

https://dspace.org/

Gay fathers' subjective experience of fatherhood

Pepper, Brett

2015-08-19
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18267

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Gay Fathers' Subjective Experience of Fatherhood

A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Brett Pepper

28/01/2015

A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Table of Contents

DECLARATION 5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 6
ABSTRACT 7
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 8
Rationale 8
Research Aims and Questions 8
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 10
The Role of the Father in Psychoanalytic Theory 10
Homosexual Fatherhood 14
Conclusion 18
Research approach 20
Participants 21
Procedure 23
Data Collection 23
Data Analysis 24
Reflexivity 27
Ethical Considerations 28
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 30
Reflexivity and interaction with the research 30
Theme One: Adoption of paternal roles linked to gender 31
Theme Two: 'Fatherhood' as dependent on the nature of relationship 32
Theme Three: Difference as Positive vs. Destructive 35
Theme Four: Identification with Normality 37
Theme Five: Maternal vs. Paternal Function 39
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 41
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION 50
Implications 51
Limitations 52
Directions for future research 52
REFERENCES 54
APPENDIX A 57
APPENDIX B 59
APPENDIX C 60

APPENDIX D 61
APPENDIX E 62

DECLARATION

I, _____, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for partial completion of the Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology) degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A sincere word of thanks must go out to my supervisor Mr. Gareth Mitchell for his steadfast support and insightful discussions.

Certainly a heartfelt thank you must be given to the participants who so graciously and honestly opened their homes and their lives to me and whose stories I hope will be heard in the spirit with which they were given.

And lastly to the numerous others who supplied me with endless words of encouragement and patiently listened, again and again.

Thank you!

ABSTRACT

This research examined the subjective experiences of gay fathers through a psychoanalytic lens in order to determine if psychoanalytic theories are applicable and useful in understanding the unique social and psychological world of gay fathers. Using a qualitative approach, informed by the method of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview, the participants spoke about their experiences of fatherhood and their understandings of how they integrate their identities as fathers with their identities as gay men. It was found that hegemonic ideas of parenting were hard to challenge directly and identifications with "normality" were common and used defensively, despite evidence that maternal and paternal functions and roles were equally able to be fulfilled by these men. This highlights the need for psychoanalytic theory to deepen its understanding of fatherhood so as to go beyond gendered stereotypes and find a more nuanced language for describing fatherhood.

Keywords: Fathers, Fatherhood, Gay, Homosexual, Family, Psychoanalysis, Adoption

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The premise for conducting this research was an attempt to fill a gap in psychoanalytic theory regarding homosexual fathers. In particular how homosexual fathers experience fatherhood and how this can be understood from a psychoanalytic perspective. In recent years there has been a shift in the ways in which homosexuality is understood in relation to the developmental and interpersonal aspects of childrearing. A major driving force behind this change has been lesbian feminist discourse which has had the effect of pulling research towards investigating lesbian issues when it comes to parenting studies. Consequently there is much literature on lesbian families and parents but significantly less so on gay men. The presented research attempted to further our knowledge of how the subjective experiences of gay fathers can be understood by psychoanalytic theory and how we may come to further conceptualise them as the context of fatherhood changes over time. Psychoanalytic theory must be able to adapt and maintain its relevance through attempting to understand all aspects of human psychology, including new ways of being.

Being able to answer the questions proposed may have far reaching implications for policy as well as practical therapeutic decisions. Better understanding how gay men understand fatherhood may inform decisions about contemporary issues such as adoption rights, formulation of laws and practical interventions or therapeutic practices, especially in light of the many contemporary social and political debates centred on gay rights.

Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this research was to broaden our knowledge of the subjective experiences of homosexual fathers and the way they understand themselves as fathers and how this intersects with psychoanalytic notions of fatherhood. It sought to answer two questions:

1. What are the subjective experiences of homosexual fathers?

2. How can these subjective experiences be understood from a psychoanalytic perspective?

These two questions were necessarily broad and somewhat encompassing of a wide area of possible exploration in that they arise out of a general exploratory drive and are best suited to the interpretavist approach that this research undertook.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of the Father in Psychoanalytic Theory

The representation of the role of the father in psychoanalytic theory has undergone extensive revision since the early works of Freud and his contemporaries (Freud, 1923; 1963; Jones, 2005; Klein, 1933; Watts, 2009). Jones (2005) tracks the development of the roles ascribed to fathers in children's development within psychoanalytic theory and delineates six areas of psychoanalytic thinking: Freudian Pre-Oedipal and Oedipal Father; the internalised 'good' and 'bad' father; the father as self-object; the father of the first separation-individuation period; the father of the second separation-individuation period; and the father as an attachment figure (Jones, 2005).

Freudian notions of fatherhood are tied to the role of the father within the triad of the Oedipal struggles of the infant (Freud, 1963; 1905; 1923). During the phallic stage both the boy and girl develop a desire to have as their first love object the mother. The boy's oedipal phase and his wish to possess the mother, ultimately ends as a result of castration anxiety brought about by the father. This castration anxiety is aroused by the boy child's realisation that his mother has no penis (as the child then assumes it has been taken) and the simultaneous envy and rage towards his father who does possess his mother, whom the child wishes to possess himself as she fulfils his primal needs. However, the prospect of competing against his own father is a terrifying phantasy to the child. Rather than face his father's wrath, in the form of castration, the boy gives up his mother as a love object (Freud, 1923). Thus the father fulfils the role of inhibitor of sexual gratification which increases the child's hostility towards the father. However, due to castration anxiety the child comes to realise that it would be non-productive to compete and so through a gradual transformation comes to identify with the father and to internalise the moral demands of the father (Jones, 2005).

The father figure (whoever fulfils the role of the third or secondary caregiver, traditionally the gendered father) also then functions as an interrupter to the intimate relationship between the mother figure (whoever fulfils the role of primary caregiver, traditionally the gendered mother) and child, as the child slowly becomes aware of the father's demands for mother's attention. From a developmental point of view, the child no longer needs the largely undivided attention of the mother figure and can thus begin to pay more attention to the father figure. This results in triangulation and the child's awareness that there is a relationship from which he is excluded. This triangulation is the basis of thirdness and the development of the child's capacity to tolerate and explore the other in the world.

Object relations theory situates the father as an object to be internalised in much the same way that the mother is internalised, as either a 'good' or 'bad' object (Klein, 1933). The difference between the object relations theorists lies in when and how the father is internalised and to what degree the internalised father plays a role in the child's psychological world. Davids (2002) suggests that the internalised father is a mediator between the functions of the mother as a nurturing and caregiving presence and the reality of the external world in ways that allow the infant to engage with reality without becoming overwhelmed. What object relations theories seem to have in common is that the paternal function of the father has been internalised before the Oedipal stage is reached (Jones, 2005) which thus posits a role for the father pre-oediaplly. This paternal function is as a mediator between the mother and the outside world and it also serves the role of facilitating the child's first movements away from a singular attachment to the mother and towards other possible attachment figures.

However, when trying to conceptualise maternal and paternal functions more fully, it becomes apparent that these concepts have room for development. This is a very complex area, as men interact with their infants in physically different ways to women and this difference is important for psychological development. However Davies and Eagle (2013) contend that it is not the fact of maleness (biological sex) but rather the fact of 'not-mother-

ness' (Davies & Eagle, 2013, p. 562) which is what defines the paternal function and therefore the developmental progress.

Davies and Eagle (2013) suggest that the paternal function is one which can be thought of in four facets: the separating third; as facilitating mental structure; as facilitating affect management; and as an object of safety and that this set of functions is regularly conflated in psychoanalytic theory with the role of the father as a biologically determined entity. When speaking of the separating third Davies and Eagle suggest that:

> *"a third who is emotionally significant to the baby(of which a father might be one), and with whom the mother has a relationship, a relationship which the baby feels it competes with, are sufficient"* (Davies & Eagle, 2013, p. 8).

