father has an experience of being seen by his infant, he is able to see himself. In this way, it seems like the infant functions as a mirror for the father and that this is the moment at which the father is conceived. The process for Warren is a real, visceral feeling of dissolving and becoming something else. He says 'your whole world melts' and this suggests that there may be an experience of reconstitution within the self. He feels like his baby is more aware of who he is and that he

is ‘not just like a sort of another like babysitter’. Similarly, Ryan says ‘Couple of months her face lights up when she sees you, so you know there’s that connection and it just gets better and better’, while Anthony gets ‘the winning smile’. These excerpts illustrate how pivotal it is for the father to begin to feel seen by his infant. For these participants, it appears to create a sense of connection, as well as an experience of a relationship in which the father feels recognized and significant to his baby, as opposed to simply being important for his baby’s development, and it is this experience which creates a representation in his mind of being significant to his baby. The fathers in this research study seem to feel incredibly proud and overjoyed, albeit surprised, at this fact.

Discussion

It is interesting to reflect that just as psychoanalytic theory has struggled to represent the father as a figure in his own right, so too did the fathers in this research study struggle to represent themselves. In both literature and in father’s accounts of fatherhood there seems to be a strong and almost inevitable pull toward the mother and infant when thinking about the father. The focus then becomes about the functions that the father performs for the mother and baby, as opposed to the father himself. There seems to be something particularly difficult about representing the father in both theory and in the father’s own mind, and it is noteworthy that the fathers’ early representations of the self as a father were somewhat rudimentary, inchoate and elusive. Of course, it would be remiss to ignore the fact that these findings pertain to a very particular subset of fathers who participated in the study, as well as to the relatively small number of fathers who participated in the research. Nonetheless, the research findings are useful in that they present an in-depth exploration of the fathers who participated in the study and they offer novel and nuanced perspectives of fatherhood. Certainly, understanding of the process of

representing the father could only be enhanced by further research on fathers of preoedipal infants in different contexts.

In thinking about why it may be that the fathers in this research study struggled to represent themselves as fathers, it is posited that Winnicott's and Ogden's ideas about the mother within the mother-infant relationship may offer some explanation. It is well known that Winnicott (1960) famously said that there is no such thing as an infant (without a mother) and that Ogden (1985) further argued that within the mother-infant unit, there is no such thing as a mother. This is because the mother becomes so preoccupied with the infant that there is a loss of herself (Winnicott, 1956). This statement is extraordinary as it captures the idea that in order to provide for her infant in the first few weeks and months, the mother has to lose herself. In this light, perhaps it is not so strange then that this seems to be the case for fathers as well. In the first few months following the birth of the baby, there appears to be a loss of the self as a father, arguably so that the father can focus on the mother and baby. In fact, the findings of this study suggest that projection might be one of the mechanisms that a new father may use to locate his own anxieties, about his capacity to father, in the mother. This seemingly enables the father to support the mother, while simultaneously allowing him space to grow into his emergent fatherhood. If this is indeed the case, it could be said that there is no such thing as a father and that the 'forgetting of the father' is appropriately in sync with the immediate need for the father to function as a container, holder, protector, and facilitator of the mother-infant dyad (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Furthermore, the social discourses surrounding 'involved fatherhood' may, ironically, inhibit fathers in their development of an intrapsychic representation or sense of the self as a father, as the idea of being an involved father seems to take precedence over the father experiencing and feeling his way through fatherhood, and owning his own

anxieties about himself as a father. Thus, remembering the father needs to go beyond the importance of the father's physical presence and involvement. The focus should also be on helping fathers experience and reflect on their emergent fatherhood and on their sense of the self as a father.

Having explored some of the similarities between the representation of the self as a father and the representation of the father in psychoanalytic theory, it is interesting to note that there is also one seemingly sharp contrast, which concerns the notion of the father functioning as a separator for the mother-infant dyad. The fathers in this research study could not identify with the representation of being a separator, and they were consciously invested in supporting the mother-infant dyad. In fact, some of the fathers in this research study were quite anxious about the mother's capacity to connect to the baby, and they were worried about interrupting the closeness of the mother-infant dyad. As such, it seems as if it is not simply a case of indifference to the idea of being a separator for the mother-infant dyad, it is actually quite a disturbing and anxiety-provoking thought for these fathers. This is not to say that the father does not have an unconscious wish to separate the mother-infant dyad, rather, the idea of being a separator is a representation of the self that the fathers seemed very uncomfortable with. However, when the research participants experienced the infant as using the father to achieve separation from the mother, it appeared to be a completely different experience. The fathers were then able to delight in their infants actively seeking and engaging with them. This was a pivotal moment for the fathers in this research study.

Hence, if one were to rewrite Winnicott's quote from the perspective of the father, it would read: "What does the father see when he looks at the baby's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the father sees is himself. In other words, the father is looking at the

baby and *what he looks like is related to what he sees there" (adaptation to* Winnicott, 1971*, p. 112).* For the research participants, the experience of seeing the self as a father in the infant's eyes brought about a marked internal shift. This shift appeared to be accompanied by a profoundly affective experience which seemed to solder the father to his infant and to the idea of himself as a father. One could possibly go so far as to say that this is the time of conception of the father, as it appears to be a period when the representation of the self as a father moves beyond the representation of father functions, sparking the representation of the self as a father to and for himself. From this vantage point, perhaps it is possible to add to Winnicott's (1960) idea that there is no such thing as an infant (without a mother), the corollary that there is no such thing as a father (without an infant).

Chapter Four

Introduction

The paper presented in this chapter was the second paper to be written and published. It was co-authored by the researcher, Sarah Berman, and her supervisor, Prof. Carol Long, and it was submitted to the accredited Journal "Qualitative Research in Psychology", a quarterly publication that is available on Taylor & Francis Online. It was published online on 21 January 2021 (https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2021.1873473). The paper is re-printed here with the journal's permission.

The paper is entitled "Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation: Representing absence". It arose in order to address the second research question, namely: What themes can be identified in new fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood and, using these themes, what might a fatherhood constellation look like?

The paper subsequently engages with the themes of emergent fatherhood that were common to the research participants in an attempt to begin formulating the fatherhood constellation. The paper explores two main themes. Firstly, the fatherhood constellation is characterised by the father's wish to protect and support the mother-infant dyad. Secondly, the idea that the fatherhood constellation is characterised by a sense of absence and exclusion, as well as a struggle to find presence and a place in relation to the mother-infant dyad. The paper concludes by suggesting that the representation of absence may be a way for the father to find presence in his own mind.

Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation: Representing absence

Abstract

In contrast with Daniel Stern's extensive work on the motherhood constellation, very little has been written about the fatherhood constellation. In an effort to explore emergent fatherhood and the idea of the fatherhood constellation, psychoanalytic research interviews were conducted with white, middle-class South African fathers of infants. The findings highlight two central themes which offer a way to begin thinking about the nature of the fatherhood constellation. Firstly, the fatherhood constellation is constituted by the father's wish to protect and support the mother and baby. Secondly, the fatherhood constellation is characterized by what fatherhood is not, as opposed to what it is to be a father. Unlike the mother, the father does not get pregnant, he does not give birth and he cannot breastfeed, all defining features of motherhood. This paper subsequently suggests that the representation of absence may be a key step to the father's presence in his own mind.

KEYWORDS: Fatherhood constellation; motherhood constellation; representation; thirdness; absence

Introduction

In his book 'The motherhood constellation: A unified view of parent-infant psychotherapy', Stern (1995) suggests that a woman, in the process of becoming and being a mother, moves into a new psychic organization. 'A mother passes out of the Oedipus complex (or whatever else is conceived as her nuclear organizing axis) and enters into the motherhood constellation for an important but transient period' (Stern 1995, 171). Akin to Winnicott's (1956) concept of primary maternal preoccupation, it can be said that the motherhood constellation primes the mother to direct her psychic energies towards her new identity, and towards absorption in the world of her new baby: it helps her to fall in love with her baby. Stern (1995) elaborates that the mother becomes concerned with

themes related to her ability to support the baby's development, to connect to her baby, to access help from support systems, and to re-organize her self-identity (Stern 1995). For Stern (1995), this unique psychological reorganization of the mother's representational world is broadly termed the *motherhood constellation*, and he terms the mother's captivation with her relationship with her own mother, herself as mother, and her baby, the *motherhood trilogy*. The term 'constellation', for Stern, implies that the entry into motherhood prompts a reconstellation of a woman's self state in relation to her baby. The term 'trilogy' implies that the centrality of the Oedipus Complex becomes secondary, as the mother reconstellates around a different, specifically matrilinear, set of relationships between the mother, her own mother and her baby. This perspective of motherhood, presented by Stern, casts light onto the mother's own developmental process as a mother, offering an important window into the experience of the mother herself, a perspective that has often been eclipsed by a focus on the baby's experience (Kristeva 1986; Long 2009; Sprengnether 1990).

In contrast to Stern's extensive writing on the motherhood constellation, he says very little about fathers. He asks whether fathers, who are primary caregivers, can develop a motherhood constellation. He further wonders if the father's need to identify with his own father may alter his representational world (Stern 1995). Stern (1995) does not consider the representational world of fathers beyond this. Nor does he elaborate on the possibility of a fatherhood constellation. To the author's knowledge, there have only been two subsequent studies that mention the fatherhood constellation. The one study, conducted by Matulaite-Horwood and Bieliauskaite (2005), identified the father's increased interest in providing physical and emotional support for his partner and baby in the last month of pregnancy as one possible aspect of the fatherhood constellation. The other study, conducted by Madsen,

Lind, and Munck (2007), focused on the fatherhood trilogy, specifically with regard to the link between the father's model of caregiving (from his own parents) and his capacity to reflect his infant's state of mind.

Given that the motherhood constellation provides a useful framework for thinking about motherhood as a developmental process, it is worth considering whether the fatherhood constellation could offer the same for fathers and fatherhood. Is there a direct parallel with the mother's process of realigning psychic structure in relation to the Oedipus complex, investing in a maternal identity and falling in love with the new baby, or does the fatherhood constellation involve a radically different process at play? Perhaps the concept of the fatherhood constellation could then contribute to a better understanding of paternal experience and it could also have significant clinical value for parent-infant psychotherapy. This paper is situated within a psychoanalytic paradigm that posits value in understanding the inner world of fathers. This is particularly pertinent given claims that fathers have been forgotten (Berman 2020), are missing (Diamond 2017) or have even been symbolically murdered (Green 2009) in psychoanalytic theory. Much of this critique refers to the predominance of the Oedipal father in Freud's theory, a figure who is largely understood as symbolically present (Diamond 2017), but only as an absent authority (Freeman 2008), and not as an actual engaged father. The Oedipus Complex situates the child as the protagonist and posits that a boy child will harbor murderous feelings towards his father who comes between him and his desire for his mother. Because this construction has centered around Freud's notion of the Oedipus Complex, together perhaps with a social understanding of infancy as the 'natural' domain of mothers, the experiences of fathers of infants, and of fathers becoming fathers to infants, has been less fully explored from a psychoanalytic perspective (but see Davies and Eagle 2013). For decades, there has been a preoccupation

with mothers and mothering, and the father has received minimal attention (Liebman and Abell 2000; Madsen, Lind, and Munck 2007; Sarkar 2018; Trowell 2002). The concept of a fatherhood constellation, therefore, offers the possibility of understanding the inner worlds of fathers in the process of becoming fathers.

Although there is value in a psychoanalytic understanding of fathers, this must be situated in an acknowledgement of the myriad ways in which fatherhood is socially constructed through gendered notions of hegemonic masculinity (Hunter, Riggs, and Augoustinos 2017; Wall and Arnold 2007). Stern's concept of the Motherhood Constellation, like many psychoanalytic and psychological constructions of motherhood, can be critiqued for its assumptions of motherhood as a natural state, thereby inadvertently reinforcing idealized and normative ideologies of motherhood (Long 2009). Similarly, psychoanalytic theories of fatherhood are underpinned by patriarchal assumptions, and can be used to construct normative and potentially sexist expectations of fathers (Freeman 2008). It has also been acknowledged that fatherhood is heavily socially constructed, with historical changes over time (Lamb 2010). The concept of a fatherhood constellation should therefore include an acknowledgement of social and historical rootedness, and that fatherhood itself is potentially constellated in relation to hegemonic masculinity. In the present study, only middle-class, privileged and involved fathers were interviewed, despite the intention of accessing a variety of different kinds of fathers. It is of interest that these were the kinds of fathers who volunteered themselves to talk about their fatherhood. The social and historical rootedness of the fathers who took part in this study means that an exploration of their accounts can offer possibilities for positing a fatherhood constellation, but these accounts are framed by their position.

Bearing in mind both the potential value of exploring the inner world of fathers, as well as the ways in which psychoanalytic theory potentially constructs fathers, psychoanalytic work that directly explores the subjectivity of fathers suggests a multitude of conscious and unconscious dynamics which can play a part in emergent fatherhood. It has been suggested, for example, that powerful conscious and unconscious drives can fuel the father's desire for a sexual relationship and the wish to have children (Etchegoyen 2002). The desire to bear a child may reflect the father's wish to master pre-Oedipal conflicts, such as the wish for independence from the mother, the wish to reverse the mother-son relationship, fantasies about the primal scene, or the wish to identify with the mother (Brunswick 1940; Diamond 1986; Jacobson 1950). The wish for a child may also stem from generative wishes to continue the self, as well as wishes for 'primary illusion', in which the father imagines that the child will love and admire him, and will satisfy his needy symbiotic wishes (Diamond 1986). The father may also have wishes to expand the self and his relationship with his partner, along with reparative and identification wishes to revitalize his own parents, by providing them with the child that he can no longer be (Diamond 1986). These potentially unconscious processes are helpful to examine, but run the risk of setting the father up, yet again, as unimportant to the mother-child relationship or as peripheral to parenting.

Exploring the father's experience of conception and pregnancy, it has been suggested that changes in the mother's pregnant body stimulate psychological adaptation and the developing mother-infant relationship, whereas men become fathers as outside observers (Etchegoyen 2002; Jessner, Weigert, and Foy 1970). This may result in men feeling disempowered and separate from the pregnancy process (Jessner, Weigert, and Foy 1970), and some fathers may experience unconscious womb and pregnancy envy (Gurwitt 1989). It

has been posited that fathers may experience a revival of primal scene fantasies, oedipal rivalry, positive oedipal wishes to impregnate one's mother, a reactivation of negative oedipal identifications with the mother that fuel the wish to bear a child and recollections of post-Oedipal absence (physical or psychological) of his own father, which impeded identification with him (Gurwitt 1989; Jacobson 1950).

When the baby finally arrives, the father has to navigate the transition from a two-person to a three-person relationship. He has to rediscover himself as a father, tolerate being separate from the mother-infant relationship, and manage interruptions and changes in the sexual relationship with the mother (Etchegoyen 2002). Etchegoyen (2002) suggests that the father has to negotiate these changes while being unconsciously confronted with unresolved oedipal issues and identifications and internalizations of his own father, which may culminate in considerable turmoil in the father's internal world. Paralleling Winnicott's (1949) exploration of reasons mothers hate their babies (by which he emphasizes the importance for loving mothering of being in touch with hateful feelings), Long (2007) suggests that the arrival of a baby, turning man into father, may prompt paternal hate, partly because of the transitions that now confront him. Such paternal hate may, as with mothers, enhance the capacity to feel 'objective love' (Winnicott 1949, 72), but may also be disconcerting, particularly at first.