Thus it is the fact of a third in the relationship which is highlighted as important rather than the fact that this third is often (but not in all cases) a father. The other aspect of this thirdness which drives development is that the relationship must be of significance to the baby. Davies and Eagle (2013) contend that it is also this significant relationship that a mother has for a not-mother which allows for the baby to perceive itself in relation to others and begins to facilitate mental structure and the capacity to think. The infant is unable to view itself outside of a symbiotic relationship with its mother until the moment when it is faced with a relationship which is outside of itself and which effectively excludes him/her. Thus the baby is forced to witness its own exclusion and to own its desires as they are; that is to say, to recognise them as desires and not realities. This of course develops the capacity of the infant to see reality as separate from his/her internal phantasy. Also crucial to the infant's development is the capacity for frustration tolerance which requires some level of mental flexibility. Davies and Eagle (2013) found that much emphasis is placed by traditional theories on the fact of the different type of relationship that a third has to the child by way of the third not being as empathically attuned in the sense of Winnicottian primary maternal preoccupation. Thus the third is perhaps more likely to induce negative affect and to teach ways of regulating it through managing the infant's expression of frustration. As Davies and Eagle (2013) correctly point out a penis is not sufficient nor necessary to determine a different kind of relationship between a third and an infant and that it is an unnecessary although common conflation of biology with capacity. Lastly, as an

object of safety the third is seen as a place for the infant's angry or frustrated projections to be lodged thereby protecting the child's primary love object from its destructive impulses and allowing it to find and maintain its loving feelings towards its caregivers (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Davies and Eagle (2013) argue generally that the fact of gender is not the underlying mechanism through which paternal functioning occurs but rather one's separateness from the mother figure (or primary caregiver and the quality which this 'not-mother' function brings to the psychological development of the child. Therefore it is the thirdness which the father figure (second caregiver) brings to the mother-infant dyad, and which then breaks it open to make room for 'others', which is the crucial aspect of being a father (second caregiver).

In a similar vein, Kohut (1984), argues the importance of the father as a self-object for the child in his/her development. A self-object is an internalised sense of relationship between an object and a person's sense of self-as-agent (Swartz, 2009). Both maternal and paternal relationships are represented internally as self-objects and can provide a mirroring and idealising role for the child (Jones, 2005). Thus the father, who is present and involved in a child's early life, can function to help the child integrate his/her experience of being loved and loving, as well as stepping into the gaps left by the other primary self-object, probably maternal.

Winnicott (1964) postulates a role for the father which is essentially secondary to, and in support of, the mother. As an environmental guardian the father is there to protect the mother-infant dyad and to maintain the ability of the mother to be fully invested in the care of the infant. However, more recent formulations have suggested that the role of both the mother and the father is to provide containment for the child's projections. Bion describes containment as the capacity of the mother to comprehend, process and give meaning to her infant's phantasies (Ivey, 2009). The father is also there to provide a holding function for the child by providing an alternative love object when needed (Davids, 2002). A holding function is essentially a provision of psychological care to an infant by his mother. Thus holding refers to the quality of care provided by the mother (Watts, 2009).

From an attachment perspective the father's role is seen as more direct and important than many original psychoanalytic theories would suggest. Attachment researchers have shown that attachment to fathers can be measured and seen from as early as four months (Jones, 2005). Interestingly it would seem that the role that a father plays for a securely attached infant is not dissimilar from that of the mother and that the similarities between the roles of mother and father may be more important than the differences (Lamb, 1997). This would suggest that the quality of parenting may have a greater impact than the quantity or content of the behaviours exhibited by parents, within reasonable limits.

Homosexual Fatherhood

Research examining same-sex parenting has been steadily evolving in response to many social and political factors which have pushed this agenda into the awareness of researchers and the public. Much of this research has come about as a response to the de-pathologising of homosexuality and the growing support of the human rights movement for the equality of non-heterosexual peoples. As mentioned previously this change has been driven by lesbian feminist discourse which has had the effect of pulling research towards investigating lesbian issues when it comes to parenting studies. Consequently there is much literature on lesbian families and parents but significantly less so on gay men and parenthood. Although this bias exists it is still of use to researchers to understand the issues inherent in lesbian parenting studies as many of these issues apply to same-sex parents more generally.

Earlier studies tended to focus on the de-pathologising of same-sex parenting practices and effects. This was a reaction to legal debates regarding custody and care, as well as questions around the developmental outcomes of children raised by same-sex parents (Perrin, 2002; Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983). The argument held that children raised by same-sex parents were more likely to suffer negative psychological, developmental and social consequences as a result of having been raised in an environment of parental 'pathology'.

However, such studies showed that no significant differences were found in children of lesbian parents and heterosexual parents in areas considered traditionally to be dependent upon the input of the father such as in recreation, autonomy and problem solving, (Turner, Scadden, & Harris, 1990; Harris & Turner, 1985; Baetens & Brewaeys, 2001). These studies thus illustrated that same-sex parenting is neither inferior nor superior to heterosexual parenting. Other studies show that in areas such as self-esteem and emotional wellbeing there is also no evident difference (Patterson, 1992; Tasker, 1999; Huggins, 1989).

In the case of homosexual fathers there has been little research that focuses on the developmental outcomes of children raised by homosexual men or on the experiences of the children themselves. This is in obvious contrast to the research on lesbian families which attempted to refute such arguments and is more developed. The main focus of research on homosexual fathers has been an attempt to determine whether children raised by homosexual men are more likely to be homosexual in their sexual orientation (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Patterson, 1992). These studies looked at divorced homosexual fathers with biological children, as well as self-identified homosexual men who then became fathers, and compared their offspring to those of divorced and married heterosexual men. The numbers of children growing up to identify as either homosexual or heterosexual did not seem to differ significantly from the estimated percentage of homosexuality in the general population (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995). The other area of focus has been on the diversity of family circumstances in homosexual and heterosexual families. These differences relate to social and environmental factors such as economic status, living arrangements, access to resources and social support. It also looks at internal family processes such as conflict, integration and acceptance of the homosexual parents and their child. This research tends to show that individual differences in family context tend to be greater than differences between same-sex and heterosexual families (Benkov, 1994). This is interesting because it suggests that although there are differences between same-sex and heterosexual families, these are not significantly damaging or particular to the nature of sexual orientation of parents. Rather, it is the unique family dynamics and social circumstances that have the most important impact on both homosexual and heterosexual families (Wind, 1999).

What is unique to the same-sex parenting research is the focus on the differing ways in which the child was brought into the family and how this may affect the parent-child relationship (Weston, 1991; Patterson, 1994). The distinction is made between surrogate insemination, prior heterosexual relationships which produced offspring and adoption. It has been found that homosexual fathers who have had children by prior heterosexual marriages tend to hold more traditional values of fatherhood and tend to be more likely to either hide or down-play their homosexuality within their families. Their male partners also tend to play a less active role in parenting, with parenting being split between father and mother more frequently. In surrogate insemination and adoption, fathers are more likely to play a more active role in their children's lives and their partners tend to feel more as if they are co-parents or even direct parents (Lynch, 2000). Whilst this may seem self-evident, it is important to note these differences in approach and to try to understand why this difference would exist.

It has also been found that generally there are differences in the way that children become aware of their parents' sexual orientation and that this may have some individual psychosocial effects on the children (Harris & Turner, 1986). Patterson (1992) conducted similar research to Harris & Turner (1986) which found that same-sex parents who openly identified as homosexual before becoming parents had better relationships with their children than those who made this identification only after becoming parents. Disclosure of parent sexual orientation has also been given some attention in other studies which seek to understand the relationships between same-sex parents and their children (Tasker, 2002; Wind, 1999; Harris & Turner, 1986). These studies sought to determine if children are adversely or positively affected by the parents' decision to disclose their sexual identity to their children and others and generally tended to determine at which age this was most appropriate or useful. No conclusive results have been found other than to say that parents with open and honest relationships tend to report better relationships with their children.

Relatively few studies have examined the ways in which children understand their relationships to their parents from their own perspective (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993; Bozzet, 1988). This is likely to change as social norms become more accepting of same-sex parenting practice. There is a trend towards searching for differences in rates of homosexuality amongst these children, but also on how these children understand their parents' homosexuality from a social and psychological perspective. Once again it was found that no significant differences in rates of homosexuality occurred. It was found, however, that these children may be more likely to consider homosexual relationships in early adolescence (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995). This focus on relationships is also reflected in the research that looks at the relationships between partners in same-sex families with children. It has been shown that traditional gender-typed roles are often renegotiated and more equitably distributed, which in turn can lead to greater relationship satisfaction (Hequembourg & Farrel, 1999; Laird, 1996; Oswald, 2002; Lynch, 2000). It was also found that gender-typed roles were less rigid in the children of these couples, but compared to the general population, the chances of these children engaging in gender-typed games, playing with gender-typed toys or behaving in gender stereotypical ways is much the same.

What is notably absent from the literature on homosexual fathers is a discussion of how they view themselves in their role as a father. There is little to no research on how homosexual men come to integrate the different identities of being gay and being a father, especially in light of the fact that socially constructed notions of fatherhood are intrinsically linked to heterosexual masculine ideals and to gender-typing of roles. The closest that researchers have come to looking at the personal understandings of gay fathers in their development as fathers is evidenced in studies conducted by Bigner and Jacobson (1989a; 1989b) who looked at the motivations for wanting children in a comparison study of gay and heterosexual men, or in the case of Bos, van Balen and van der Boom (2003) in lesbian families. This is in some ways related to a study conducted by Peterson, Butts & Deville (2000) which looked at the parenting experiences of three self-identified homosexual fathers. Their research looked at broader social and personal understandings and gained some sense of the meaning and integration of being gay and being a father. It was found

that many fathers spoke of the need to face and overcome societal homophobia and develop a sense of safety before becoming fathers. Once a child was welcomed into the family themes emerged of how fathering changes one's life priorities and how the work of fathering is seen as more complex than originally thought by the participants. There also emerged a theme of exploring both masculine and feminine aspects of being a father. However Peterson, Butts, & Deville (2000) did not provide any theoretical or practical implications arising from these findings other than to say that therapists and society should treat gay families as normal families. This leaves a large gap to be filled by future research in finding ways to understand how homosexual men integrate these different identities.

Conclusion

In looking at the available literature on psychoanalytic ideas of fatherhood it becomes apparent that one has to read between the lines in order tease out the potential areas of intersection between well-developed and entrenched theory and the fact of a growth of non-traditional family constellations. In psychoanalytic literature the focus tends to fall on the things that fathers do and the effects that these things have on the developmental trajectory of the child. Fathers in psychoanalytic theory have traditionally been described through their biological sex and thus the things that they do falls naturally into the assumption that these are biologically expressed behaviours. This appears to obfuscate the fact that very many of these theories do not require the actual male body so much as the difference that a male body represents as opposed to a female body in a heterosexual relationship. Where the research on non-traditional or same sex families has tried to account for the newly realised ways in which children are raised, it too fails to look at how previous theory and understandings can either shed light, or be adjusted to account for, the possibly different processes which play out in these families. Studies on homosexual parenting tend to try to account for the ways in which the children of these families are no different from their traditionally raised counterparts. In doing so, these studies attempt to address the idea that psychoanalytic (and other) theories have put forward about the specificity of gender as an important factor in children's development. The study undertaken here tries to begin to draw these two divergent, but not primarily contradictory,

paths of research and observation together through bringing a psychoanalytic understanding to the experience of fatherhood by gay fathers in order to begin to fill the apparent gap in knowledge. It seeks to find the places where these apparently as yet un-integrated approaches are actually less divergent than they believe themselves to be.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research approach

Much of the previous research conducted on gay fathers has been quantitative in nature and has sought to understand if trends or discernable differences exist between heterosexual and homosexual parents or their children generally. Whilst this has served a valuable role in determining that no real differences are evident, it now becomes important to turn to questions of how these families make sense of the world they inhabit. In order to do this one must move away from numbers and into narratives. It is for this reason that this research takes a qualitative approach through which to explore these questions.

Qualitative research has a reason and place within psychological and social research and does not attempt to replace quantitative research methods. Rather it seeks to understand phenomena from a different point of view. It seeks to unearth meaning from the individual or group without losing its context and uniqueness. Qualitative research attempts to account for the ways in which political and personal biases may enter the research process by being appreciative of the context in which the research occurs (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). This is important in research of this nature which looks at issues which are charged with both emotion and politics, the effects of which might be missed if the data gathered were reduced down to numbers and interpreted in a common sense way, which is so often the case with quantitative research. In this research the aim was to better comprehend gay fathers' subjective experiences of fatherhood and therefore the approach used needed to elevate their voices and give importance to their views and beliefs without attempting to condense them into concepts or variables which have little representational value. Qualitative research involves going to the places internally where people live out their daily assumptions, values and beliefs in order for the researcher to become immersed in the participant's world (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). This immersion serves to give a deep and rich insight into the context surrounding the research questions and allows for a nuanced understanding of whatever emerges from the research. The result is that the outcomes of the research are nearer to experience and hold value and meaning for the

people who engage with the research in such a way as to be of use in building constructs and theory further along (Kvale, 1999).

The aims of this research were rooted in a broadly interpretavist approach that sets up an intersubjective relationship of the researcher to the researched and a particular way of gathering data that cannot deny the impact of the researcher's affect and reaction to the data and its generation (Frosch & Baraitser, 2008). This is particularly true of the presented research as the interaction between the researcher's own context and that of both the participants and the actual data is implicated through the core assumptions of the method chosen. Thus, the reflexivity of the researcher was considered as crucial to the data gathering and analytic processes.

Qualitative research moves away from generalizable findings through which the reader makes sense of broad issues in the social world. Rather there is a move to understand particular instances 'in context' which may be transferrable to other similar instances as a way of understanding deeper meaning within such contexts. Therefore there is a duty on the qualitative researcher to provide a detailed and rigorous account of both the context and the methodological approaches to the research as a means of facilitating transferability (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Transferability is a form of theoretical generalisability and speaks to whether or not the findings and lessons gleaned from this sample are germane to other populations, samples or settings (Payne & Payne, 2004). In this research it speaks to the purposive sample of gay fathers and whether the findings could be relevant to other gay fathers. The reader of the research has a duty to discern whether or not the findings are sufficiently transferable to other contexts and findings in their own work.

Participants

This research examined four homosexual men who had either adopted an infant below the age of four years or who had biological children by surrogacy. Men who had children by prior heterosexual relationships were excluded from this study. This particular set of

guidelines was chosen as a means of furthering the validity of the study as it goes towards eliminating potential confounding effects. It is likely that homosexual men who decide to adopt a child may have different worldviews and thoughts on fatherhood to men who have previously been involved in a marriage or relationship which resulted in biological descendants. It seems that in many cases men who adopted or had surrogate children tended to assume the absence of a mother figure or female body presence in their children's lives prior to becoming fathers whereas men with children from previous heterosexual relationships tend to assume that the female parent will be involved. This is likely to show a distinct difference in the way these two sets of gay fathers think about their role and function as fathers.

Potential participants were approached through personal and professional networks available to the researcher and his supervisor. The sample was thus purposive in nature. Purposive sampling is the process of seeking out a sample that holds specific attributes or knowledge relevant to the research questions. In this way it differs from randomized sampling as it seeks to circumscribe a selected and purposeful sample (Payne & Payne, 2004). The researcher also made use of snowball sampling as a means of gaining participants. Snowball sampling is a purposive sampling technique that often results in homogenous samples due to the fact that it relies on networks of linked peoples (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Whilst this may be problematic in other forms of research, for qualitative research of this kind it helps to gain access to hidden or vulnerable populations. The nature of this sample is such that it is often hidden and socially limited due to the social characteristics of being gay and being a gay father in particular. The point here is not to find a random sample but to find a sample that has the unique insight and experience which speaks to the research (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Participants were contacted and informed of the aims of the study and invited to participate at their own discretion (see Appendix A for participant information letter and Appendix B and C for relevant consent forms).