Examining fatherhood and the role of the father more broadly, there appears to be a move within the psychoanalytic literature towards a construction of fathers which separates the father from the paternal function (see Davies and Eagle 2013). This way of thinking critically about gender has highlighted that maternal and paternal roles can no longer be conceptualized as being neatly divided between mothers and fathers. This perspective offers opportunities for nuance and complexity in the construction of fatherhood.

The aim of the interview-based qualitative research study (on which this article is based) was to explore the representational world of new fathers, with a view to creating a space to begin thinking about the nature of the fatherhood constellation, both as an experience of the internal world and as a socially and historically rooted experience. This paper focuses specifically on father's reflections on their transition to fatherhood[1] in order to begin to formulate the fatherhood constellation.

Method

Stern's (1995) finding that there is a reorganization of a woman's representational world when she becomes a mother has enhanced current understandings of emergent motherhood, and it has had import in both research and psychotherapeutic contexts (for example, Dugmore 2013; Hoffman 2004; Slade et al. 2005; Spinelli et al. 2016). Given the contribution of this concept to theory and practice, this research set out to explore whether there is a similar reorganization of a man's representational world when he becomes a father, or whether there may be a different process altogether. In order to explore the representational world of fathers of infants, the study was situated within a qualitative research design and, more specifically, within the psychoanalytic paradigm. A psychoanalytically informed research interview method (adapted from Cartwright 2004; Hollway and Jefferson 2013; Kvale 1999; Stromme et al. 2010) was selected for the process of data collection and data analysis, as it enabled an exploration of the research participants' conscious and unconscious representations of themselves, their parents, their infants and partners. The first author, a woman of similar socioeconomic and cultural background to the participants, conducted all of the interviews. Of childbearing age herself, her cultural similarity and gender seemed to position her as a maternal figure for all of the participants, who seemed eager to please her by sharing their experiences (despite initial

reluctance to take part in the interviews). Holmes (2017, 98) explores the question of whether interviews ‘impede or facilitate emotional connection’; the researcher’s position in relation to participants seemed to do both.

Sample selection

The research participants were selected using non-probability purposive, volunteer and snowball sampling strategies. While the researcher initially tried to obtain research participants by approaching vaccination clinics, it proved difficult to obtain research participants in this way. The researcher then tried other avenues to recruit fathers, including approaching pediatricians' offices, ante-natal class providers and online parenting community forums. However, the final sample was accessed through word of mouth and snowball sampling.

Because the transition to fatherhood was of interest, as well as the experience of being a father to an infant, the researcher ensured that the research participants had at least one child aged between 6 and 24 months of age. The lower limit of 6 months was set in order to allow the fathers some time to adjust to fatherhood and settle into their new role, while the upper limit was set in order to ensure that the children were still infants. The fathers were all residing with their child and partner at the time of the research, and they all considered themselves to be secondary caregivers to their infants. These were specific inclusion criteria, as it was felt that absent fathers would likely have a different experience of fatherhood in comparison with present fathers, as would fathers who are primary caregivers, as opposed to fathers who are secondary caregivers.

The sample consisted of seven men, whose ages ranged from 24 to 37 years old, with children ranging in age from 5 to 24 months old. All of the participants, except one, had a child below the age of 12 months. Six of the research participants were first-time fathers,

while one of the research participants has two children aged 24 months and under. All of the participants were white, middle to upper class men residing in Johannesburg, South Africa. The sample is thus specifically socioculturally located and does not represent all fathers. Furthermore, it seemed that all of the fathers in the sample were very invested in being fathers. Thus, the results reported on in this paper represent the experiences of a particular group of fathers. Their experiences may be very different to other kinds of fathers, and this paper does not intend to utilize their voices to speak for all fathers. Nonetheless, their involvement allows important insight into their fatherhood identities.

Data collection and data analysis

The researcher conducted two interviews with each participant, such that a total of fourteen research interviews were conducted. Because the interviews were designed to explore the fathers' representational world, with a focus on their representations of themselves, their parents, their partners and their infants, a psychoanalytic approach to interviews was taken. Following Hollway and Jefferson (2013), Holmes (2017) and Kvale (1999), an open and exploratory interview style was adopted. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the research interviews, and the researcher also encouraged the research participants to share any other information that came to mind. The researcher opened the first interview as follows: 'I am interested in hearing your thoughts about yourself as a father, your partner and your child. I am also interested in anything you might want to tell me about your life or your background. So, even if it seems irrelevant or off topic, if something comes up for you during the interview, feel free to share it'. In the second interview, the researcher then encouraged the research participants to reflect on their experience of the first interview and any thoughts that may have emerged between the two interviews. The researcher also used the second interview to clarify and

further explore the material that emerged in the first interview. All of the research interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for the purpose of data analysis. A benefit of the psychoanalytically informed research interview method (adapted from Cartwright 2004; Hollway and Jefferson 2013; Kvale 1999; Stromme et al. 2010) is that it enables the researcher to go beyond the subjective report of the research participants and to explore the unconscious meanings and intrapsychic phenomena in the interview material (Cartwright 2004; Midgley 2006; Stromme et al. 2010). The approach accounts for participants being 'defended subjects' (see Hollway and Jefferson 2013) and it allows the interviewer to probe defenses and enter into interpretive conversations in the interview itself (Holmes 2013a). This approach also held particular advantages given that the subjectivity of fatherhood is under researched. Firstly, a sustained focus on participants as fathers could be held, with reflection taking place from the first to the second interview. Secondly, the fatherhood constellation could be thought about in relation to a number of participants, an advantage compared to the more widely used psychoanalytic case study approach. This also meant that participants were aware that they were contributing to research on fatherhood, and many of the participants expressed that the opportunity to reflect on their experience helped them to articulate this experience in ways they had previously not done (paper currently in preparation). This is a particular advantage of interview based psychoanalytic research.

Following Cartwright's (2004) guidelines, the data analysis involved an exploration of the content and form of the interviews, the underlying feeling states and associated thoughts, repetitive and core narratives, associations, digressions, and seemingly omitted information, as well as identifications and key object relations. Attention was paid not only to what participants said, but also to what was not said and, importantly, to the affective

valence of what was said (Frosh and Saville Young 2008; Hollway and Jefferson 2013; Saville Young and Frosh 2018). Moments of interruption or rupture were noted as possible responses to uncomfortable feelings (Holmes 2013b). The analysis presented in this paper focused in particular on two themes to have emerged: the representation of the father as a protector and container of the mother-infant dyad, and the awareness of the father that he is not a mother, and cannot undergo the bodily experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. These two themes were frequently discussed in the research interviews, and were also chosen as a focus of this paper because they were affectively charged, indicating their emotional importance to participants. Quotes presented in this paper frequently reflect hesitancies or fragmentation of speech. Such hesitancies, contradictions or lost trains of thought are identified in psychoanalytic research as a site of analysis (Cartwright 2004; Frosh and Saville Young 2008), in this case potentially revealing clues to the internal representations that the fathers held of themselves in uncertain and difficult to define ways. The researcher also used transference-countertransference impressions as an additional source of information to make sense of preliminary findings (see Holmes (2014) for a discussion of the potential, and the limits, of using transference-countertransference in research interviews).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Non-Medical Ethics Committee. The research participants were given detailed information pertaining to the nature and purpose of the research study prior to the research, so as to be able to provide informed consent. Pseudonyms were used.

Conceptualizing the fatherhood constellation: the father's wish to support and protect the mother and baby

Throughout the research interviews, a central theme that emerged was the father's wish to support and protect his partner and baby. This wish was framed as an aspiration, albeit an anxious one, to be a strong and steady male presence. For example, Gary posed a question to his ideal father-self: 'are you the one who's panicking alongside your wife, or are you the one who's got a bit of perspective and can … just be a little bit calmer about it?'. Jonathan expressed 'when things start to go wrong, I guess, I, you, you start to get that like lump in your throat, and you also realize like, but you can't really like show it too much, because your, your wife's (Jonathan laughs) actually going through more than what you're going through'. Steven shared that he feels anxiety 'when I'm not there. I feel, maybe, not controlling or anything, but like uh, you know with my wife driving her around, maybe, you know, G-d forbid there's an accident or something like that'. In addition, David, not directly expressing his own anxiety, but expressing his anxiety about the ability of mothers to cope, stated that he doesn't 'believe a mother would be able to do it on her own'. Some of the fathers also expressed worry that their partners may get post-natal depression or have difficulty connecting to their baby, possibly even rejecting their baby. David shared: 'so a lot of women can reject the child, you know that's quite scary'. The fathers subsequently saw it as their responsibility to take care of the mother, so that she could take care of the baby. In the words of Jonathan, one of the fathers who expressed concern about his wife getting post-natal depression: 'I actually worked out that I must concentrate on my wife'. These excerpts capture a sentiment common to all of the research participants, namely a strong sense of responsibility with regard to taking care of their partner and, by implication, the baby and the mother-infant dyad. On the surface, this idea that the central role of the father

is to support and protect the mother and infant seems obvious and intuitive. It appeals to common-sense assumptions that the father is secondary and, as Winnicott (1957) argued, ideally suited to provide auxiliary support to the nursing couple. However, these ideas may, at the same time, unwittingly perpetuate a misogynistic view that women need care and protection, and that men are 'supposed' to provide such protection. One can hear, in the statements above, the assumption that women should have a man to protect them.

Although misogyny may underpin the stance of the above-mentioned research participants, it is useful to take into account the interviewer's experience of these discussions, as this may add further context with which to make sense of the fathers' responses. In general, the interviewer felt uneasy, impassioned and somewhat taken aback, being a woman herself, when the fathers shared such views. The interviewer also felt anxious about sharing in such discussions with the fathers, without their partners available to share their own perspective. However, the interviewer also felt oddly protective of the fathers. Upon reflection, the researcher felt that her own wish to protect the fathers stemmed from feelings of empathy that emerged during the research interviews, particularly at moments when the fathers so clearly wanted to be 'good' fathers, but were so overcome with anxiety about being a father. For example, David shared that 'a mistake with your child can like, it like kills you in your heart'. The researcher subsequently felt that the father's wish to be a steady presence and a source of protection for the mother and his baby may serve to conceal a greater anxiety about the baby's fragility and the father's own adequacy. In this light, the researcher could then reconcile the fathers' misogynistic views as potentially being part of a defensive process which protected the fathers from having to confront their own anxieties and potential to cause harm. If this is the case, then what might the positioning of the father as a strong, steady presence mean for the fatherhood

constellation? What is the implication that, in order to constellate oneself as a father, one is required to be auxiliary?

On the one hand, positioning the self in a peripheral or auxiliary position in relation to the mother-infant dyad, seemingly allows the father to project a semblance of calm through which he can offer support to the mother. However, such positioning also appears to come at the cost of the father sometimes having to forego his own needs for the benefit of the mother-infant dyad. For example, Jonathan gave up on his wish for his wife to breastfeed their second child, as he recognized that it was to the detriment of the mother-infant relationship, while David conceded to getting a night nurse in order to show his wife that he supported her, even though he himself did not consider a night nurse necessary. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, a representation of the self as being on the periphery sometimes disguised the father's own anxieties, both in terms of his own vulnerabilities, and in relation to his anxieties about a potentially flawed or damaging mother. Taking the above into consideration, it is apparent that offering support is not necessarily an easy task for the father. On the contrary, the *wish* to offer support is accompanied by the anxiety of failure. This suggests the possibility that the father constellates not only around his newfound identity and a new set of relationships (as is the case in the motherhood constellation), but also around a set of anxieties about protection, that are linked to both destructive phantasies and normative constructions of masculinity. As such, although the wish to protect involved 'masculine' aspirations of strength, such aspirations also meant that the men felt they needed to forego their own wishes and opinions in order to protect (and, by implication, not hurt) the mother-infant dyad.

Finally, it is important to remember that even though the father may hold a representation of himself as being auxiliary and on the periphery in taking up his role of

caring for the mother-infant dyad, this does not necessarily mean that the mother and infant experience the father as being auxiliary. As such, there may be a disjunct between how the father sees himself and what he actually is for the mother and infant.

Conceptualizing the fatherhood constellation: being on the outside of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding

Pregnancy: 'my wife was the one who was having all these changes'

During the research interviews with Ryan, he described his experience of his partner facing bodily changes during pregnancy, while he felt unchanged. Ryan shared that, as a result of being on the outside of the experience of pregnancy, he did not sufficiently grapple with his impending fatherhood, and he felt quite unprepared for this change in identity.

Ryan:

> Um, when my wife was pregnant it was very different for, for me to like try and ex-experience what she was experiencing. You know for me I was still just a regular Jo Shmo and my wife was the one who was having all these changes … I don't think I was prepared to be a father … I think I was a little bit naïve, living in a bubble, just going on my normal life, and then, when she came home, life started, became a little bit more challenging. … I just rolled with the punches … Whereas, my wife, I think it was a little bit more emotionally taxing on her. … but that's where you have to try be supportive of your partner.

The above quote shared by Ryan highlights his experience of fatherhood as being fundamentally different from motherhood. Ryan suggests that the mother undergoes a myriad of physical changes that, in his mind, are an important part of preparing for parenthood. While it is not necessarily true that a father does not have any hormonal changes, as Ryan proposes (Berg and Wynne-Edwards 2001; Rilling and Mascaro 2017), it

seems that the absence of overt physical changes left Ryan feeling unprepared and naïve. He only noticed a change when his baby came home and 'life started'. While he says that the first few months after the birth of his baby were more challenging for his wife than for himself, he too seems to have had his own struggles. This is apparent in statements like 'became a little bit more challenging' and the idiom, 'rolled with the punches'. These statements show that there actually might have been something difficult, a series of punches, that Ryan experienced. It is then interesting that Ryan primarily locates the psychological and physiological struggle with parenthood in his wife. What Ryan seems to be describing is a defended state of mind and being. Change is located outside, in his wife. He denies emotion, indicates a level of control over his own emotions, but talks in quite a 'cliched' and closed off way, with reference to feeling he is in the midst of conflict.[2] Consequently, there is little space left to think about Ryan himself. Thus, even though the father does not have to experience the challenges associated with being pregnant, perhaps he has his own unique challenge in that he has to negotiate fatherhood from the position of not being pregnant.

Related to the above, David shared his experience of being on the outside of pregnancy, reflecting that the father's relationship with the baby begins differently to the mother's relationship with the baby. He said: 'When you first become a father there's like, there's not much of a relationship, because your wife's been giving to the child for nine months, and you, you know, you haven't really given'. In this excerpt, David described feeling unable to give to his baby for the first nine months since conception, as it was his wife who was pregnant and who carried his baby in utero. David felt deficient in being able to nourish his child, as if his lack of bodily nourishment left him tangential. He felt himself to be starting off at a different point, and he felt like it only became possible for him to start

giving to his baby once the baby was born. Thus, both Ryan and David seem to be highlighting what they feel to be fundamental differences between fatherhood and motherhood. They share that, unlike the mother, the father does not have a pregnant body to guide him into fatherhood and to connect him to his baby. However, he does have his partner's pregnant body and, as such, it is interesting to consider that the father's point of access to fatherhood may be through his partner. In fact, until the baby is born, it seems that the father may feel that he can only look after his baby by taking care of his partner. Perhaps it then makes sense that, for these fathers, caring for their partner and baby was found to be a salient feature of the fatherhood constellation. Of course, this begs the question of what this finding might mean for same sex relationships, and further research would need to be conducted in this regard.