Procedure

Once the aims of the study and the procedure had been explained, and if participants consented to taking part, the researcher set up an interview at a date, time and venue that was suitable to both parties. At the interview the participants were handed two consent forms (see Appendix B and C); one for consent to participate and another for consent to be audio taped. Once the participant had read and understood all relevant forms and had signed the consent forms, the researcher began the interview.

Data Collection

This study made use of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview as a general guideline for conducting the research interviews (Cartwright, 2004). Cartwright (2004) describes the Psychoanalytic Research Interview as a means of uncovering unconscious content and constructions which can be added to the basic hermeneutic units in qualitative research. The aim is to allow for psychoanalytic concepts to be used as a lens through which to view the interview data but this also requires an approach to data collection which allows for such insight to be uncovered. Recognising the limited resources for this research, the use of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview was mainly as a way of gaining a more near-to-experience account, as opposed to an in-depth analysis.

Data was collected using the guidelines set out by Cartwright (2004) for a Psychoanalytic Research Interview (see Appendix D for interview schedule). This required in the first instance that the interviews be primarily unstructured and that the interviews be allowed to follow a course determined by the participant and their narrative (Cartwright, 2004). This was helped by the researcher stating that he was primarily interested in the participant's own views and understandings and that they were free to give any information they felt was relevant or of interest to their own narrative, even if not directly related to the stated research area. The area of research was clearly defined by the researcher before the interview so that the data collected can be made sense of through the unconscious material that the topic evokes. This can only occur if the participant understands where the researcher is coming from. The participants were encouraged to begin from any point in

their narrative as this is in-and-of itself a valuable piece of data (Cartwright, 2004). As the narrative emerged it was the role of the researcher to encourage open speech and the flow of associative material by not interrupting unnecessarily and by asking probing questions that uncover in-depth meaning behind more seemingly superficial data (Kvale, 1999). The other primary role of the researcher-interviewer was to make mental notes of feeling states and affect, in both himself and the participant, as well as noting body language, facial expressions and dissonant gestures between verbal and nonverbal communication (Cartwright, 2004). These all provide vital contextual and comparative data for understanding any emergent transference and countertransference impressions (Kvale, 1999).

On completion of the interview the researcher carefully closed off the topic and ensured that any concerns about the process or outcome of the research were answered. The researcher also made sure to be alert for any possible negative affect or potential problems that the participant may have encountered in the moment and endeavoured as far as possible to make sure that the participant was aware of any resources they may need in the future to resolve such issues. Immediately following the interview the researcher documented any notes, comments or ideas that occurred around the interview as well as noted any particularly interesting or relevant topics that arose but which were not covered in depth. This was to ensure both that the context and flavour of the interview was as accurate as possible for the analysis and to inform future interviews. Once all the interviews were concluded and follow up communications had been drawn to a close, the researcher analysed any outstanding data and wrote up the report in consultation with his supervisor.

Data Analysis

The data analysis is fundamentally linked to the procedure used in the data gathering process through the underlying assumptions of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview (Cartwright, 2004). These epistemological foundations determined both the nature of the data gathered as well as the ways in which this data was construed as meaningful in the analysis. The Psychoanalytic Research Interview assumes a certain position on four areas of

interest to the data analysis, namely: (1) the construction of meaning; (2) the associative nature of interview material; (3) context; and (4) inchoate transference-countertransference impressions (Cartwright, 2004, p. 217). By paying careful attention to these particular aspects of the interview and the data generated the analysis attempted to be psychoanalytically informed and meaningful. To be psychoanalytically informed does not mean to fit and bend the data collected into the existing framework of psychoanalytic thinking (Frosch & Baraitser, 2008). To be psychoanalytically informed means to be able to use the language of psychoanalysis to describe the meaning making processes that are used by the participants in a way that is coherent and understandable to people other than those involved in the researcher-participant dyad (Kvale, 1999).

A psychoanalytically informed hermeneutic analysis looked at how the participants represented themselves and their experience of fatherhood in their narratives, as well as how the structure of the narratives, i.e. what is foregrounded, omitted, affect laden or avoided, serves to give further information regarding the participants' understandings of fatherhood. Narratives can be regarded as reflections of the way in which the 'self' works and has internalized particular relationships. The analysis is interested in the way individuals have located themselves in relation to objects (Cartwright, 2004).

There are a number of steps to a psychoanalytically informed hermeneutic analysis, namely: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing and re-contextualizing (Cartwright, 2004). Firstly, attention is paid to feeling states and corresponding thoughts or perceptions, both those of the participant and those of the researcher (Cartwright, 2004). In this way, transference-countertransference interactions are used to form analytic impressions. Because the nature of research interviews dictates that these impressions are likely to be brief, these will not be used as independent evidence, but rather as contributing to a bigger picture of a particular understanding of fatherhood that is supplemented by other sources of evidence. These impressions can be compared with the object relations and representations that are identified within the transcribed texts (Cartwright, 2004). Next, the researcher looks for core narratives (Cartwright, 2004). These are story lines within the interview which isolate a scene that is relevant to the interview topic. These core narratives are then considered within the context of the interview as a whole, since the Psychoanalytic Research Interview

stipulates that the interview text is “engaged in within its totality, allowing all aspects of the interview to influence the analysis of the flow of associative material” (p. 228). Here, the structure of the narrative is considered. Finally, according to Cartwright (2004), narratives are studied for the identification of object relations, and in particular, defensive structures. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) theorize the notion of the ‘defended subject’ and state that the defenses that an individual engages in are believed to demonstrate themselves within the interview context. Reports given by people about their relational experiences communicate both content and unconscious defenses against subjects that pose a threat to the self. Thus moments of defensiveness or unconscious contradictory material becomes useful as an indicator which may serve to inform the researcher of potential areas of data richness.

The use of psychoanalytic concepts in this research method does however present some problems. The very nature of good qualitative research requires that it resonate with readers and in particular with the participants themselves (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999) as a means of ensuring credibility. In qualitative research one cannot speak of reliability in an absolute sense. Thus credibility, as a measure of the research finding’s nearness to experience and as a measure of the degree to which the subjectivities of the researcher have been accounted for and made clear to the reader, is used to determine the ‘reliability’ of the research (Payne & Payne, 2004). Thus the use of underlying psychoanalytic concepts to make meaning of what each participant brings to the research poses problems in that the participant stands outside of the ‘privileged’ knowledge of psychoanalytic theory. Thus to present a participant with an interpretation or formulation of their own narrative that has been understood through a psychoanalytic lens may result in a rejection of such data, or in the worst case, a rejection of the researcher as the participant struggles to merge the given theoretical understanding with their narrative. Kvale (1999) suggests that the Psychoanalytic Research Interview includes tacit knowing which goes beyond a one-dimensional understanding of verbal communications. What the interviewer is more interested in is the empathic, intuitive and relational communications which then serve to enrich the understandings of the verbal expressions (Kvale, 1999). These ways of knowing are inherent in the experience and training of the interviewer and can be held under advisement of more experienced and knowledgeable others but this does not change the fact that it may be

seen by the participants themselves as unfounded or misinterpreted. Of course it must be noted that the researcher did not bring forth interpretations or understandings to the participants if it was believed that they may bring harm or unnecessary concern to the participants. This aspect of the psychoanalytic interview requires a close working with the research supervisor to maintain an ethically conclusive stance which protects the participants from harm. Certainly, whilst interviews were in progress no interpretations or change-producing reflections were made and all interpretations made in the final report were carefully weighed.