Childbirth: 'as soon as you give birth, as soon as the woman gives birth, right'

The experience of childbirth is also not without its challenges. The father has to negotiate claiming his fatherhood and connecting to his baby without actually giving birth to his baby. Interestingly, two research participants, David and Gary, became uncomfortable when they realized that they may have implied that the father had given birth, as opposed to the mother. They seemed anxious and they quickly revised their use of words.

David:

As soon as you give birth, as soon as the woman gives birth, right …

Gary:

A guy at work just, uh, had a baby, I think two weeks ago, and, uh, his wife did, he didn't.

David and Gary both quickly corrected themselves when they initially said that the father had given birth, being sure to emphasize that the father did not give birth, his wife

did. The emotional tone of the interviews in these moments was one of embarrassment, followed by prompt clarification that they were aware that the fathers themselves had not given birth. These moments may be understood as slips of the tongue, where the desire to be more central pops out and is then shamefully rescinded. Alternatively, or perhaps simultaneously, these moments may represent moments where fathers feel together and part of something, but then feel anxious about having overstepped into maternal territory. Although David and Gary made an effort to be physiologically accurate, it is interesting to think about the intrapsychic importance and impact of undoing the representation of the father's involvement in the birth of his baby. It could be argued that by correcting themselves, the fathers may have been invested in more than simply being scientifically correct. They may have been anxious about overstepping into the territory of the mother. At the same time, their initial slips about the father giving birth might also have been concealing an unconscious wish for the father to be more involved in the process of growing and birthing a baby. Either way, it is apparent that the father finds himself in a precarious position in relation to childbirth, and the research participants' responses felt like an erasure of the father himself.

Since Horney (1967) explored the concept, womb envy has found a place in psychoanalytic literature, albeit not a central one. The erasure of the father for these participants was linked to envy of the creativity of the womb, or at least exclusion from this creativity. Horney (1967) argued that womb envy is particularly strong for men, resulting in disparagement of women. This response explains the broader contempt men hold for women (Horney 1967). If womb envy is a central part of the fatherhood constellation, this also means that disparagement is not always felt to be a viable response. When woman becomes mother, she potentially becomes linked with Madonna, not whore

(Welldon 2018). Although the men in this study said disparaging things about their partners, this was not overt; on the contrary, the men in this study strongly felt that they had to protect their wives: they were not legitimate objects for disparagement. Thus, in the context of the fatherhood constellation, womb envy potentially feels anxiety provoking and illegitimate. Thus, it is argued that by not being pregnant and by not giving birth, the father is left with a sense of exclusion, as suggested by Etchegoyen (2002). Being in this excluded position requires the father to have to grapple with the extent to which he can claim his part in the birth of his child. He has to find his place as a father in relation to the mother and his baby.

Postpartum: 'I can't breastfeed my child'

Like being unable to be pregnant or give birth, fathers are also unable to breastfeed. For example, Jonathan shared the following:

Jonathan:

> I don't know if you've seen that movie, um, it's one of the 'Meet the Parents' trilogy or whatever and he like, Robert De Niro has like fake boobs and he can like, [my wife] always says, if I could do that I would, you know, which I don't know if it's entirely true, but she's probably not that wrong … but I can't breastfeed my child, not, don't have that capability, although my wife jokes if I, if I, I wish I could, um, but you know so, so, so it was very much focused on, on, on how can I help my wife.

The film 'Meet the Parents' uses the impossibility of a man breastfeeding as a means to create humor and comedy. It is interesting that this cultural joke seems to enable Jonathan to acknowledge his own wish to breastfeed. Of course, beneath the humor is the painful reality of being unable to breastfeed, and Jonathan says 'I can't breastfeed my child, not, don't have that capability'. Jonathan clearly has to reconcile himself to the fact that he

can't breastfeed his child, yet humor appears to be a very useful device in helping Jonathan to acknowledge his wish to breastfeed. Nonetheless, it seems as though there is insufficient space to process the deeply painful feelings beneath the humor, and it is interesting that Jonathan, confronting this exclusion, then redirects his energy toward helping his wife. Like Jonathan, Anthony also expressed a wish to breastfeed, yet his experience was slightly different. He shared:

Anthony:

> (Pause) Um, listen, so the breastfeeding didn't really start off so well, so I'm just very grateful that she's able to and, thank G-d, now it's going well … Um, I think I'm jealous of the concept, not the practicality, and the closeness … I think it's amazing for a mother and child to have that, um, but it's not my role, got to also resign yourself to the fact that it's not … I went through a phase where I was (pause) like almost resentful and jealous and, um, like I was very aware of the bond that Stacey and Jenna have as a result of that, and I was very positive about it, but then (switches off heater) I was like jealous, I was very, very jealous, um and since then I've sort of levelled out. Um, but it was quite a difficult thing to go through, like I think A) to be jealous of my child and B) jealous of my wife.

In the excerpt above, Anthony captures the difficulty that a father may encounter in relation to breastfeeding. He describes his discomfort with being jealous of his wife's ability to breastfeed, as well as of his child. He also painfully speaks about feeling excluded from the close bond that he feels is created between a mother and child through the process of breastfeeding, and it is clear from the above that, like being unable to bear a child, being unable to breastfeed can give rise to complex, ambivalent feelings, which are difficult to

bear. The concept of womb envy, explored above, is also complexified by Anthony's expression of exclusion from both mother and child: it is not only his inability that constellates him into fatherhood, but also his awareness of a special relationship from which he is absent.

In thinking about Anthony's feelings, it is useful to consider Klein's (1975) definition of jealousy. For Klein, 'jealousy is based on envy, but involves a relation to at least two people; it is mainly concerned with the love that the subject feels is his due and has been taken away, or is in danger of being taken away, from him by his rival' (Klein 1975, 181). Anthony talks about a jealousy of his wife's ability to breastfeed and of the breastfeeding relationship between the mother and infant, and this seems to be akin to Klein's formulation of jealousy. Anthony wishes that he could have a part in the breastfeeding relationship, and it is painful for him to be excluded from something which he sees as so intimate and special. These are extremely complex feelings for a father to acknowledge, as it is difficult to conceive of either one's infant or one's partner as a rival for the other's affection. Notably, Anthony does not wish to spoil the breastfeeding relationship, at least consciously, as envy would do. He seems to feel guilty about his jealousy, and he is relieved, reassured and grateful that the breastfeeding relationship has become established, given that it did not start off well initially.

Postpartum: 'you don't know what to do with the child'

In the absence of having their body available to guide them through pregnancy, childbirth, and in bonding with their baby through breastfeeding, some of the fathers described their experiences of suddenly finding themselves thrown into fatherhood, as if it were unexpected, even though it wasn't. The research participants spoke about trying to

just ‘get on with it’ when, actually, ‘you don’t know what to do with the child’. This is shared in the excerpts below:

David:

> No one really prepared me for fatherhood … It’s sort of like you just gotta do it, you gotta get on with it … You don’t know what to do with the child. You know obviously you have prenatal classes and you go to all these things, but it’s sort of like you’re listening to the doctor, and they’re going on, and you like, you don’t know what’s potting.

Jonathan:

> You don’t really know how it’s going to be … You go to these, um, these like ante-natal classes … um, but it’s very focused on the birth … and I think then, suddenly, like the last class I remember you start thinking about actually caring for the baby … and suddenly you actually realize ‘wow, I actually have to keep this little thing alive’.

Gary:

> I am not sure I had a concrete idea. I mean probably ladies are a little bit more in tune with that side of things … I guess it’s probably a big difference between guys and girls, is girls probably do actively think about that, and, uh, similar to your wedding day, you don’t, I think girls think and fantasize about how it’s gonna feel and be and all that, and guys wake up for the day and feel it … I mean you don’t know how you’re gonna react, and what it’s gonna be like and are you gonna know what to do … it’s just the complete unknown … Um, I mean you can go through all the pre-natal courses and all that stuff, but until you’re there doing it, holding your own baby, you don’t really know exactly what to do.

The above excerpts highlight the enormous uncertainty that comes with emergent fatherhood. The research participants experienced it as unexpected, unfamiliar and unnerving, and they shared that they felt very unprepared for the task at hand. They expressed disappointment in the ante-natal classes, as they found that the focus was predominantly on the pregnancy and childbirth, while very little thought was given to fatherhood. Pregnancy and childbirth are so all-consuming that little attention is given to helping fathers think about how they would like to father postpartum. One could argue that the focus is on ensuring that a healthy baby is delivered, yet little attention is given to the parents themselves who will need to care for their baby. These fathers then seem to feel that they are left to figure it out for themselves. Gary articulately shares that one can only know about fatherhood once you are 'holding your own baby', and it is only at this point that fatherhood seems to become real. It is noteworthy that given the enormity of the task at hand, the fathers focus on the immediacy of the physical needs of the baby, while there seems to be very little space available to think about the baby beyond this. This, too, may affect a father's ability to find his way into fatherhood and connect to his baby, as he is most concerned with keeping his baby alive, a task which already feels incredibly overwhelming. Gary also suggests that there is something different between girls and boys when he presumes that girls have marriage and babies in mind long before boys do. Gary's response to the dilemma facing him is to excuse his feelings of ignorance and exclusion through gendered stereotypes. In his words, 'guys wake up for the day and feel it'.

Discussion

When reflecting on the experience of becoming a father, this paper has shown that fathers come into fatherhood less through looking inwards to their own experience than through looking outwards to the experience of the mother. First, fathers are drawn towards

a focus on the mother, constellating themselves into fatherhood by taking on the role of support and protection of the mother. This paper has suggested that this should not be thought of as a smooth, obvious process, but rather one that requires of the father to anxiously define himself in terms of his absence from the mother-infant dyad, both pre-natally and postnatally. Maintaining 'a bit of perspective', to use the words of one participant, requires concealment of anxiety, not only of one's own internal feeling of danger, but also anxiety about the possibility of a flawed or damaging mother.

Second, fathers are constellated into fatherhood through an absence of bodily experience. The reference points of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding loomed large for participants in this study. The father does not get pregnant, he does not give birth and he is unable to breastfeed. Fathers described a disorienting process of trying to find their place in the face of this lack. Perhaps the most poignant aspect of the research interviews was the way in which fathers struggled to develop their sense of themselves as fathers. There seems to be something about fatherhood that is vague, indistinct and elusive, compared to motherhood. We argue that this is because the fatherhood constellation might be organized around what it is not, as opposed to what it is. This is apparent where the research participants seemed to be embroiled in processing their not being the mother, as a means to figure out what it is to be a father.

What implications may this have for formulating a fatherhood constellation? This question can be explored through a comparison between the motherhood and fatherhood constellations, but this comparison seems inadequate. This study suggests that it is also necessary to explore the fatherhood constellation not only in parallel to, but also as a radically different process to the motherhood constellation.

Unlike the mother, who Stern (1995) argues moves from oedipal structures towards maternal relationships and investment in the new mother-baby configuration, in coming to develop her identity as a mother, fathers did not necessarily describe turning to paternal relationships (A paper which more fully explores the potential intergenerational aspects of the fatherhood constellation, which we have not been able to focus on in this paper, is currently in preparation). Although fathers did not describe investment in the new father-baby configuration in quite the same way, they did describe investment in the new mother-father-baby configuration. However, this was presented from an outsider position, in which the new mother-baby relationship was the strongest referent, and the father's position was uncertain and unsettled. Furthermore, it could be suggested that oedipal relationships are not set aside in the same manner as in the motherhood constellation, where Oedipus takes a back seat. To the contrary, entering into fatherhood is evocative of previous oedipal dramas, not only related to feelings of being excluded from a dyadic relationship (then mother and father, and now mother and child), but also to fears of being an envious presence or an inadequate partner. Oedipal resonances of the entry into fatherhood have been explored elsewhere (Diamond 1986; Etchegoyen 2002; Gurwitt 1989; Long 2007); we suggest that fatherhood is constellated around a reworking, rather than a setting aside, of the oedipal situation and that this constitutes the father in his own mind, at least initially, as an auxiliary presence.

Although it is clear that a process of psychic reorganization takes place for both mother and father, one cannot posit that there is a process of primary paternal preoccupation akin to the mother's process of absorption into falling in love with her baby. Fathers do not seem to lose themselves in the way that Winnicott (1956) describes for mothers. Instead, the fathers seem to lose themselves, at least in the first few months

postpartum, in caring for their partner. Energy does not flow into their new identity as fathers; instead, energy flows into trying to constitute themselves in a relationship with partner-turned-mother and baby. The focus is outwards rather than inwards, and the process is stilted and characterized by doubt.

This suggests that the father's own process follows a different trajectory to that of the mother, and that fathers constellate themselves around absence. In much of what has been written about fathers, 'fathers have rarely been portrayed as real people' (Grossmark 2019, 317) and Grossmark (2019) further argues that fathers themselves struggle to feel like real people. In what Grossmark (2019) terms the 'anguish of fatherhood', he describes a process characterized by confusion and melancholy unknowingness. His descriptions resonate with those of the fathers in this study. It is however important to note that this may not be the 'natural' state of fatherhood. Fatherhood is a sociohistorical construct, and participants in this study were keenly aware that previous generations of fathers were expected to be significantly absent, whereas their generation were expected to be more hands-on. As fatherhood changes socioculturally, so too may the fatherhood constellation change. Fathers appear to constellate themselves in relation to what is socioculturally expected of them, given their position on the periphery of the bodily experience of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. Indeed, the fathers in this study enduringly spoke about themselves in relation to established ideologies of hegemonic masculinity, and it is fair to assume that their experiences of fatherhood were saturated by their own sociohistorical positioning. Specifically, it would be remiss to ignore the fact that the research sample consisted of both privileged and invested fathers. However, the authors argue that even though this research study predominantly gives voice and representation to the fathers who actively chose to participate in the research, perhaps the

voices of the fathers who did not choose to participate can still be heard in their absence, through a representation of absence. Given that it was so difficult to obtain research participants who were willing to share their representations of fatherhood, and that the final sample consisted of both privileged and invested fathers, consideration must be given to how much more difficult it might be for a father who is less privileged or less invested to represent his experience of fatherhood? From this perspective, the small sample size and the difficulty recruiting research participants becomes a site of analysis in and of itself. It could then be argued that although this paper does not lay claim to a universal formulation of the fatherhood constellation, the finding that absence seems to be at the core of the fatherhood constellation may be a phenomenon applicable to other kinds of fathers not represented in this sample. However, further research needs to be carried out in order to establish whether or not this is the case. The key point is that it seems necessary to include in any conception of a fatherhood constellation the constructions of masculinity that accompany it. For the fathers in this study, these constructions were set against a sense of being excluded, in a very gendered way, from the maternal.