There is little to be done about the gap in psychoanalytic knowledge between researcher and participant and this in turn necessitates a greater focus on alternative methods of credibility building. To this end the reflexivity of the researcher was considered as vitally important in allowing the reader to ascertain in what ways the researcher's possible bias has been brought to the analysis of the data and discussion. Further, the involvement of a more knowledgeable other, in the person of the research supervisor, helped to provide a further credibility check.

Reflexivity

Considering the nature of the methodology chosen for this research it was vitally important for the researcher to be aware of his own interactions with the research at all stages of the process. All decisions made and data gathered must necessarily be interpreted by the researcher as a way of formulating an understanding to present to readers (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). This, however, means that the researcher's views and preconceptions will be present in the findings. Rather than being an obstacle to generating good research these preconceptions may add to the value of the research if they are amply explored and stated beforehand, thus allowing the reader to ascertain for themselves where the researcher's voice is present and where it is not.

Fossey, McDermot & Davidson (2002) argue for the permeability of the researcher to be of utmost importance in the research process. This means to be able to let the data gathered

and observations made influence the interpretations of the researcher in such a way as to make the research more transparent and authentic. In service of this approach the findings chapter holds a reflexive section where I shall try to lay bare the interaction between my own internal processes and the process of research.

At all stages in the research process (data gathering, analysis, formulation and presentation) it was my intent to be aware of and reflexive towards the role that my own input has had on the process. As discussed previously, this was through noting my own countertransferences, difficulties, interests and decisions; and at all times attempting to explain or make clear my intentions for such choices as may result.

Ethical Considerations

Since the population of the study is not considered a vulnerable population (adult males over the age of 18), internal ethical clearance from the School of Human and Community Development was sought and granted (see Appendix E for Ethics Clearance Certificate). Participation in this study was completely voluntary and was explained as such to all participants. It was stated that no participant would be unequally benefitted or harmed by their participation. For the interviews informed consent was given in writing as well as consent to audiotape the interviews. Confidentiality was important in order to protect both the client and his child/ren from any potential negative reactions to this research. These may be encountered both socially and institutionally as the rights of gay and lesbian peoples are still under considerable public debate and there are many social difficulties still experienced by this population, particularly in the differing cultural settings encountered in South Africa. Full anonymity could not be guaranteed due to the use of face-to-face interviews, the specific and unique nature of the sample, as well as the fact that sampling relied in part on utilising snowball techniques, which necessitated the use of networks in which the individual respondents were situated. Since the interview was of a personal nature and contained possible identifying information steps were taken to sanitise the data of any such information prior to presentation. Whilst full anonymity could not be guaranteed, confidentiality was held to be of utmost importance. Confidentiality and all

researcher credentials and contact information was explained and assured as per an informational hand-out given to all potential participants and was reiterated at the beginning of the interview. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants at the stage of data presentation. Participants were informed of their right not to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable answering and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any disadvantage to themselves. Participants were also informed that direct quotes would be used in the final write-up of the research, but that these would not be linked to any identifying information and would be used in conjunction with other quotes from other participants.

All research data collected is stored in a secure environment and only the researcher and his supervisor have access to the data collected. Finally, participants were informed that the collected data would be stored for two years in password protected files that only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to, if publication of the study arises, and for six years if no publication arises. Thereafter the data will be deleted. Details for access to free (or nominally priced) counselling services were provided at the end of the interview and on the participant information sheet for participants who may feel that they might require counselling after the research interview.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Reflexivity and interaction with the research

As a gay man at the beginning of my career as a psychologist and researcher, I have a personal interest in this research as a way of understanding how my future may play out. One such aspect involves my desire to possibly be a father one day, as well as questions around how I may come to integrate my identity as a gay man with that of being a father. Prior unpublished research conducted by myself has looked into the ways in which young heterosexual men are attached to their fathers and how this affects their relationship to them. This has left me with a sense of some of the broader ideas as to what is important from a child's perspective to have in a father, but has left me with questions as to what a father sees as important in his role as father. In terms of my preconceived notions of gay fatherhood, this has been mostly influenced by current literature. Therefore the ideas around more equitable sharing of roles, men taking up the maternal role more actively and the notion of being publically identified as gay before child-rearing are to my own mind fairly logical and self-evident. This does not mean that I am unwilling to question or give up these ideas if they are proved to be false or incorrect, but that I am aware of the assumptions I hold in this regard.

More pertinent for the completed research is the retrospective acknowledgment that the research process itself caused me to explore more deeply my preconceived notions of fatherhood through forcing me to question many of my countertransference reactions as well as the reasoning behind my own lines of questioning and choice of words. As far as possible it is my intent to show when my own beliefs and biases were evoked within the particular themes and narratives described below as a way to make the results more transparent. Most prominent for me was the realization that my focus on maternal and paternal function as a central theme of the construction of identity as a gay father is likely linked to my own difficulty in trying to tease apart their individual and combined meanings. Thus it became somewhat difficult at times to probe the participants' understandings as to what constitutes maternal versus paternal functions, and their beliefs about their own

ability to provide both, when in my own mind the concepts remained somewhat unclear. I suspect that much like my participants, it was easier to stick to describing roles, rather than function, and that this resulted at times in confusion. I have tried as far as possible in analysis of the research and in supervision to account for this interplay of dynamics, but it remained the more difficult section to write and make sense of.

Analysis

Analysis of the data yielded the five main themes. These themes are discussed in detail below. The five themes identified are:

1. Adoption of paternal roles linked to gender
2. 'Fatherhood' as dependent on the nature of relationship
3. Difference as positive vs. negative
4. Identification with Normality
5. Maternal vs. paternal function

Theme One: Adoption of paternal roles linked to gender

The way in which the participants spoke of their interactions with their children, current and projected into the future, seemed to suggest that they were adopting an underlying assumption of the father role that fits with typical descriptions of fathers in western culture, and which match some part of the psychoanalytic thinking of fathers' behavioral manifestations of intrapsychic structures. When asked what a father brings to a child one participants' response was *"Discipline, respect, being well mannered, being outgoing, funky and that kind of thing"* (P3). These are the kinds of words used to describe the direct contribution that the participants believe they will make to their children. This appears to be done through the father acting in a certain way; fulfilling the role of the disciplinarian or the leader in play, for example. So, whilst many of the fatherly outcomes for children are related to values and norms, the capacity to instill this is linked, unchallenged, to the gendered role of a father since in common western thinking it is the father who encourages exploration

and independence through play. Whilst at times difficult to distinguish from later discussions of maternal versus paternal function, this theme captures the unguarded and unprocessed attitude that one's own gender is correlated with a certain way of being as a father(?). *"Being a male himself, maybe he thought it would be easier to relate" (P4)*. It is the direct assumption that because one is a male and has a child, one is therefore a father in stereotypically masculine ways. This assumption seems to feed into the sense that one can prove one's own ability to be a father through being able to fulfill these stereotyped father roles. This is evident when one participant was asked how he prepared *himself* to be a father:

> "I was living in like what was 90 square metres, you know, I mean it was nice, it was safe and it was, whatever, but it wasn't physically safe for a child you know… I cleaned everything and like, cleaned everything, I emptied out all the drawers" – (P2)

In a very real way this participant speaks of keeping the physical environment safe. Whilst not solely indicative of his sense of fatherhood, it was this aspect which first came to mind when thinking of what it meant to be a father, to protect his child from the dangerous environment through making his physical space (as compared to mental space) safe. The paternal role is thus situated as one in which the values and ideologies, the morals and ways of being, are instilled by the father through masculine behaviours. When asked what had to be thought about prior to becoming a father, one participants' response was simply *"Would you be a good father, just from a values perspective?"* (P1). In this instance the father was referring to the transmission of values to the child, as if to say that what is passed on to a child is more important than what one should *be* as a father.

<u>Theme Two: 'Fatherhood' as dependent on the nature of relationship</u>

'Fatherhood' as something that occurs and is defined within the boundaries of relationships, appears to be a question that links across all other emergent themes. The unifying idea behind this theme is that in all the participants' narratives there was a reflection on the

relationship that one has with one's child and with one's partners. Even for single fathers, the thoughts around parenting as a single father were framed around how significant others would or would not fulfill the same provision of care to the child which is summed up by a simple question uttered by one of the participants: "*Would you be a good father as a single father?"* (P1). In some instances, fatherhood was defined through the sole responsibility of the narrator, even in the presence of his significant other. As if to say that only one father can be *the* father. This was in contrast to other moments where the equitable sharing of roles, or the fact of another person in relationship to the child was highlighted. "*If you were in a relationship you can share some of the responsibilities"* (P1). One participant spoke of the idea that the equitable sharing of roles equates to equitable father status: "*Each person should have a title, but you're not a dad. You don't live with us, you don't contribute"* (P2). Even the participants who were married with joint and equal custody and responsibility, at times spoke of gender-typed roles as presenting the possibility that one father would be more 'father' than another. It is in this area that the question of who is *more* 'father' and who is *more* 'mother' emerged, and also where it was most defended against when approached too directly. However, following on from unguarded comments about the right and responsibility to be the primary caregiver, it could be asserted that in some sense the father is the one who 'provides' physical care, safety, active contributions to household needs and income. Thus a father who cleans, cooks, fetches from school and attends sporting events is somehow less of a 'father' than the one who does this and works.

An interesting distinction in relation to this theme appeared in the data. Namely that single gay fathers and gay father pairs (who both work) were at times perceived to be *more* 'fatherly' than their straight counterparts, who work but do not contribute to care or services rendered at home:

> *"But I think there is something different about the home-work, the home career divide, that's different and I think the expectation of men is so low in general that there is always this kind of shock that we do it from, especially the straight couples, and the straight couples have never seen it because they, I don't know, I constantly have conversation with wives about how little they demand of their husbands. Not demand, but just like the expectations…"* (P2)

Thus tension in relationships appears, in that two gay fathers may feel somewhat in competition for the title of 'father', whilst both identifying as *more* 'father' as opposed to traditional heterosexual fathers who need not compete with another father.

This theme also speaks to the real relationship and object relationships that form between father and child. The participants seemed to consider themselves fathers in as much as they are objects in their child's mind and vice versa. Fatherhood was spoken of in such a way that it became clear that those fathers who have bonded with their children are rightfully considered fathers.

> *"Yeah and it's just different, and he loves Tate[1] to death and he would you know, he still calls him Tate, he doesn't call him Dad, and… but we have discussed and we were trying, shit but it's hard, he's eight and a half, he's been using one name his whole life and it's hard to change to something else, whereas with Keanan we did the whole thing together, so he's Papa to Keanan and I'm Dad."* (P2)

Interestingly this idea that bonding must occur is something that is thought of as being active and contingent on effort and time spent with the child, as opposed to being seen as a natural progression and a result of one's father status, especially notable since all fathers interviewed received infant children into their lives.

> *"The beginning is like babysitting. I mean like when this little thing shows up, I mean it's like babysitting, you don't have any connection to it, it's just like… I mean in honesty and as much as I love Joe and you know he is my son and all that stuff, but if they handed me another kid, and the orphanage said this is Joe, would it be different, would we have bonded? We would have bonded and that's what would have happened you know."* (P2)

[1] All names have been changed in order to protect the identity of participants and third parties.

This may not be so obviously different from heterosexual fathers, but in the case of mothers it is often considered a purpose and result of the pregnancy and birth period which naturally predisposes a state of intense bonding. In the case of the participants this pre-disposition was not assumed and therefore bonding became an action to be done with thought and effort. In some sense this denies the underlying human ability to connect and bond with love objects, to attach to them, as if fathers do not possess this inheritance.

Theme Three: Difference as Positive vs. Destructive

This theme emerged in discussions and narratives that spoke of difference being explicit between children and parents. For many of the participants the realization that one would not have firsthand knowledge of the female anatomy and processes, or would have to face inevitable questions about where their child's mother is, raised questions for them as to the effect of difference on their ability or capability to be a father. *"I know how boy things work, I don't know how girl things work"* (P1). This was also often presented as a discussion around the presence or absence of female role models, as if to say that the actual presence of a female person is somehow important to the healthy development of a child. *"There was a concern about having female role models for a child, which is important in a male only environment"* (P2). Regular mention of female family members and other role models became apparent from early on in the process, at times feeling more like a justification than an exploration.

> *"…you know at one stage, I asked myself the question about the lack of a female role model in his life. But there is no lack of a female role model. He has one of two nannies at least two days of a week around him. When I got him, I had nannies full time."* (P1)

There were direct comparisons made between mothers and fathers as gendered beings, and the ways in which fathers can actively take on the traditional roles of mothers, such as

attending parents meetings or joining committees at school, which is often considered the domain of women.

> *"Like moms clearly do all these things, so like I am the class mom, and the head of the class moms will sit there and look at the room and admittedly all women and me, you know, and they, good morning ladies. And I am like I am a man, I am 6'4 I know you see me, you know."* (P2)

It seems that what the above participant sits with is the acknowledgement that he actively takes on mother roles which are traditionally assigned to women but that it feels somehow uncomfortable. To be seated amongst women and not to be seen as different despite his overwhelming maleness in the room makes him wonder why the female mothers cannot see him as a father. In some ways it seems easier for him to inhabit the role of the father, or perhaps more preferable, as it sits more comfortably with the fact of his male biology, despite the fact that in practice he inhabits both maternal and paternal roles.

There was also a sub-narrative of the difficulty that their children might face in being identified as different by other children due to the presence of two fathers and the absence of a mother.

> *"…there is usually a woman at home. And it's hard for the kids to…. It's actually not hard for them to accept the difference, but it's hard when they start getting asked questions and then it's hard to say why, you know, then it's, then the language is hard…"* (P2)

There was a general trend amongst the participants towards saying that this is negated by 'good parenting' and a healthy dose of love, but not much was said of how this translates into doing or being as a father.

> *"When she is in school; having two dads, might be a hard task but I think, again, with her if we implant the love and the effort it will not be a problem"* (P3)

Interestingly there seems to be an absence of any mention of each participants' own thoughts around the missing female/mother. Always spoken about in relation to their children, and not to one's own experience of having a mother in the home, this seems somehow unusual as one would assume that having been raised by a heterosexual family there would be memory and associations of motherhood which might be elicited. Instead it felt at times overtly defensive in the almost absolute absence of any mention of participants' own mothers

Theme Four: Identification with Normality

When encountering questions and thoughts of sameness and difference, there were distinct moments of defensiveness that were highlighted by common paradoxical statements that were made in response to direct questions about what makes a gay father different to a straight father. *"I don't think I'm much different from anybody"* (P1). This led to many instances where there emerged unconscious contradictions in the participants' narratives. The fact of contradiction itself does not tell us much, but the consistency with which these contradictions arose around questions of comparison to straight fathers tells us that something happens when these fathers are faced with their difference or similarity. When one participant was asked how he integrated his identity as a gay man with that of being a father he replied:

> *"How would it be to be the father of a child and be gay? Nothing about the gayness… or about the life that I would subject my child to [but what would it be like?]"* (P1)

This is where defensive structures and early countertransference impressions came into the analysis of the data as this topic evoked a large amount of affect laden responses to seemingly unthreatening questions. Broadly divided into two aspects, that contradict each other in subtle ways, there was a broad identification with being 'the same as them (straight couples)' and 'the same as us (gay fathers)'. *"We are just fathers, aren't we?"* (P1). Some participants returned at crucial moments of talking about their right or their ability to

be a father to absolute statements about being no different to any other father, gay or straight. There were moments of downplaying one's own individual fatherhood in order to present a similarity and identify with fatherhood as a broad concept, mostly described in ways that maintain hegemonic masculinity's version of fatherhood. One participant spoke about being misidentified by others as a straight man when asked where the mother of his child is. Interestingly his response belies his wish to be seen as not-different (from heterosexual fathers). *"Don't you always think that? Don't you always think that there's a mother somewhere?"* (P1). Then, in contrast there were moments when fatherhood was defined through community and the normalizing effect of groups of people, as in the relief felt when finding the community of gay fathers expressed by one participant when he says:

> *"And you know it was really encouraging, I had to say I didn't know any gay dads when I was starting, so it is interesting to me, a lot of it, and part of it because I was definitely living in the 'gay-bourhood', and the 'gay-bourhood' is not where you raise children."* (P2)

There appeared to be no recognition of the paradox of needing a community of gay fathers to feel reassured if one is no different to the community of fathers (including straight fathers) more generally.