Fatherhood, then, is constellated around this confusion and struggle to be real. Green (2009) takes this formulation further: he suggests that the father is not only constructed around absence, but has been lost, 'repressed, forgotten or distorted' (p.25). Although Green (2009) focuses largely on the child's experience of the father rather than on the father's experience of himself, he parallels the father's relegation to the position of witness with the child's experience of the father: 'for the most part the father can only be reached through absence' (p.29). We propose that the fatherhood constellation has absence at its core, and that this is the dilemma new fathers face when finding themselves. Part of the work of the fatherhood constellation might then be for the father to come to

terms with his not being the mother, and to work through possible feelings of jealousy in relation to the mother and infant. In other words, through the representation of absence, the father may be able to find presence as a father, to and for himself. Of course, it is important to mention that this process of representation is not restricted to the father; the representation of absence is a key aspect of Andre Green's work in general (Reed and Widawsky 2018). It surely applies to mothers as well, albeit in different ways. Nonetheless, the findings of this research cast light onto the father in particular, and it begins to illustrate some of the specific ways in which fathers may work to represent the absence of representation.

In light of the above, the fatherhood constellation seems to offer a framework for thinking about fatherhood that can be used to enhance current approaches to psychotherapeutic intervention. First, the findings suggest that fathers may need to be given a safe space within which to explore their emergent fatherhood, given that the father's focus is often placed on the mother, when the father may be feeling quite unsteady himself. Second, efforts to encourage involved fatherhood need to concentrate on helping the father find representation as a father in his own mind. The representation of absence may be one way to facilitate this. Third, any intervention with the father could only benefit from including the mother, and consideration of the father in the mother's mind. This is because the mother, who can hold the father in mind, can offer another space in which the father can develop his emergent fatherhood. Of course, the father's representation of his place in the mother's mind is central as well, along with the level of accord or discord between their representations.

Perhaps, albeit unwittingly, Green (1997) describes fatherhood best with his discussion of how cavemen would go about drawing pictures of 'negative hands' on cave

walls. He says: 'To represent the hands, prehistoric man used two devices. The simplest was to paint the hand and to make an impression on the wall, leaving a direct trace of it. The second was more indirect and sophisticated. Here the hand that draws does not draw itself. Instead it places it on the wall of the cave and spreads the colours all around it. Then it separates from the wall, and a *non-drawn* hand appears' (Green 1997, 1083). Perhaps it could be said that the motherhood constellation parallels the hand which makes an impression directly on the wall, whereas the fatherhood constellation parallels the non-drawn hand. Fathers in this study appeared unable to access fatherhood through a direct impression of it.

Chapter Five

Introduction

The paper presented in this chapter was the third paper to be written and published. It was submitted to the accredited Journal "Psychoanalytic Practice", ISSN number: 2709-6971. It was accepted for publication and published in Volume 29 (issue 1) of Psychoanalytic Practice in September 2021. The paper is re-printed here with the journal's permission. The paper is entitled "Rethinking the fatherhood trilogy: Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation". It arose in order to address the third research question, namely: How do new fathers locate themselves intergenerationally in their fathering, and what might the fatherhood trilogy look like?

In comparison with the motherhood trilogy, there is a lack of research on the fatherhood trilogy and on the relationships that are salient to the father in his emergent fatherhood. This research, therefore, set out to explore the nature of the fatherhood trilogy. Instead of an exploration of the 'fatherhood trilogy', this research paper presents the possibility of the 'fatherhood trilogies', as there were multiple trilogies which were seen to play a part in how the research participants locate and develop their sense of themselves as fathers. In the paper, the accounts of three of the research participants are used to explore the various fatherhood trilogies, as they pertain to each father. The paper also discusses the possibility that fatherhood may be overdetermined.

Rethinking the Fatherhood Trilogy: Towards a Formulation of the Fatherhood Constellation

Abstract

Like motherhood, fatherhood brings about a reorganisation of the father's representational world, and it presents an opportunity for the father to focus on particular sets of relationships in his development of himself as a father. If one were to try to map these relationships for the father, using Daniel Stern's analogous conceptualisation of the motherhood trilogy, it could be expected that the fatherhood trilogy would depict a new father who is pre-occupied with his own father, himself-as-a-father and his baby. However, the data obtained from in-depth psychoanalytic research interviews with South African fathers of infants indicates that there may be various, overlapping trilogies involved in emergent fatherhood. These trilogies can take multiple forms, reflecting both conscious and unconscious intergenerational, intragenerational, matrilineal, patrilineal, Oedipal, social, cultural and historical facets of emergent fatherhood. Subsequently, this paper argues that fatherhood may be overdetermined and that, for the fathers in this study, the fatherhood trilogy might be more accurately framed as the fatherhood *trilogies*. Three case studies, compiled using the data that emerged from research interviews, will be used to explore the fatherhood trilogies and their contribution to the fatherhood constellation, specifically the representation of the self as a father.

Introduction

In his book *The Motherhood Constellation: A Unified View of Parent-Infant Psychotherapy*, Daniel Stern (1995) draws attention to the intergenerational aspects of motherhood. He proposes that, in the process of becoming a mother, a woman becomes preoccupied with her relationship to her own mother, and with herself as a mother to her baby (Stern, 1995). Stern (1995) refers to the mother's focus on her own mother, in relation

to her own mothering, as the *motherhood trilogy*. This concept forms an important part of Stern's broader idea of the motherhood constellation.

Since the initial release of Stern's book in 1995, the ideas pertaining to the motherhood constellation have contributed to research and psychotherapeutic contexts (Dugmore, 2013, 2014; Hoffman, 2004; Imber, 2010; Innamorati, et al., 2010; Slade et al., 2005; Spinelli et al., 2016). Stern's (1995) framework is useful as it takes into account the main themes involved in emergent motherhood, the intergenerational aspects of motherhood, as well as different ports of entry for intervention. Given the contribution of Stern's concepts to psychoanalytic theory and practice, this paper argues for more thought to be given to the fatherhood constellation and the fatherhood trilogy, as these concepts may enrich current understandings of emergent fatherhood, as they have done for emergent motherhood.

In general, Stern (1995) does not pay much attention to the father. He does wonder whether fathers, who are primary caregivers, will also develop a motherhood constellation, as mothers do. However, he does not give any thought to fathers who are secondary caregivers. Interestingly, although there is a small body of literature exploring experiences of emergent fatherhood, there appears to be little further research on the fatherhood constellation specifically, apart from two research studies. The first, conducted by Matulaite-Horwood and Bieliauskaite (2005), studied fathers' preoccupation with supporting the mother-infant dyad, arguably a key feature of the fatherhood constellation. The second study is particularly relevant to this paper. Madsen, et al. (2007) examined whether the fathers' own experiences of being parented influenced their capacity to reflect their infant's state of mind, thereby clearly acknowledging intergenerational aspects of fathering. Their findings highlighted that fathers are capable of reflecting infants' states of

mind. However, this capacity 'applies to only some fathers, namely, those having a model of caregiving representing closeness with and compassion from their parents. The study further indicates that fathers having such a model have derived this from their relationship with their mother' (Madsen et al., 2007, p. 160). Importantly, it seems that the ability to reflect on an infant's mind is 'not linked to gender and parallel gendered role model experiences', as Stern (1995) seems to claim, but rather to experiences with a caregiving and sensitive parent (Madsen et al., 2007, p.161). Thus, Madsen et al. (2007) argue that the growing involvement of fathers worldwide increases the likelihood that infants will experience close interactions with both their mother and their father, and that the child's model of caregiving will likely draw on both mother and father in the future. This finding is most significant as it designates the fatherhood trilogy in the form of father's mother-father-baby, while simultaneously acknowledging that this formation of the fatherhood trilogy may change with the increasing trend towards involved fatherhood.

The general literature on experiences of emergent fatherhood may suggest some themes that are likely to be important for the fatherhood trilogy. While Stern's (1995) motherhood trilogy explores intergenerational patterns, specifically the mother's relationship with her own mother, authors such as Atkins (1981), Burlingham (1973) and Diamond (1998) examine the father's relationship with his own father. Interestingly, Atkins (1981) also explores how the father's relationship with his father is mediated by the father's mother and, in so doing, highlights that both the father's father and mother are important for the father's fathering. At the same time, there is also a body of literature which focusses on the difficulties in father-son relationships and the consequences thereof. These include the experiences of 'father hunger' and the effects of paternal absence on fathering, as well as deprivation, seduction, and the acting out of the 'Laius complex', in which the father acts

out his rivalry with his son through abandonment (Diamond, 1998; Gill, 1991; Herzog, 1982; Ross, 1982). Notably, these perspectives appear to prioritise the nuclear family, emphasising the role of both the biological father and mother in the production of fathering. However, this understanding of what it means to be fathered is expanding, with a growing distinction between the father as a person and the paternal function (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Along these lines, a research study conducted in South Africa suggests that there is a need for more historically and contextually informed research on the meanings of fatherlessness; Ratele et al. (2012) argue that the dominant discourse of 'demonised non-nuclear, female-headed households' needs to be expanded to include social fathers (p. 553).

Although the fatherhood constellation emphasises the key themes involved in the transition to fatherhood (Berman & Long, 2021), the fatherhood trilogy enables a focus on the intergenerational and intragenerational aspects of emergent fatherhood. There is clearly a need for further research on the fatherhood trilogy and its permutations within different contexts. This research study set out to explore the representational world of new fathers who considered themselves to be secondary caregivers of infants. The researcher was interested in the key figures and early experiences which fathers believe influenced their fatherhood.

Method

Research design

Winnicott's (1960) famous sentence 'there is no such thing as a baby' (p. 49) alerts us to the idea that wherever one finds an infant, one will find a caregiver. Although psychoanalytic theory has tended to focus on the importance of the mother, the importance of the father is increasingly being recognised (Etchegoyen, 2002). The significance of the father is not limited to early childhood development, but extends to emergent fatherhood

as well (Dick, 2011). Every father was once a son, and his own early childhood experiences will likely play an important part in his fathering. Given the focus of this research on the father and, particularly, on the sets of relationships which become salient in the father's representational world during emergent fatherhood, a qualitative research design, located specifically within the psychoanalytic paradigm, was deemed appropriate. The researcher used a psychoanalytically informed research interview method – adapted from Cartwright (2004), Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Kvale (1999) – to guide the research process, selected for its ability to explore participants' conscious and unconscious self and object representations. This paper offers a case study analysis of three research participants. A case study approach offers a detailed, rich context within which to explore the contribution of both conscious and unconscious intergenerational and intragenerational relationships to the representation of the self as a father (Salkind, 2010).

Sample selection

The research participants were selected using non-probability purposive, volunteer and snowball sampling strategies. Despite approaching various organizations, no fathers volunteered for the study for some time. The final sample, primarily accessed through word of mouth and snowball sampling, consisted of white, middle to upper class, South African men, all of whom were residing with their partner and child at the time of the interviews. The research is thus restricted to a particular sociocultural context, perhaps reflecting the difficulty of researching fathers, who are often difficult to access. See Berman and Long (manuscript in preparation) for a reflection on the difficulties of accessing fathers, and how this may be thought about in relation to the challenges of fatherhood. In addition, all participants lived with both of their parents as children, and their parents were alive at the time of the research. This common feature meant that research participants could explore

their representations of their own parents without having to filter their representations through the lens of actual loss or absence. Seven men, aged between twenty-four and thirty-seven years, participated in the research. Six were first-time fathers to infants below twelve months, while one was a second-time father (with one child below twenty-four months of age and another below twelve months). Six out of the seven research participants were fathers of girls.

Data collection and data analysis

Fourteen research interviews were conducted, two with each participant. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured interview schedule guided interviews, with questions which prompted participants to reflect on their representations of themselves as fathers and their experience of their parents (as a child and currently), their partners and their infants. The researcher encouraged participants to share any relevant additional information.

The process of data analysis involved an exploration of the fathers' conscious and unconscious self and object representations. In order to access these representations, data was analysed at the level of both form and content. Particular attention was given to core narratives and to the possible meanings of associations, digressions, repetitions, hesitations, omissions and inconsistencies (Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013; Kvale, 1999). Transference-countertransference impressions also served as an additional source of information to verify and corroborate initial interpretations (Cartwright, 2004). Furthermore, preliminary interpretations from the first research interview were discussed and elaborated upon with the research participants in the second interview. In order to provide quality checks, analysis was initially conducted independently by the researcher and two research supervisors and then refined in collaboration.

Although the case study method seeks explanations of an individual nature, as opposed to a more general nature (Mertens, 2015) and is oriented towards the specific (Stake, 1995), case study methodology has played an important and increasing role in the development of new ideas, examining not what is common but what is possible (Midgley, 2006; Willemsen, et al., 2017). Therefore, even though the case study is typically used to describe the course of a patient's clinical treatment (Chamberlaine, et al., 2003), it was selected to provide a detailed, rich context within which to explore each father as an individual (Salkind, 2010). Importantly, the three case studies explored in this paper were chosen precisely because they demonstrate the use of different key figures and trilogies in the process of self-representation as a father. In so doing, the researcher highlights that the fatherhood trilogy may not be the same for all fathers, and that each father's trilogy needs to be explored in its own right. At the same time, the researcher was also interested in seeing whether common themes emerged for the research participants. These themes have been explored in the discussion section of the paper.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Non-Medical Ethics Committee. Prior to participation, participants were given detailed information in order to grant informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

The fatherhood trilogies: David the 'supermom'

David was a keen research participant; he was warm and approachable. He liked to talk and appeared to be at ease during the research interviews. His interview transcript was the longest of all the participants. David often rephrased things multiple times and sometimes stumbled with his words. He spoke about his parents frequently. Although he

tended to speak of his father as being rather absent, his father's absence was present at all times. David spoke very fondly of his mother. He described her as being an incredibly 'strong' woman, and he referred to his father as the 'weaker' parent. He said that his mother was very involved in his life, whereas he felt that his father had been largely unavailable to him and the family. David shared that there were 'certain levels of my life that my father was blotched out of, like he wasn't there and then he was there, and then he wasn't there and then he was there'. The anguish of David's father's absence was clearly felt during the interviews, and he spoke about a friend whose father 'used to do everything with, with him, and like my father would never do, like, any of those things'. It was apparent that David wished to have a father who would do everything with him too.

David's father was not altogether physically absent: he made an effort to attend every soccer match that David played. This is not coincidental; it emerged that David's grandfather was a professional cricket player, who forced David's father to play cricket. He only showed an interest in David's father's cricket matches and expressed disinterest in any other activities. As a father himself, David's father made a point to attend every soccer match that David played, even though he himself had little interest in soccer. Although David appreciates and recognises his father's effort to support his personal interest in soccer, it was not enough for David. He still feels that his father played an insufficient role in his life.

In the absence of his own father, David sought out other father figures: 'if you don't necessarily have a father that fulfils everything that you need, you make other people father figures in your life'. He felt, though, that he didn't always choose the right father figures and it was clear that none could replace his father. He was left with a gap that he simply could not fill. Nonetheless, David cherishes the fact that his father modelled hard work and taught

him to ‘never give up’. He also tries to understand his father in light of the fact that his father had a terrible relationship with his own father (David’s grandfather). David explained that his grandfather was ‘very abusive… not the nicest man…but, thank G-d, my father had an amazing mother … she would entertain for like fifty, sixty people, and nothing was ever too much…like she could cater, like, not normal’.

In contrast to his relationship with his father, David described an extremely close relationship with his mother. David said that he felt compelled to take his mother’s side when his parents fought, and he always felt the urge to ‘protect my mother, without a doubt, for sure, because my mother gave me a certain level of love that my father didn’t always give me’. He told me that ‘your, your mother, as, as, me as a man you know, a mommy's boy, as they say, is like an everything. Your mother is like everything, you learn from your mother, you wanna marry a woman similar to your mother, and they say that men do’. The idea of being a ‘mommy’s boy’ was very prominent and repeated several times. The phrase seemed to help David to make sense of the close relationship that he shared with his mother. However, as an adult, it seems he has also started developing his own ideas and views that differ from those of his mother.

David said that men tend to marry a woman like their mother, so he was rather shocked when confronted with his wife who was unlike his mother and his paternal grandmother. For David, a mother’s nurturing and care are lovingly entwined with food, and he really struggled, during the early stages of his marriage, when his wife didn’t show her love in the way his own mother did. David recalls how his mother lovingly cooked for him and included him in the process, telling him to ‘come and beat the eggs you know, come and lick the bowl’. He wished that his wife could show him love in the same way, and he seems to have felt enormous relief when his wife started to show her love through food.

David makes sense of his wife's difficulty showing her love through food in light of her relationship with her own mother. David's mother-in-law was adopted and had a very difficult childhood. Although David considers her to be a powerful and strong woman, he feels she didn't know 'how to really be a mother' and, as a result, his wife 'learnt it basically on her own'. As such, even though David considers his mother-in-law to be an amazing cook herself, he emphasises that she never taught his wife: 'I'm busy in the kitchen [pause] get out the kitchen, don't come and help'. In David's eyes, his wife had to learn to become a mother on her own.

As a father himself, David makes considerable effort to be involved in the care of his daughter. He was sure to tell me that he looked after his daughter the night before our interview: 'I looked after my daughter, like I put her to bed, I fed her, I did everything and, um, that was great and she went down perfectly, you know what I mean because she, she can relate to both of us like that'. The idea of being an involved father holds much meaning and significance for David: he felt that his parents had such fixed, separate roles, that when they occasionally swopped roles, he found it strange and he then delegitimised that parent's input. In light of his childhood experience, David is adamant that he does not want that sort of relationship with his daughter. He wants his daughter to be comfortable with him performing roles that her mother ordinarily does. In his mind, this will allow his daughter to take him seriously, and not to be dismissive of his views, as he was of his own father's views.

In light of the above, David easily performs '*motherly duties'* and makes a concerted effort to be involved and present in his daughter's life. However, it is noteworthy that his involvement tends to focus on what he deems to be *motherly* activities, with relatively little sense of himself as a *father* at this point in his child's development. In fact, the idea of being a father, in other words, someone other than mother, is rather anxiety-provoking for David,

as he is not sure if his daughter could manage to hold both her mother and father in mind in the face of disagreement.

David explained 'Let's just say my wife disagrees with me, then my child will disagree with me, because the child's learning it from the mother to disagree with the father, but, then again, is the child really that entwined to, to see that view, or is the child just, is it, is it just, is it the child just sees – okay, it's a normal reality that the mother's allowed to disagree with the father'. Given David's early experience of little space for disagreement between his parents, and his father's opinion taking second place, it is understandably very difficult for David to assert his own opinion as a father, and to trust that it can be valid. It is also interesting that, in the second interview, when David further reflected on how his daughter sees him as a father, he said: 'so thank G-d she does, she always smiles and giggles and she does, she gives a lot of warmth and love back, so I definitely say that she does, you know, think I'm supermom [laughs]'. Perhaps this excerpt says it all. Although David is trying to give his daughter an experience of an involved and present father, and he is trying to undo his own experience of an absent father, he does not hold a strong representation of himself as a father in his own mind: he is 'supermom' instead. His representation of himself seems to be more of a representation as mother than as father.

While it may be expected that the father's identification with his own father would inform his paternal representation of himself (Stern, 1995), David's case highlights that self-representation as a father is multi-faceted. David's representations of his own parents, their relationship with one another, and their relationship with his grandparents all contribute to his representation of himself as a father. Furthermore, David's representations of his wife, informed by his representations of her parents and her grandparents, also play a role in his representation of himself as a father in relation to his wife and daughter. As such, multiple,

overlapping trilogies influence David's self-representation. Fatherhood subsequently offers David the opportunity to rework his early relationships with his own parents (intergenerational dynamics) in the context of his relationship with his wife and baby (intragenerational dynamics). This process involves matrilineal, patrilineal and Oedipal dynamics, in both the past and present.

Matrilineal dynamics present a focal point for David's self-representation, both in relation to his own mother and his paternal grandmother. In contrast, there is a noticeable disjunct with the fathers (father and paternal grandfather) in David's narratives. Added to this, David alerts us to potential difficulty in the dyadic relationships within his early family triangle: he describes discord between his parents and sees himself as a 'mommy's boy'. Given that Britton (2004) highlights the importance of recognising the link between one's parents for intrapsychic development – it creates a "triangular space" – it is interesting that David has not only a representation of an absent father, but also a representation of a mother who denigrates the father in her own mind. Greenson (1968) speaks to this composite experience of the father as being a key contributor to the boy's struggle to disengage and disidentify with his mother. This may explain David's sense of himself as a 'mommy's boy' and his early adulthood process of trying to separate from his mother and her views. David's experience of an 'amazing' mother, and a more difficult relationship with his father, also seems to repeat the past, as David's father shared a similar dynamic with his own parents. It is possible that history may be repeating itself once again as, even though David tries to give his daughter an experience of a present and involved father, he struggles to hold a representation of himself as a father. Notably, this research study did not explore David's daughter's experience of him as a father, so it is not possible to know whether David's lack of representation of himself as a father influences his daughter's ability to

represent him as a father. Further research exploring the father, mother and infant in relation to one another would be valuable.

Early Oedipal dynamics appear to be revisited in David's emergent fatherhood, with a particular hue pertaining to fatherhood. On the one hand, David describes difficulty reconciling his wife's initial disinterest in cooking for him with his early experience of being a 'mommy's boy' who was invited to join his mother in the kitchen to 'come and beat the eggs you know, come and lick the bowl'. On the other hand, Oedipal rivalry reveals itself once again, but this time in the context of David trying to be a better father than he felt his own father was towards him. Interestingly, his efforts to be a better father draw on social and cultural constructions of 'new fatherhood', which emphasise increased father involvement (Gregory & Milner, 2011). Despite his increased involvement, David struggles to be on the outside of the mother-infant dyad as he is unsure of his daughter's ability to keep both himself and her mother in mind.

David's wife's early triangle seems to play a part as well. Whereas David tends to idealise the mothers in his family of origin, he was shocked by his mother-in-law's lack of motherliness, and he believes his wife had to teach herself how to mother. As such, David's anxiety about his wife's capacity to mother, together with his experiences of his own mother and father, propels him to be 'supermom'. He holds a representation of himself as being like mother, possibly even above or better than ('super') mother, but not father.

The fatherhood trilogies: Ryan the 'superman shield'

Ryan presented as a tall, confident and assertive man. He was energetic, warm and friendly. He was also very articulate. He chose his words carefully and seemed not to elaborate unnecessarily, preferring to be concise. He came across as thoughtful, emotionally

intelligent and appropriately boundaried. I imagined that his daughter might feel understood by him and safe.

Ryan was raised by both his mother and father. He said that he enjoys a good relationship with both parents but is closer to his father. Ryan described his mother as being a doting, present mother, who was always there for him and committed to her children. In contrast, Ryan described his father as hard working, stern, dependable, and he could always rely on his father to protect him. Ryan reported that he and his father share certain character traits and interests. This similarity extends to their approach to fathering. Like his father, Ryan said that he can also be stern and will do anything to protect his daughter. He did not disregard his mother's influence, acknowledging that his mother taught him to express emotion. His father was not an emotional man, having grown up 'in a very old school home, the man was the man, he was hard, he wasn't supposed to show emotion. I never saw my father ever cry'. Although Ryan sees his grandfather and father as being unemotional, he feels he has learned to show emotion from his mother.

Ryan felt that 'your parents really do influence you, not only by the way they bring up their children, but the, by the way they have a relationship as husband and wife'. Ryan thereby recognises the impact of his parents on him as both a father and husband. Ryan wishes to emulate his parent's relationship, and he makes a concerted effort to make time to work on his relationship with his wife. This is particularly important to Ryan, as he explained that his wife's parents had a poor marriage, and that his wife suffers from depression, along with her sister and mother. He hopes he can protect his daughter from depression by working on his marriage with his wife and by creating a healthy home environment.

It is clear to see that Ryan is besotted with his daughter. Ryan said: 'Every video I get sent here, I go straight downstairs to the ladies and I show them videos, and I'm 'look how she's already walking, look how she's already talking, and look how she's already clapping and smiling', whatever it is you know. Um, ya, I like to show off a little bit. She's the apple of my eye, what can I say'. Ryan tries to be 'a hands-on father'. He described his involvement in changing nappies, spending time with his daughter before work, playing games with her and coming home early from work in order to bath her, even if it means catching up work once she is asleep. Ryan tries to make their time together quality time and he enjoys it thoroughly, but he also seems realistic about the difficulties that come with parenting.

Ryan sees himself as a good father and he is confident that his daughter adores him. He delights in the so-called daddy's girl dynamic, sharing that 'I'm still her favourite', although he wonders if and when this will change. She may 'gravitate more to mom, to the feminine things, and that's where I might be upset'. Given that Ryan takes such pleasure in the father-daughter bond, it is painful for Ryan to think about his daughter developing a greater interest in her mother. Currently, he is aware of how the close father-daughter relationship affects his wife, but he has not yet had to experience this for himself.

Ryan described his fatherly aspirations as follows:

You want to give her the best, you want to, you don't want to over-indulge the child, but you want them to grow, you want to give them the skills to grow themselves. You don't want to just spoon feed them, but you want to be supportive and go to ends of the world so that they can learn and fight, fail and succeed themselves, be there with a guiding light, but stop any harm that comes their way if you can. Be the superman shield.

This excerpt poignantly captures Ryan's wishes and fears. He wants to enable his daughter to learn from her own mistakes, but he knows that he cannot protect her from them. Nonetheless, he hopes to guide his daughter and try to protect her from harm. It emerged that Ryan finds it difficult to feel helpless and unable to protect his daughter. A particularly salient example for Ryan was when his daughter was ill, and he wished that he could be the superman shield to take away his daughter's illness. However, he knew that the best he could do was be there with her and help her through it.

Ryan spoke clearly and articulately about his sense of himself both as a father and husband. He proudly takes up his place in both of these roles, and he shared that he knows he has an important part to play in supporting his wife and in connecting to his daughter. Like David, Ryan makes an effort to be an involved and present father. However, Ryan's self-representation as a father seems to draw on an identification with both his mother and, particularly, his father, whom he represents as being protective, stern and caring, and as having an important place in his own mother's mind. It is therefore interesting that, in contrast to David who sees himself as 'supermom', Ryan wishes to be the 'superman shield'. He wants to protect his daughter, as his father protected him, but he also resigns himself to the fact that sometimes the best he can do is be with her through difficulties and painful experiences. He uses his ability to connect to emotion, which he feels he learned from his mother, to help his daughter in these moments. Ryan therefore seems to draw on both the matrilineal and patrilineal in his self-representation as a father. As he says, you have to be 'hard when you have to and soft when you have to. Take each situation in its own, with its own merit, and treat it where you need to – being hard or soft'.

Oedipal dynamics also appear to have the opportunity to be revisited and reworked in the context of Ryan's fatherhood. Ryan mentioned his enjoyment of his daughter being

'daddy's girl' and he shared that she is 'the apple of my eye', but he also has a sense that this could change, and he worries about his ability to tolerate such a shift. Here Ryan seems to highlight that, even though a father experiences pregnancy from the outside, and that it can take time for a father to connect to his daughter (Berman & Long, 2021), the daddy-daughter dynamic offers the father something special that he, too, can have, even though he is not the mother. However, Ryan also alerts us to the challenge that fathers may then encounter as these Oedipal dynamics shift. In this light, perhaps Ryan's focus on his relationship with his wife serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, Ryan seems invested in working on his marriage as a means to try to protect his daughter from maternally inherited depression. On the other hand, perhaps working on his marriage helps Ryan to feel secure in his place in the parental couple, regardless of his daughter's shifts in parental preference. As with David, Ryan also seemed to take up a more social and cultural representation of the 'new father' as being an involved and present father. He, too, uses multiple points of reference to build his representation of himself as a father. However, the most marked difference is Ryan's representation of himself as a father in his own mind.

The fatherhood trilogies: Anthony in a 'complete panic'

Anthony came across as warm, genuine, thoughtful and engaging. He reflected meaningfully on his experiences of being a father and on himself as a father, confronting and sharing some quite difficult aspects of his fathering with me.

Anthony described his mother as being an 'unbelievable mom'. He shared: 'Thank G-d, her and I have a very, very close relationship … when I think back on my childhood, she was always there, like she was always around, she was always available to do, to 'schlep' [give lifts], to talk, to give advice'. In contrast, Anthony described his father as being very short-tempered and much less available, both physically and emotionally. Anthony said that

he was scared of his father's temper as a child. He shared that his father's father was a very hard man, so his father was raised like that as well. Interestingly, although Anthony described his father as not the 'most emotionally available', he also explained that his father 'knows that's how I feel, he knows where I felt that's where he was lacking, um, and he agrees'. Thus, even though Anthony experienced his father as being insufficiently emotionally available to him as a child, he has been able to talk to his father about this as an adult, enabling him to try to make sense of, and possibly even work through, some of his childhood experiences.

As a father himself, Anthony attempts to be different. He tries to:

> *… make a more conscious effort to be more emotionally available to my daughter and wife … I try to not argue things out, I try to talk things out and come to and have like positive conflict resolution … I try not to sweat the small stuff, um, realise that there is a bigger picture …I also don't prioritise work like he does but, that being said, he built his own business, and I was handed a business and a degree of financial security, which he built for himself.*

Anthony has thus made a concerted effort to see his father's perspective, but still tries to be different from his father, specifically on an emotional level. In particular, he seems intent on avoiding negatively charged situations, and he appears to avoid anger and conflict. In so doing, he also seems to draw on his relationship with his mother in his fathering. Anthony explained that he and his mother have many similarities. He is: '…very much like my mom, very similar, very [pause] neurotic, in a good way [pause] - um, overly giving

[pause] like self-sacrificing, um, and that attitude where you can get done what you have to get done… also my mom and myself, to a degree, don't necessarily look after ourselves as a priority [pause] not to a healthy degree, but it is what it is'. Clearly Anthony sees himself as being like his mother – he attributes his softer side to his mother, but he also acknowledges that this can be taken too far, resulting in self-neglect.

During the research interviews, it was apparent that Anthony absolutely loves his daughter, and he delights in her adoration and in the father-daughter bond. He explained that 'she's a flirt when it comes to her dad, so whenever she looks at me, she just gets this massive smile, um, I'm really panicking like one day when I'm gonna have to discipline her, cause she's got me wrapped'. Here, Anthony hints that his love for his daughter, along with the positive feelings he gets from their relationship, is so great that it is going to be very difficult for him to discipline her or upset her. In some respects, this is already a challenge. Through the process of the research interviews, Anthony realised that he has considerable anxiety about his capacity to hurt his daughter, and this anxiety may interfere with his fathering at times. As an example, Anthony said that he avoids activities like bathing and feeding his daughter, as he worries that he could hurt her. Given his fear of his own father, it is possible that Anthony is concerned about being like his father: He is therefore prohibited from participating in ordinary caregiving activities, as he is afraid to hurt his daughter. Anthony described coming to this realisation during our interview, making him question whether he should start being more involved in bathing and feeding his daughter.