> *"No, I definitely feel...we, as a couple, can do exactly the same as what heterosexual couples can do, exactly the same. The only thing we can't do is breastfeed."* (P3)

The other way in which normality appeared to be contradicted was the belief that gay fathers may have a more difficult time deciding how to negotiate the home/work divide, as if to say the presence of a female and male person in a household would then determine more easily this division of labour. This was seen in earlier themes about fatherhood as a relationship, but this also represents the one way in which it appeared easier to identify as different to heterosexual couples – in work that is unrelated to parenting. Essentially saying 'we are different because we both should work', as if to say that hegemonic ideas of parenting, where one parent works and the other cares for the child, are not taken on in gay

relationships, or if they are, then the gay couple reverts to a traditional model of male and female roles, with the father who stays at home being identified with the maternal role.

Also of interest was the fact that all participants spoke at first about the legal, financial and personal preparation that goes into fatherhood as a gay man. There is no simple way to 'have a child' for gay men. Yet despite long and detailed explanations of this difficulty, there was no mention about the thoughtfulness and effort that distinguishes the process from many straight fathers' experiences of fathering a child. Straight fathers are not subject to scrutiny and approval by external authorities (such as social workers and adoption agencies), nor are they required to prove their financial and personal capacity to rear a child. Yet the participants did not seem to regard this as being significant as a distinguishing factor in their journey towards fatherhood.

Theme Five: Maternal vs. Paternal Function

Probably a central assumption of fatherhood by the participants in this study was the statement that gay men are as capable of providing psychological care and physical nurturance to their children as any straight mother or father. One participant states early on that:

> *"My concern was what would be if there was no female figure. However, I do believe that we all have both aspects in us, some more than others, etcetera etcetera, but I think that is okay."* (P1)

However, this seemed to be a difficult topic to engage with for most of the participants. Partially this appears to be related to the difficulty in separating out paternal function from the idea that this is can only be provided by a gendered individual, namely a father. Furthermore, there was a haphazard discussion of the participants' ability to provide both maternal and paternal functions for their child, in the absence of a female person on which to attach the maternal function.

"John is definitely a lot softer than I am. I think John will probably teach her forgiveness and that kind of stuff. I will teach her the total opposite, not to be mowed over and to stand your ground kind of thing. John is kind of, I don't know, I am more straight and narrow than what John is, but John and myself are both; John loves the dogs as much as I do, so I think from a loving, nurturing side, I think we would probably be equal."(P?)

Although this topic evokes some defensiveness, there was also some vulnerability shown, namely the fears and hopes that these fathers have for their children and themselves as fathers. Narratives cohered around themes such as what it means to practically care for a child versus to emotionally care for a child. It seems that these questions had a flavour of an anxiety or nervousness that any new father might experience about their worthiness to be a father, but that these anxieties were exhibited through the concern about female absence, difference and similarity. There seems to be an unspoken fear that maternal function is linked to a gendered female individual and that the realisation that a father can fulfil maternal functions is an important realisation for gay fathers.

"I thought a woman has got more of a mother instinct than what, I think, a guy has got and I must say, surprisingly, I don't think it is true." (P3)

This theme therefore encompasses a majority of previously described themes but speaks to the more complex task of separating out the belief in oneself as being a father vs. doing fatherly things and motherly things. Put another way, it speaks about the internal conflict around whether or not both maternal and paternal functions can be provided.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

To look at where psychoanalytic theory begins to talk about gay fatherhood as possibly following a different developmental trajectory, as compared to straight fatherhood, has been a difficult task in as much as fatherhood within psychoanalytic literature is yet to claim its final and undisputed placement in a child's development, as in the case of motherhood. That being said, psychoanalytic literature has much to say about the father which applies directly, or very nearly directly, to what it means to be a gay father. Whilst many of the themes presented in the data analysis appear to be divisions, it must be acknowledged that they are arbitrary divisions in their attempt to show the nuances in gay fathers thinking. In reality they constitute a web of interconnected processes that play out simultaneously or in sequence in response to the daily challenges of raising a child. Of interest is the progression of the narrative of being a father and the omissions therein.

More broadly the data speaks of a gay father as: 1) doing fatherly things; 2) whilst in a relationship to his objects; 3) trying to manage anxieties around difference; 4) and identifying with the idea of fatherhood; 5) whilst learning/sensing that fatherhood is something to 'be' rather than 'do'.

The first emergent theme of adopting of the paternal role speaks to the idea that the first and most obvious objective difference between a heterosexual father and a homosexual father is the supposition that the *physical* mother is absent. This refers directly to the absence of a *female body* and/or the presence of a solely male body/bodies. At first glance this would not appear to be abnormal by modern family structures, as in the case of single fathers, but for these gay men the absence of a female bodily presence leads to questions

around the roles which their male body inhabits with ease versus with effort. What seems to emerge is that gay fathers speak more easily of being able to do fatherly activities or to take on fatherly roles than those conventionally assigned to the mother (by fact of her biology and subsequent assumptions). This mirrors the heterosexual father's tendency to assign certain roles in the childrearing to the fact of his biological sex. Working to provide for the family, securing the family from threat, discipline and moral education are all identified by these gay fathers as being part of a father's role in childrearing. What is significant is that these are things that fathers *do* or enact through typically masculine behaviours and which these gay fathers brought as examples of their role as a father. The question then arises as to why these gay fathers struggle to assume or highlight their need to also be a mother and enact motherly roles through maternal behaviours? It is important to reiterate at this point that what distinguishes this theme from the more internally focussed theme of Paternal vs. Maternal function is that this theme represents the fathers' overt idea that their biological sex, and the fact of homogeneity in the parents (as applicable to couples), is given as a seemingly important factor in determining how they relate to their children, to the exclusion of much mention of fulfilling motherly roles which are equally important in raising a child. Psychoanalytic literature has traditionally spoken about the very different ways in being that males bring to childrearing, typically focussing on rougher play, more direct communication, and less active holding and support (Davids, 2002). These of course have an effect on children but are not clearly linked to biological sex when looked at more closely.

Winnicott (1964)suggests that a father's role in the parental unit, and in the child's development, is to provide a holding environment for the mother-infant unit. This facilitates a state of intense bonding between mother and infant which begins before birth and continues on until the infant begins to develop an autonomous sense of self through the father's introduction of thirdness. This idea then places the father as a third party, to introduce to the child the outside world only when the child begins to negotiate separation from the mother. As such, the father enters the psyche of the child relatively late and fulfils a primary role of *doing* things that make the world safer for the mother-infant dyad prior to the infants awareness of him. This can be done through environmentally useful actions,

such as protection from harm, mediation of the outside world, provision of resources and instruction in social norms and values at the appropriate age. As related to the findings of this study, there is little to no mention of motherly roles such as feeding, bathing, soothing and encouraging of the infant. When mentioned, it is in the context of anxieties about the ability to complete these tasks efficiently and correctly. Whilst these anxieties are not limited to fathers generally, it is something that highlights the concern among gay fathers that these actions are foreign to them and would require learning and effort. This belies a seeming assumption that these actions are somehow inherent in mothers, which is of course not the case, however the narratives suggest that the actual lack of a female bodily presence is in some way a potential area of difficulty. Even when gay fathers are denying that the lack of a female presence is of any import, their unspoken narrative suggests that they identify this as an obvious difference which needs to be accounted for, and which they are defended against, recognising that the difference is inherent in their family structure. This is not to say that the 'being' part of parenthood is neglected or absent in gay fathers, but rather that gay fathers identify the idea of a father with the acts of 'doing' that traditionally are assigned to heterosexual fathers in psychoanalytic theory.