Anthony observed that his wife notices his anxieties, and tries her best to limit their impact on his relationship with their daughter. For example, she encourages Anthony to bath and feed their daughter. She also makes sure that everything Anthony might need is ready when he takes their daughter out. In this way, she tries to avoid him having to panic.

Anthony really appreciates his wife's ability to support him and hold him in mind as a father, and he also admires her abilities as a mother. He describes her as being a calm, collected mother who is able to tolerate her baby's distress and try different things in order to see what their baby might need.

Anthony, like David and Ryan, holds a rather negative view of his wife's mother. His wife and mother-in-law have 'a very complicated relationship':

> [wife's mother] *has a mental illness and, an untreated mental illness, and she has, has always had, and has now a very bad relationship with her [his wife]. Um, when we were pregnant, when we told her we were pregnant, she said 'I want nothing to do with you, your husband or this child' – that was her response to her daughter's first pregnancy. So I think* [my wife] *wants to prove she's not a product of her upbringing, um, which she has her whole life … she's just surpassed it all, um, I think, like, with the help of her psychologist, um, cause they do work through a lot of it together … she's doing unbelievably well. She really, thank G-d, is like chalk and cheese*.

The difference between his wife and her mother is reassuring for Anthony. He witnesses this in relation to their baby, and also experiences his wife as supportive of him as a father. Anthony seems to be more concerned about himself as a father than about his wife as a mother. He acknowledges that he is very anxious, and he attributes his anxieties to his own mother and paternal grandmother being very overbearing and overprotective. He

sometimes catches himself repeating these same behaviours with his daughter, and he considers himself to be a 'panicker'.

Once again, it is apparent that the fatherhood trilogies are multi-faceted, with many factors influencing the father's representation of himself as a father. Similar to David, Anthony identifies more strongly with aspects of the matrilineal, that is his relationship with his own mother, in his representation of himself as a father to his daughter. He specifically leans towards an identification with his mother's capacity to care, and he wishes to give his daughter everything that he can. At the same time, he appears to develop his sense of himself as a father based on a disidentification with his father's short-temper and emotional unavailability. Of course, these predominantly conscious identifications and disidentifications may not mirror Anthony's unconscious identifications and disidentifications. In fact, Anthony's anxiety of having to discipline, or even accidently hurt, his daughter could be viewed as a defence against his own more potent and aggressive parts. Importantly, Anthony's case demonstrates the complexity involved in exploring the matrilineal and patrilineal in the representation of the self as a father, as it highlights that both conscious and unconscious identifications and disidentifications, based on both conscious and unconscious self and object representations, may play a part.

The women in Anthony's life are very important in his narrative. His Oedipal relationship with his mother is echoed in his love for his wife, his shock with his mother-in-law and his love affair with his daughter. As with Anthony and Ryan, his daughter's loving looks, reverberating with those of his wife and his mother, position him simultaneously as son, husband and father.

Although Anthony, like David, predominantly identifies with his mother, he is quite unlike David as he still maintains a representation of himself as a father, both in his own

mind and in his wife's mind. This is interesting, given that one of the apparent differences between Anthony and David is that Anthony did not hold a representation of his father as denigrated in his mother's mind. Furthermore, Anthony experiences his wife as being able to keep him in mind, even if he sometimes feels excluded from the mother-infant dyad. His wife also supports his relationship with his daughter, and she tries to promote their relationship, as she does not seem to worry that it could threaten their relationship as a parental couple. As such, although Oedipal dynamics resurface within the new parent-infant triad, Anthony appears to have an opportunity to work through his feelings of exclusion, as he does not have a representation of his father as denigrated in his mother's mind, and he also does not feel himself to be denigrated in his wife's mind.

Discussion

When reflecting on how fathers develop a sense of themselves as fathers, this paper has shown that fathers do not necessarily turn to their own fathers, and they certainly do not turn only to their own fathers, as predicted by the fatherhood trilogy. Fathers may draw on many different conscious and unconscious representations of their infants, parents, grandparents, partners, and parents-in-law, amongst others. Fathers may, therefore, reference multiple trilogies that can be matrilinear, patrilinear and/or Oedipal in nature, along with social, cultural and historical constructions of fatherhood across time, in the process of self-representation as a father. This paper subsequently argues for the possibility of the 'fatherhood trilogies', along with the idea that fatherhood may be overdetermined: that fatherhood emerges from a multiple overlaying of internal representations connected to various figures and with complex relationships between these internal figures. In the three cases presented in this paper, no single dominant axis emerged. Different cases are likely to offer different perspectives; it is striking that what characterises the cases here is

precisely multiplicity rather than a homing in on any one particular intergenerational relationship.

The research findings suggest that the fatherhood trilogy does not simply parallel the motherhood trilogy; there seems to be a different process at play altogether. Firstly, the father, like the mother, undergoes a reorganisation of his representational world, however, multiple conscious and unconscious trilogies appear to become relevant, which overlap and influence one another. On the one hand, the finding that the father turns to multiple trilogies in his self-representation could be explained by the idea that fatherhood begins from a position of absence and exclusion (Berman & Long, 2021). It could be that without the bodily experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, a father may find himself having to turn to personal, social and cultural contexts in developing his sense of himself as a father. On the other hand, the concept of overdetermination could explain the many factors which contribute to the process of self-representation as a father.

Overdetermination refers to 'the fact that formations of the unconscious (symptoms, dreams, etc.) can be attributed to a plurality of determining factors' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 292). The most common interpretation of this is that these formations of the unconscious are related to a 'multiplicity of unconscious elements which may be organised in meaningful sequences, each having its own specific coherence at a particular level of interpretation' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 292). The highly intricate and nuanced ways in which the fathers combined personal, social, cultural and historical factors in their process of self-representation suggests that just as symptoms and dreams within the psyche are overdetermined (Freud, 1900), the representation of the self as a father may be overdetermined too. This explanation could account for the similarities amongst the research participants (for example, seeing a 'good' father as being an involved father), as

well as the differences amongst the research participants (for example, their varied identifications and disidentifications in their emergent fatherhood). Importantly, regardless of whether the explanation is more of an embodied, intrapsychic and/or contextual nature, developing a sense of oneself as a father appears to be a complex process influenced by a variety of factors, which combine in a multitude of ways in the production of fathering. If this is the case, then perhaps the motherhood trilogy also requires revisiting, as it is possible that the representation of the self as a mother may also be overdetermined. This could be explored in future research.

Secondly, an analysis of the research participants' matrilinear and patrilinear trilogies reveals a process of self-representation as a father that is somewhat akin to the way in which a baby develops judgment. Just as 'the original pleasure ego tries to introject into itself everything that is good and to reject from itself everything that is bad' (Freud, 1925, p. 369), fathers in this study spoke extensively about their emergent fatherhood in relation to aspects of their own parents/grandparents/parents-in-law which they would like to emulate (take in), as well as aspects which they would rather avoid (spit out). In particular, the research findings suggest that the father does not always develop a representation of himself as a father through an identification with his own father. His sense of himself as a father may be developed through a disidentification with his own father. Of course, just because we would rather deny or negate something does not mean it has no valence: negation 'is a way of taking account of what is repressed; indeed, it is actually a removal of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed' (Freud, 1925, p. 368). Nonetheless, in situations where there is a strong disidentification with the father's father, the father's mother may offer a site for identification, which could contribute to the father's self-representation. The finding that a passive, aloof or punitive

father impedes a boy's identification with a positive, masculine model is not necessarily a new one (Imbesi, 1997). However, this study suggests that the effects could extend into emergent fatherhood. Fathers who experience their own fathers as being passive, ineffectual or punitive may have a more challenging time developing their representations of themselves as fathers. This can be even more difficult when the father was experienced as being denigrated in the mind of the mother. As Celenza (2004) says 'when males are degraded in the mind of the mother, or fathers are experienced as unacceptable in actuality (or both), the son cannot use the father or his image as a pathway to his own masculinity' (p. 223).

Furthermore, just as the baby has the task of discovering 'whether something which is present in the ego as an image can also be rediscovered in perception (that is, in reality)' (Freud, 1925, p. 369), the fathers in this study were very focused on their own involvement, that is their absence and presence as fathers to their infants, but in rather concrete and physical terms. Research and clinical work have explored absent fathers (Gill, 1991; Mander, 1999; Ott, 1997), present but absent, and absent but present fathers (Besdine, 1973; Davies, 2015; Heineman, 2000; Stoller & Herdt, 1982), as well as father presence versus the paternal function (Davies & Eagle, 2013). However, this body of literature and research tends to emphasise the experience of absence/presence for the infant and the consequences thereof for child development. This paper highlights the importance of exploring the other side of the coin, that is the father's representation of himself as a present/absent father.

As an apparent reaction to their own fathers, who belonged to a generation of fathers viewed as uninvolved, the fathers in this study prioritised being 'involved' and 'hands-on'. While it could be argued that this rather concrete understanding of father

presence may stem from difficulties related to holding the father in mind (Berman, 2020), considering a 'good' father to be an involved father, who is only embroiled in the positive, playful, gentle, caring and protective aspects of fatherhood, has additional problems. This is because this 'good' father is then the father who is 'supermom' or the 'superman shield'. This is the father who does not hurt his child. But what, then, of the father who may accidentally hurt his child, or who is called upon to set limits, enforce discipline and say 'no'? With little space for the father who is the purveyor of the negative, and for the father who absorbs the negative, it is no wonder, then, that these aspects of fatherhood were extremely anxiety-provoking for the research participants.

Thirdly, Oedipal dynamics do not fall away as the 'dominant organising axis' for the father, as Stern (1995, p. 171) argues may be the case for the mother, when she develops her identity as a mother. In fact, for the fathers in this study, Oedipal conflicts came more sharply into focus, as Oedipal dynamics from the father's early childhood had the opportunity to be reworked within the new parent-infant triad.

While rivalry and envy have frequently been discussed as it pertains to the father and male child, the findings of this study seem to suggest a rivalry with a female child as well. Given some of the difficult feelings that fathers had being on the outside of the mother-infant dyad, it is possible that these feelings would be even greater in relation to sons – potentially explaining the low participation of fathers with sons. If this is the case, then the findings support the notion that the son (child) does not simply develop feelings of rivalry and aggression to his father; 'the father projects his own aggressions, stemming from his rivalry with his son, onto his son, and his son identifies with this projected aggression, thus enabling him to avert the danger ensuing from his father's aggression. In this way the son returns the father's aggression and begins to compete with him' (Zepf et al., 2017, p.

52). These authors are pointing out a potential blind spot of Freud's, arguing that 'Freud's thesis that the Oedipal rivalry begins with the son constitutes in a mystified form the father's rivalry with his son' (Zepf et al., 2017, p. 52). This idea once again reminds us that in the story of Oedipus, we cannot forget Laius (and Jacosta), and it highlights the more destructive or aggressive drives which may be stirred up by fatherhood.

On the other side of the Oedipal coin, the fathers in this study described deriving immense pleasure from the father-daughter relationship, as well as a sense of duty to protect their daughters. Ryan shared that his daughter is the 'apple of my eye', while David said that 'there is definitely a different kind of interaction that I have with my daughter compared to if she was a boy'. Anthony was 'very happy that she's a girl … like this kid has melted my heart', while another research participant, Warren, said that 'I think dads have like, obviously, a, a, a soft spot for their daughters and a, and a, and a protective kind of view [pause] protective, um, approach towards them'. Gary also emphasised 'it's like different, special for, for me. I probably feel more protective over her than I necessarily would a boy'. These excerpts, along with the idea of 'daddy's girl', which was prevalent in the interview material, show that the father-daughter relationship is a source of joy and pride for the research participants, as well as a stimulus for the wish to protect their daughter. Given that feelings of pleasure often went hand in hand with the wish to protect, it is interesting to consider whether fathers' more erotic feelings or libidinal drives may create anxiety for fathers and prompt a wish to protect as a defence. The fathers locate the threat on the outside but perhaps it may also be found within. If this is the case, then this may also help to explain the general difficulty that the researcher experienced recruiting fathers. Although more fathers of girls came forward than fathers of boys, they weren't easy to access either. It could be that fatherhood stirs up representations of the aggressive

(death) drive and the libidinal drive, which may be difficult to confront, both in fathers of daughters and sons.

Furthermore, the fathers also discussed their fear of losing the special father-daughter relationship, as their daughters may grow to favour their mothers. The fathers also shared anxieties about either harming their child or damaging the father-daughter bond; sometimes through necessary and quite ordinary aspects of parenting, such as having to discipline or becoming angry at their child. As mentioned previously, this is an important issue, as Freud's paper on negation, along with more contemporary work on the paternal function, highlights the importance of being able to assert the 'no', as well as accept the child's 'no' (Davies & Eagle, 2013; Freud, 1925). Clearly, the father's Oedipal anxieties could interfere in this process. In addition, fathers also spoke about how the birth of their child impacted their marriages, and they described feelings of displacement and exclusion, as well as a process of trying to re-establish the parental couple. On the one hand, this may be a priority for the father, so that he can support his wife and simultaneously feel supported by his wife. On the other hand, being able to trust that his wife is on his side may serve to diminish envy and rivalry with his child. It also further undoes the idea that the Oedipus complex solely rests on the child's shoulders, as the father and mother have a part to play (Zepf et al., 2017).

Finally, although it may be argued that a potential limitation of this study is the small sample size, and the participation by a very small subset of fathers, this paper nonetheless proposes that the fatherhood trilogies have significant clinical potential, not only in work with fathers, but benefitting mothers and infants as well. This is because the concept of the fatherhood trilogies offers an overarching framework within which to think about the intergenerational, intragenerational, matrilineal, patrilineal, Oedipal, social, cultural and

historical aspects of fatherhood, as they come to bear on the father. Whereas the fatherhood constellation emphasises the father's wish to support the mother and baby, along with his experience of disembodiment and exclusion from motherhood and the mother-infant dyad (Berman & Long, 2021), an exploration of the fatherhood trilogies appears to offer the father an opportunity to locate his sense of himself as a father intergenerationally and intragenerationally. For the fathers in this research study, the process of making self and object representations explicit fostered a more nuanced understanding of their paternal self-representations. The fathers explored links between their fathering and their own experiences of being parented and, as some of the fathers became aware of unconscious aspects of their fathering, they used these instances as sites of intervention (Berman & Long, manuscript in preparation). While the age-old adage is 'like father, like son', this paper suggests that the development of the sense of oneself as a father is not quite so simple. Both conscious and unconscious identifications and disidentifications from multiple relationships contribute to the development of the sense of oneself as a father.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This research study set out to explore new fathers' experiences of emergent fatherhood and, in so doing, it aimed to discover how fathers represent themselves as fathers in their own minds, as well as in the minds of their partner and infant. It was hoped that the research would go some way towards addressing the gap in the literature on fathers, and towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation, by identifying common themes in new fathers' experiences of fatherhood.

As the research progressed, a second focus of the research became apparent – fathers' experiences of the research process itself. This focus arose in the course of recruiting research participants, as well as in the exploration of the research participants' experiences of the research interviews with the researcher. An analysis of the process of data collection offered insight into some of the challenges typically experienced in recruiting fathers for fatherhood research, as well as a glimpse into how fathers may use research interviews in their process of coming to represent the self as a father. The findings offer an important contribution to clinical work with fathers and research on fatherhood.

In accordance with the research aims, this chapter will provide a discussion of the research participants' self-representations as fathers or, rather, their struggle for self-representation, which became apparent through the research process. This struggle for self-representation will be examined against the backdrop of the social expectations of fathers and the pre-oedipal father's relatively limited representation within the psychoanalytic and psychological literature, as well as in relation to the psychodynamics of fatherhood. Key themes pertaining to the fathers' experiences of fatherhood and the process of finding representation will then be discussed as possible components of the fatherhood

constellation. The discovery of the fatherhood *trilogies*, as opposed to the fatherhood *trilogy*, will also be explored. Finally, the findings from the analysis of the research process itself will be used to explore how fathers can be supported in their process of self-representation. The implications of this research study for clinical work and research will be discussed, along with the limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

The father who is either alive but dead, or dead but alive: The pre-oedipal father's struggle for self-representation as a father

Given that so much emphasis is placed on the importance of fathers for children and their intrapsychic development (for example, Freeman, 2008; Joannidis, 2019; Jones, 2007; Kalinich, 2009; Liebman & Abell, 2000; Perelberg, 2015; Rodica, 2019; Trowell, 2002; Von Klitzing, 2019), and the lack of attention that is given to the father as a figure in his own right, it was expected that fathers would grab the opportunity to talk about their experiences of fatherhood. However, this was not the case. When fathers were asked to participate in this research study and share their experiences of fatherhood, the researcher encountered absence. Even for the fathers who did choose to participate, they did so with some hesitation and anxiety, and the fathers often struggled to find the words to talk about and give life to their sense of themselves as fathers. Perhaps this should not have come as a surprise since fathers are generally difficult to access (Baradon, 2019). However, this research suggests that this difficulty accessing fathers is not only an experience that researchers and clinicians may have of fathers, but that it may also be an experience that fathers have of themselves.

An exploration of the data revealed that the fathers in this research study positioned themselves as outside observers of the mother-infant couple, and that they found it difficult

to see themselves as fathers. Many of the research participants were filled with significant anxiety about their ability to father, as well as concern about disrupting the mother-infant dyad. The research participants desperately wanted to be present and involved fathers, but they struggled to see themselves as fathers. Their representations of themselves as fathers were initially vague and filled with self-doubt. The search for the self-representations of new fathers therefore exposed a lack of representation, or the struggle for representation. Many of the fathers in this research study were alive and involved fathers but, in their own minds, they were either psychically dead or, rather, dormant.

Of course, fatherhood does not take place in a vacuum, and fatherhood has to be understood within the cultural, social and political milieu within which the father finds himself. On a personal level, the fathers in this research study described being the sons of a generation of fathers whom they considered to be rather absent and uninvolved. This is not unexpected, given that the social expectations of fathers in the previous generation were quite different to the expectations of fathers today (Lamb, 2010). Fathers of previous generations were seen as the economic providers and breadwinners for their families, and caregiving responsibilities were primarily the domain of mothers (Crespi & Ruspini, 2015; Lamb, 2010). We have only recently seen a shift towards the idea of the 'new nurturant father' and 'new fatherhood', and there is still some debate about whether this has generated real social change (Crespi & Ruspini, 2015; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lamb, 2010). This debate is true not only of fathers themselves and how they embrace the new social constructions of fatherhood, but also of the ways in which society supports fathers and the performance of fatherhood. Despite increasing evidence for the influence of paternity leave-taking on father engagement (Petts & Knoester, 2018), gender inequality in the workplace, as it pertains to paternity and parental leave, persists (Kaufman & Petts, 2020).

To complicate matters further, we know that even when fathers are given more paternity leave, this is not always taken up, and that this is likely for a multitude of reasons – including breastfeeding being the domain of mothers and this being considered the primary reason for taking leave, fathers being unable to afford taking leave as men tend to be higher income earners than women, work-related social expectations which may push fathers into the role of secondary caregivers, and because mothers may be gate-keepers restricting father-child interactions (see Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2019). Father involvement is, therefore, a truly complicated matter. It cannot be attributed to any one factor alone. It requires social transformation with regard to the norms of masculinity and femininity in relation to work and care, legislation and regulation that promotes fathers' uptake of parental leave, as well as the consideration of financial constraints and individual ideals (Rocha, 2021).

Indeed, the research participants in this study seemed to find themselves caught between their personal wish to be more involved fathers than their own fathers had been, social expectations of involved fatherhood, as well as workplace demands for work to be their primary focus (see Berman, 2021b). These competing demands highlight, more than ever, the need for systemic support of the pre-oedipal father himself, as well as the need for greater understanding of the psychodynamics of fatherhood. An important question is what, if anything, can a psychodynamic perspective contribute towards our understanding of the pre-oedipal father?

At first glance, we see that the psychoanalytic literature is filled with and dominated by the dead father. Freud's exploration of the myth of the murder of the primal father left an indelible mark on psychoanalysis, as it demonstrated how the original father brought the dead father to life by ensuring that he lives on intrapsychically (Perelberg, 2015). The

problem, however, with the concept of the dead father, is that it has seemingly led to the neglect of the pre-oedipal father who is alive. This is apparent where the Oedipal father appears to have taken precedence over the pre-Oedipal father (Kalinich, 2009), Oedipus (the child) has taken precedence over Laius (the father) (Kancyper, 2006; Ross, 1982), and the mother has taken priority over the father (Jones, 2005; Kalinich, 2009; Oberholzer, 2002). The repercussions of this are apparent (see Besdine, 1973; Davies, 2013; Gill, 1991; Heineman, 2000; Mander, 1999; Ott, 1997; Stoller & Herdt, 1982), and have prompted a turn to the pre-oedipal father in the last few decades (Etchegoyen, 2002). This turn to the pre-oedipal father represents a timely move away from the dead father towards the alive father. However, it is noteworthy that the interest in the pre-oedipal father tends to be limited to the functions that he performs for his infant (for example, Baradon, 2019; Diamond, 2017; Diamond, 2018; Etchegoyen, 2002; Freeman, 2008; Gonzalez-Torres & Fernandez-Rivas, 2019; Grossmark, 2019; Kalinich, 2009; Lagarto & Duaso, 2021; MacDonald et al., 2021; Masoumi & Elyasi, 2021; Perelberg, 2015; Premberg et al., 2008; Shorey et al., 2017). The question, therefore, remains: What about the father himself? While the interest in the role of the pre-oedipal father in child development marks an important shift away from the pre-occupation with the dead father, it still falls short. It, too, runs the risk of making demands on fathers without understanding their own psychodynamics and their ability to meet these demands within a society that has very particular expectations of men and fathers.

Returning then to the research question of the self-representations of fathers, this research has found that in the place of self-representation we may find an absence of representation or a struggle for self-representation. This struggle permeates at many levels of the father's experience of fatherhood. It is apparent in the father's experience/ lack of

experience of himself as a father, in his ability/ inability to take up his place as a father within his family, in the recognition/ lack of recognition of his fatherhood in the workplace, and in the struggle of the psychoanalytic and psychological literature to engage with the pre-oedipal father himself, as a figure in his own right. The following section subsequently represents an opportunity to turn to the father himself.

Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation

The paper entitled 'Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation: Representing absence' (Berman & Long, 2021) explored the key themes of emergent fatherhood in an attempt to explore the psychodynamics of fatherhood and begin formulating the nature of the fatherhood constellation. The paper was written against the backdrop of Daniel Stern's (1995) motherhood constellation. The findings of the research study suggest that the fatherhood constellation does not parallel the motherhood constellation, as it has its own unique shape and character. Two central themes emerged.

Firstly, the fatherhood constellation reflects the father's wish to protect and support the mother and baby, with a particular focus on caring for the mother so that she can care for the baby. The father is, therefore, primarily invested in promoting the relationship of the mother to the baby. This is in direct contrast with the motherhood constellation, in which the mother's focus is on the self and her own relationship to her baby (Stern, 1995). While it is important for the father to support the developing mother-infant dyad, what about the father and the father-infant dyad? Notably, the fathers in this study were left having to conceal considerable anxiety, both about their partners and about themselves as fathers, with little sense of the fathers feeling able to ask for support for themselves.

Secondly, the fatherhood constellation appears to emphasise a process of fathers coming into fatherhood through what it is not, as opposed to what it is to be a father. Fathers described an absence of bodily experience in coming into fatherhood (pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding), as well as their experience of exclusion from the mother-infant dyad (see Berman & Long, 2021). Similar to motherhood, fatherhood also appears to require a reworking of identity, however, the focus appears to be outward rather than inward, on the other rather than on the self, and on what fatherhood is not, as opposed to what it is to be a father. Developing a sense of oneself as a father is, therefore, not a smooth process and it is characterised by absence and self-doubt.

The paper entitled 'Rethinking the fatherhood trilogy: Towards a formulation of the fatherhood constellation' then explored some of the conscious and unconscious identifications and disidentifications with key figures which fathers may use to develop their sense of themselves as fathers. Unlike mothers, who Stern (1995) says become focused on their relationship with their own mother in developing their identity as mothers to their baby, the fathers in this research study encountered various, overlapping trilogies in their experience of becoming and being a father. The paper argues that emergent fatherhood entails a process of substantial reorganisation of the father's internal world, and that fathers appear to cast their net wide in developing their sense of themselves as fathers. This could be because emergent fatherhood involves the father having to figure out what he is from the position of what he is not.

This nascent formulation of the fatherhood constellation offers a way to begin thinking about the process that fathers may encounter as they enter fatherhood. If we were to frame the motherhood constellation as an account of the 'inside story', then perhaps the

fatherhood constellation could best be described as an account of the 'outside story'. For the fathers in this research study, the father in the fatherhood constellation is primarily concerned with being a supportive figure for the mother-infant dyad (akin to Winnicott's views of the father - see Winnicott, 1957). Despite a wish to be present, fatherhood is characterised by absence. Andre Green's work on the negative is particularly useful here, and Green (2009) proposes that the father has been "repressed, forgotten or distorted" (p.25) and that "for the most part the father can only be reached through absence" (p.29). Importantly, this absence does not seem to be limited to the experience of the infant, it appears to be a part of the father's experience of himself as well. Using this understanding of absence, we can begin to see that the father's absence is not simply related to his lack of presence. There are forces at play that maintain the father's absence, and this suggests that the 'problem' of father absence can't necessarily be solved by promoting the presence of fathers. After all, we know that even when fathers are encouraged to be more involved, they may struggle to take the opportunity to do so (Karu & Tremblay, 2018). Numerous factors are at play which keep the father absent, or on the outside - including the social, economic, cultural, political and personal.

The father who is alive but dead: Some ideas for bringing the pre-oedipal father to life

Giving life and vitality to the father as a figure in his own right appears to be a challenge - this was true both for the fathers who chose to participate in the study and, by proxy, for those who did not. The fathers who chose to participate struggled, at first, to explore how they see themselves as fathers. Their self-representations were nascent, unclear and vague. However, these self-representations appeared to become clearer in three ways. Firstly, when fathers experienced their infants as becoming actively responsive

to them (Berman, 2021a). Secondly, when fathers experienced themselves as having a place in the mind of their partner and infant (Berman, 2021b). Thirdly, when fathers talked about their experiences of emergent fatherhood, and when they reflected on themselves as fathers from the perspective of their partner and baby (Berman & Long, 2022). These findings suggest that in order for the pre-oedipal father to take his place as a father, he needs to feel that he has a place. This is not a given for the father, or at least certainly not for the fathers in this research study. The fathers felt very out of place and their primary concern was taking care of the mother-infant dyad, even if it was to the detriment of the self. Although well-intentioned, this neglect of the self meant that the fathers' own anxieties were present but overlooked. A true turn to the father must therefore necessitate an increasing awareness of the father to and for himself, as well as within the family as a whole, and in society.

More specifically, these findings suggest that, in order to foreground the father, work with fathers needs to include an exploration of the father's experience of emergent fatherhood, his experience of his infant's interactions with him, and the father's sense of himself in the mind of his partner and infant. Doing so in the presence of the mother may also help mothers reflect on how they, too, hold the father in mind and promote/inhibit father-involvement. There is increasing interest in mothers as gatekeepers (see Gaunt, 2008; Kulik & Tsoref, 2010; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2015), and encouraging mothers to reflect on how they hold the father in mind may go some way towards helping mothers create more space for the father and for father involvement in childcare activities.

While the tendency may be towards interventions that are postnatal and treatment-oriented in nature, prenatal interventions that can serve as primary prevention strategies

should be considered as well. For example, an intervention program using ultrasounds between the 21st and 30th week of pregnancy invited fathers to interact with the foetus, verbally or by softly massaging the infant through the mother's abdominal wall (see Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2019). The baby's responses were seen through ultrasound, while the parenting coach drew attention to the infant's attachment and exploration signals, the infant's responses to the father's interactions, as well as to the ways in which the parents and infant respond to each other. Intervention programs of this sort may support and increase father involvement (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2019), and programs like these offer the perfect opportunity to explore the representations of the father within the family.

With regard to clinical work with families who are struggling post-natally, we know that parent-infant therapy can sometimes fall into the trap of seeing the mother as the identified patient and the father as the 'coping parent', which may result in the father himself being overlooked (Baradon, 2019). The findings of this study offer a direct way to remember the father and to enliven him as a key figure within the parent-infant triad, as well as to and for himself. This study also highlights the importance of finding ways to include fathers in therapy and encourage their participation. Importantly, when attending to the father himself, the clinician may encounter absence and exclusion as being a core part of his experience of emergent fatherhood. This study suggests that these experiences are not to be dismissed or, unwittingly, reinforced. Rather, they present an opportunity to help the father find presence, through a representation of absence (see Berman & Long, 2021).

In addition to the above, work with fathers would benefit from thought being given to the reorganisation of the father's internal world, including but not limited to the father's

representations of his own father. The clinician can gain important information about the father's representational world by exploring the father's representations of his mother and father, together with his representation of their relationship to one another and to himself. Similarly, the clinician can gain much from exploring the father's representations of his partner and infant, together with his representations of their relationship to one another and to himself. Taken together, these representations will likely offer a comprehensive view of both intergenerational and intragenerational dynamics influencing the father's experience of fatherhood – and the clinician can take note of potential oedipal conflicts related to feelings of being excluded from dyadic relationships, as well as to fears of being an envious presence or inadequate partner. It is, therefore, not enough to recognize the importance of fathers for child development. This recognition must be met with a greater understanding of fathers and fatherhood, as well as with support for fathers in their fatherhood role. A true turn to the father necessitates representation of the father within his own mind, as well as a representation of the father and fatherhood within the broader social, cultural and political milieu.

Limitations of the research study

The first limitation of this research study pertains to its qualitative nature and the fact that the qualitative paradigm, on which this research is based, is often criticised on the basis that a small sample size limits the generalisability of the research findings. This is arguably especially true in the case of in-depth psychoanalytic interviews, which produce material with great depth and richness, and which is, at first glance, very specific to each participant. Although this may be a criticism of the research study, it is also its strength, as this approach provided rich material related to fathers' lived experiences of fatherhood –

thereby addressing a gap in the literature on fathers. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, with time, recurring themes across the research participants were identified, which allowed for an exploration of what men, who are in the period of transition to fatherhood, may have in common, despite individual differences. Nonetheless, this research acknowledges that the research findings only represent a start towards the formulation of the fatherhood constellation and that further research is required in other contexts. This is especially true given the cultural and social homogeneity of the sample in this research study - all of the research participants were white, middle-class men. This limitation has been discussed more fully in paper two, but it is worth noting this limitation here once again. Fatherhood is a sociocultural construct and, as fatherhood changes socio-culturally, so too may the fatherhood constellation change (Berman & Long, 2021).

The second limitation of this research study pertains to the focus of this research on men who consider themselves to be the secondary caregiver to their child. This focus on men who are secondary caregivers forecloses on exploring the experiences of parents in same sex relationships, who are not male, but who consider themselves to be secondary caregivers of their infants. It also forecloses on understanding the experiences of fathers who are primary caregivers. While this was not the focus of this study, it is certainly an area for future research.

The third limitation of this research study is the focus on fathers who were living with their partner and child at the time of the research. While this offers an opportunity to explore the lived experiences of fathers who live together with their child, it does not allow for an exploration of the experiences of fathers who do not live with their child. In a similar vein, the research study focused on biological fathers, and it does not take into account the

lived experiences of social or economic fathers. These are both important areas for future research.

The fourth limitation of this research study is that the sample was largely representative of fathers of girls. The possible explanations for this have been explored in more fully in paper 3 (Berman, 2021), but there is certainly scope for further research which includes fathers of boys.

Finally, the fifth limitation of this research study pertains to the glaring question: what about mothers? This research set out to focus on fathers, given the substantial research that is already available on mothers and the fact that including mothers would have been beyond the scope of this project. However, the decision to focus on fathers, to the exclusion of mothers, is a significant limitation of this research study. We know that mothers influence 'whether and how father and baby get to know each other' and that the mother may be a facilitator, partner or gatekeeper to the father's relationship with the baby (Baradon, 2019, p. 169). It therefore seems that both research and clinical work with parents would benefit from including a focus on both the mother and father, as this would enable an exploration of the father in the mother's mind.

Other areas for future research

In an attempt to formulate the psychodynamics of emergent fatherhood, this research has proposed a formulation of the fatherhood constellation. The limitations of the sample in this research study, and their implications for the proposed formulation of the fatherhood constellation, has already been discussed. Further research into the fatherhood constellation is clearly needed with fathers in different contexts. Given that some areas for

future research have already been highlighted in the papers above, the comments here have been limited to a few key areas.

Given the utility of the motherhood constellation in clinical work with mothers, further research is required to explore the utility of the concept of the fatherhood constellation in clinical work with fathers. Just as the motherhood constellation offers points of entry for working with mothers via the motherhood trilogy (see Stern, 1995), further research could explore which points of entry (trilogies) in the fatherhood constellation would offer the most therapeutic benefit to fathers, infants and the family as a whole.

Moreover, given that research into the fatherhood trilogy exposed multiple trilogies, it is curious that Stern (1995) outlines only one trilogy for the mother. It could be that this is the most salient trilogy for the mother and, if this is the case, then further research could explore why it is that other trilogies do not play a part in emergent motherhood. If this is not the case, then such research could uncover additional trilogies that may add to our current understanding of emergent motherhood, as well as identify additional points of entry for working with mothers clinically.

Furthermore, it is important to note that when this research exposed fathers' experiences of absence and exclusion, it highlighted the fathers' implicit assumption that mothers come to motherhood through an experience of presence and inclusion, via their body. It would be useful for further research to explore whether this is in fact mothers' experiences of motherhood - further research on the way in which mothers may experience presence, inclusion, absence and exclusion could make an important contribution to our understanding of emergent motherhood, as well as give voice to the varied lived experiences of new mothers. These research findings could also be used to stimulate more

nuanced conversations between mothers and fathers on their experiences of emergent parenthood.

Finally, it is curious that even when fathers are given the opportunity to take paternity and parental leave, they may not do so (see Kaufman & Petts, 2020). While this research focused on fathers who do take up opportunities to be available and present for their child, further research on the psychodynamics of fathers who struggle to take paternity and parental leave could help us to understand this phenomenon more fully. Such research could directly explore how to support fathers who wish to be involved and present fathers, but who struggle to take up their place as fathers through making use of the avenues available to them.

Concluding Remarks: Are we ready to embrace paradox?

When reflecting on the process of researching fathers, numerous binaries become evident, some of which include: mother-father, mother-infant, father-infant, Oedipal father – preoedipal father, absent father-present father, and dead father-alive father. The problem with the tendency to think about things in a binary way is that it creates the belief that there are two mutually exclusive alternatives, and that predicaments need to be resolved in favour of one alternative or the other (Wood & Petriglieri, 2005). Winnicott proposes that if we are to get out of either/or thinking, then we need to embrace paradox and hold the tension associated with keeping both sides of the binary in mind. Paradox has to be accepted, tolerated and respected without resolving it (Winnicott, 1971). This thesis, therefore, argues in favour of not having to choose between the binaries of father and the mother, the Oedipal father and the preoedipal father, or between the father's perspective and the infant's perspective. Instead, we need to highlight the binaries and the tensions. We need to articulate the disjunctions and paradoxes inherent in parenthood, without

necessarily resolving them. If we can do this, then we can open up a space for men to play with their sense of themselves as fathers in relation to their partner and infant, and men can use the transitional space to find presence, which is not simply the antithesis of absence, but which represents absence.

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Appendix I

Information sheet for vaccination clinics/health professionals

Good day,

My name is Sarah and I am currently completing a doctoral degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite parents at your vaccination clinic to participate in my research project. This information sheet is intended to provide you with sufficient information so that your consent to allow me to invite parents to participate in the study can be considered informed. If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me.

My PhD study is on fathers' experiences of fatherhood and I am interested in interviewing first-time fathers between 20 and 40 years of age, who are living with their partner and 6 to 12 month-old child on a permanent basis. Potential participants will be invited to participate in two (possibly three), audio-recorded, one-hour interviews, held at least a week apart, at a time convenient for the participant, either at my private practice, or at the participant's place of work or home. Access to the audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be limited to my supervisors and I, and I will store and password protect the audio-recordings and interview transcripts on my computer. The audio-recordings and transcriptions will be kept for five years after completion of the research project, after which time they will be destroyed. While direct quotes from the interviews may be used in writing up the findings of the study, I will make every effort to remove identifying information and to use pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants. Furthermore, participants will be informed that participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to refuse to answer any questions, or to withdraw from the study up until such time that the thesis or any journal articles are published, without providing a reason for doing so. The final PhD thesis will be stored in the Thesis Collection at the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, and it will be available online. In addition, some chapters of the thesis will be published in psychology journals and/or presented at academic conferences.

A possible benefit of this study for participants is that it will enable fathers to reflect on their experiences of fatherhood and, in so doing, it will offer fathers the opportunity to gain insight into their fathering. More broadly, this research will contribute to the understanding of fathers' experiences within the field of psychology. There are no anticipated risks regarding participation, but the researcher will refer participants to FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa – a non-profit organisation) for free counselling if necessary.

Upon completion of the research, I will also provide your clinic with a one-page summary of the findings. This may be of benefit to the existing psycho-educational services that your clinic currently provides to new parents. Upon receiving your consent to invite parents at your clinic to participate in the research, I would also like to request your permission to post an information sheet on a notice board at the clinic. This information sheet will explain the extent and nature of the research to potential participants.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me using the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Berman [1]
Researcher

Tel: 072 636 9118

Email: sarahbermanpsych@gmail.com

Prof. Carol Long
Supervisor

Tel: (011) 717-4510

Email: carol.long@wits.ac.za

Dr Nick Davies
Co-supervisor

Tel: (011) 717-1000

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[1] The original information sheet referenced the researcher's maiden name 'Sarah Stadler'. These details have been updated to reflect the researcher's name change and updated contact details.

Informed consent form

- I have read and understood the above information letter regarding the research project.
- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by Sarah Berman about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of her proposed study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.
- I am authorised and hereby do provide consent for Sarah to recruit participants for her research from _____ (name of vaccination clinic).
- I do/ do not provide permission for Sarah to post an information sheet related to her research project on a notice board at the clinic.
- I would/ would not like to receive a summary of the findings at the end of this research project. (If applicable) Please email the findings to: _____

.....

Printed Name Signature Date

Appendix II

Information sheet for research participants

Good day,

My name is Sarah and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a doctoral degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project.

For my PhD, I am interested in fathers and in hearing about your experiences of fatherhood. There is currently very little available research on fathers within the field of psychology, and this research intends to enhance current understandings of fathers and fatherhood. In particular, I am interested in interviewing first-time fathers between 20 and 40 years of age, who are living with their partner and 6 to 12 month-old child on a permanent basis. If you would like to participate, I will ask you to take part in two, audio-recorded, one-hour interviews held at least a week apart. You may also be asked to participate in a third interview if necessary. The interviews will be take place at a time that is convenient for you, and the interviews will be held either at my private practice, your place of work, or at your home. It is important to note that the interviews will be transcribed and that direct quotes from the interviews may be used to present the findings of this research project in the final research report, journal articles and/or at academic conferences. However, every effort will be made to remove identifying information and to use pseudonyms in order to protect your identity. Access to the audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be limited to my supervisors and I, and the audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be stored in a password protected format on my computer. The audio-recordings and transcriptions will be kept for five years after completion of the research project, after which time they will be destroyed. The final PhD thesis will be stored in the Thesis Collection at the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, and it will also be available online. In addition, some chapters of the thesis will be published in psychology journals and/or presented at academic conferences.

Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary, and that you can decline to participate, or withdraw from the study up until such time that the thesis or any journal articles are published, without providing a reason for doing so. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. There are no anticipated risks regarding your participation however, participation in the research will entail quite in-depth discussion about your experiences of fatherhood. Should the research evoke any difficult feelings, then I will refer you to FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa – a non-profit organisation) for free counselling. Also, if you would like, I can provide you a summary of the main findings at the end of the research project. If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me using the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Berman [2]
Researcher

Tel: 072 636 9118

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Prof. Carol Long
Supervisor

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[2] The original information sheet referenced the researcher's maiden name 'Sarah Stadler'. These details have been updated to reflect the researcher's name change and updated contact details.

Informed consent form

- I have read and understood the above information letter regarding the research project. I hereby confirm that I have been informed by Sarah Berman about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of her proposed study.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to refuse to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable.
- I understand that I may, at any stage up until the publication of the research and/or any journal articles, withdraw my consent and participation in the study, without prejudice.
- I consent to participating in two to three interviews conducted by Sarah Berman.
- I do/ do not consent to the interviews being audio-recorded.
- I am aware that the results of the study will be written up as a PhD thesis, may appear in psychology journals and/or may be presented at academic conferences.
- I consent to the use of direct quotes in the presentation of the findings of this research project in the final thesis, journal articles, and/ or at academic conferences. I understand that the researcher will take every effort to remove identifying information and to use pseudonyms in order to protect my identity.
- I am aware that access to the audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be limited to Sarah Berman and her supervisors. I am also aware that Sarah Berman will store and password protect the audio-recordings and transcriptions on her computer, and that these will be kept for five years after completion of the research project, after which time they will be destroyed.
- I would/ would not like to receive a summary of the findings at the end of this research project. (If applicable) Please email the findings to: _____

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and, of my own free will, declare myself prepared to participate in this study.

.....

Printed Name Signature Date

Appendix III

Semi-structured interview schedule

Biographical Information

Age of father:

Age of mother:

Relationship length:

Relationship status (married - yes/no):

Age of child:

Sex of child:

Interview 1

I am interested in hearing your own thoughts about yourself as a father, your partner, and your child. I am also interested in anything you might want to tell me about your life or background, even if it might appear irrelevant or off topic.

Questions

1. Questions to elicit father's representations of himself as a father

    a. Before you became a father, did you have any ideas or wishes about what it would be like to be a father? Did you have any fears?
    b. Can you tell me how you see yourself as a father? Are you the kind of father that you imagined you would be?
    c. Has becoming a father changed your experience of yourself? If so, how?
    d. What kinds of feelings have emerged in the process of becoming and being a father?
    e. How do you think your partner sees you as a father?
    f. How do you think your child sees you as a father?

2. Questions to elicit father's representations of his partner

    a. Before your child was born, did you have any ideas or wishes about the kind of mother that your partner would be? Did you have any fears?
    b. Can you tell me how you see your partner as a mother? Is your partner the kind of mother that you imagined she would be?
    c. Have your experiences of your partner changed since you had a child? If so, how?

d. What kinds of feelings have emerged in relation to your partner since you became parents?
e. How do you think your child sees your partner as a mother?

3. Questions to elicit father's representations of his child

a. Did you have any ideas or wishes about how your child would be before he/she was born? Did you have any fears?
b. Can you tell me how you see your child? Is your child as you imagined he/she would be? Explain.
c. What is it like for you when you interact with your child?
d. Do you think that your child's gender affects your interactions together? How might these interactions be different if your child was of the opposite gender?

4. Questions to explore representations of dyadic relationships

a. How do you experience your partner's relationship with your child?
b. Do you think that your child's gender influences your experience of your partner's relationship with your child?
c. How do you think your partner feels about your relationship with your child?
d. Do you think that your child's gender influences your partner's feelings about your relationship with your child?
e. How do you think your child experiences your relationship with your partner?

5. Questions to explore representations of triadic relationships

a. Do you have any wishes about the kinds of interactions that you would like to take place between you, your partner, and your child? Do you have any fears?
b. What is it like for you when you are together with your partner and child?
c. What do you notice about the interactions that take place between the three of you?
d. Has anything been unexpected or surprised you when you are with your partner and child?
e. What are the best and worst moments?
f. Do you think that your child's gender makes a difference to the way in which the three of you interact?

6. Have your experiences with your partner and child evolved or changed in any way over the past six months?

7. Questions to elicit representations of the father's own mother and father (parental figures)

7.1. Can you tell me how you experienced your own mother (or any other important maternal figures) as a child?

a. What did your mother think of your father? How did your mother talk about your father? What was it like for you?
b. How did your mother talk about your relationship/ lack of relationship with your father?

7.2. Can you tell me how you experienced your own father (or any other important paternal figures) as a child?

a. What did your father think of your mother? How did your father talk about your mother? What was it like for you?
b. How did your father feel about your relationship/ lack of relationship with your mother?

8. Questions to elicit representations of triadic relating in primary triangle

Did you have any wishes as a child about the kinds of interactions you would have liked to have had with your mother and father together?

Can you tell me what it was like for you as a child to be together with your mother and father?

a. Looking back, do you notice anything about the interactions that took place between the three of you?
b. What were the best and worst moments?

9. Explore current relationships with parents

a. Can you tell me about your relationship with your mother currently?
b. Can you tell me about your relationship with your father currently?

10. In general, how do you think your experiences with your parents have affected your experiences as a father?

11. Is there anything else that you would like to mention that we have not spoken about?

12. How has this interview been for you?

13. Did anything unexpected come up that surprised you?

Interview 2

As I mentioned last time, I am interested in hearing your own thoughts about yourself as a father, your partner, and your child. I am also interested in anything you might want to tell me about your life or background, even if it might appear irrelevant or off topic.

1. I wonder if we could begin by talking about your experience of the last interview. What was it like for you?

2. Have you had any thoughts or feelings that came up from that interview?

3. Address any follow-up questions from the first interview.

4. Is there anything else that you would like to mention that we have not spoken about?

5. How has this interview been for you?

6. Did anything unexpected come up that surprised you?