The ideas of Winnicott (1964)and the role of the father also open questions as to the effect of single parenting versus a parenting couple/unit. This is perhaps where gay fathers unconsciously speak of their desire and attempts to 'be' parents as well as 'do' parental things. Many of the participants identified that the work of being a parent is split between the emotional work of caring and the physical work of providing, but this split mirrors the identification of straight fathers as being fathers because of what they may do outside of the home. Thus these gay fathers imply that a father who provides care and housework is not to be considered as much of a 'father' as one who does this *and* works outside of the home. In essence this leaves the stay-at-home father in a mother's role and more easily identified as a maternal presence despite the overt declarations that gay fathers are different and do not inhabit typical gendered divisions of labour.

Another way in which gay couples identify with the idea that one father is more 'father' than another is through the bond and preference of the child for one caregiver. Gay fathers do not fall pregnant, nor do they experience labour, even though the adoption or surrogacy process may represent a symbolic pregnancy and birth (often taking significantly longer than nine months). This emerges in the participants' discussion of how receiving a newborn child or infant is somewhat akin to babysitting. The absence of a mother represents also the absence of a pre-designated primary caregiver and obvious first attachment object. Thus the gay father is thrust into this role without the 'benefit' of a biological-temporal primer that many psychoanalytic theories take for granted. Gay fathers then are forced to think about the very active ways in which they must bond and attach to their children in ways that object relations theories suggest are inherent in the mothers' biological drive to care for their children. Object relations theorists such as Kohut posit that the father's function is to provide a self-object that can mediate between inner and outer worlds and between me and not-me representations (Kohut, 1984). The role of the father in this regard is not disputed by the findings of this study, but this leaves a question as to the role of the father in psychic development from birth to the beginnings of object relating. For gay fathers there is no presumed mother to supply the omnipotent baby with omnipresent but fallible nurturance, nor is there a hormonally driven experience of an all consuming attunement to an infant child. Whether or not this biological predisposition is necessary, it appears that the participants' experience is that bonding must occur in the form of a dedicated drive to foster an attachment and that anyone outside of this process becomes by default less of a 'father'. This is relevant to those fathering couples who were interviewed as this also then suggests a difference in identification between the two fathers, with one father being more of a 'father' than the other through his position as the primary attachment object.

Interestingly, these fathers tended to be unaware of this contradiction in their narratives, especially when they felt compelled to declare their absolute equality in attachment. This absolute equality is likely as a result of having to give up their claim to a biological disposition to bond, thereby giving up the possibility in their own minds of one father being a primary attachment figure, which is of course not necessarily a true reflection of what actually occurs. So, whilst the recognition that the work of childrearing may be split more

equitably (as has been shown in prior research) there is a seemingly unconscious but implicit recognition that very often one father serves as a primary attachment figure. Where this is obvious, there tends to be a defensive reasoning of why this has occurred, usually as referenced to personality and out-of-home commitments which restrict time for bonding. These arguments appear to mirror the heterosexual fathers' ideas of fatherhood which is of course in turn mirrored by theory in that the primary attachment is considered as crucial for the early development of the child's psyche. This of course speaks of a singular attachment, normally to a mother. It would seem that in this instance the father who bonds with his child to develop this primary attachment is then seen as being motherly or more mother like than the other father, who then is ascribed the role of traditional father, but that in contradiction the father who both mothers and fathers (by going to work) is considered to be the 'alpha' father.

When trying to unpack these distinctions of what makes a father, these gay men began to express ambiguous concerns about the effect of their difference on their ideas of fatherhood. Whilst not overtly acknowledging some very tangible ways in which a gay father is different from a straight father, there emerged anxieties around what it would mean to only have a male presence in their children's lives. In response to this there arose a series of justifications as to why their children would not be missing out on the sex-specific experience of a mother versus a father. References to family and female support structures were common alongside descriptions of the ways in which the participants actively take up the typical role of the mother in the household. What particular anxieties these explanations served to avoid is not yet clear, however they arise in contradiction to a narrative of identification with heterosexual, hegemonic and stereotyped ideas of fathers.

This identification with 'normality' was a common theme across all the participants' narratives and appeared to permeate most of their discussions around their decisions to be fathers or their reactions to perceived challenges from others. There exists an inherent contradiction between firmly stating that one is no different from the population of fathers more generally whilst also maintaining that finding a community of gay fathers is somewhat

reassuring and provides relief from unspoken anxieties about fatherhood. Seemingly the identification with fatherhood as an overarching population arose in response to direct observations by others that a mother figure is not present. This leaves one with a sense that these fathers may become defended against what others might say about the absence, and therefore the loss, of a mother. As if to say that by virtue of being a father one is not able to provide motherly care. This appears to elicit a reaction against any form of difference, even so far as to negate individuality in the moment of challenge and to forsake the fact of difference completely when in perceived comparison to heterosexual couples. It is difficult to know what this says about the identity of fatherhood that each participant has internalised but it may speak to something of an anxiety around capability or right to childrearing in the absence of a mother. These fathers rigorously state their similarity despite having spoken of the many ways in which they actively father in areas usually considered the domain of the mother. There is also a seeming absence of recognition that the process of bringing a child into a gay family requires not only a vast amount of work and preparation, but also to be subjected to the scrutiny and approval of outside forces such as the state and child welfare services. This is a very tangible and distinct way in which gay fathers are obviously different from straight fathers who are not subject to such exposure or invasion.

Interestingly, and in light of earlier discussion, the prevalent area in which gay fathers are able to identify difference is in the split between home-work and out-of-home work. Here the participants seemed to believe that the split may be more difficult to negotiate but is likely more equitably shared and may also lead to a sense of one's fatherhood as being something more than usual if one does both. Only one participant was able to recognise that this is also the domain of single fathers and not inherent in gay fathers alone.

Another area of contradiction to identification with 'normality' is the expressed relief when finding a community of gay fathers. This relief belies a possible underlying anxiety about the potential difference between gay and straight fathers in that the fact of finding other *gay fathers* is what is significant to allay this anxiety. Therefore it can be seen that these fathers

hold a simultaneous desire to be the same as the general population of fathers whilst also feeling in some significant ways different to straight fathers. However this contradiction is not noted in the narratives nor addressed by any of the participants and seems to evoke defensive reactions that belie underlying anxieties.

However, when speaking of anxieties there emerges one theme in the narratives of all the participants and seems to underpin the difficulty in separating out what it means to be a father (as a gendered individual) versus what it means to do fatherly things. This became evident gradually through the development of each participant's narrative. This gradual emergence seems to be as a result of the difficulty in describing those areas usually considered to be maternal functions (in psychoanalytic theory) in the absence of the mother on which to attach these functions. As one participant acknowledges, it is hard to talk about maternal functions when they are normally described through gendered words that imply a mother's implicit knowing and ability. Participants struggled to identify the ways in which their paternal and maternal functions were different, because for them the usual gendered behavioural manifestations were not self evident. It becomes difficult to describe the love and nurturance that a father wishes to impart to his infant when he simultaneously believes that he embodies paternal functions, such as thirdness and authority, and yet he cannot resort to gendered terms such as 'mother's instinct'.

The concepts of maternal and paternal functioning have been given a fair amount of thought and discussion in psychoanalytic literature but they still represent an area of uncertainty and contention. Maternal function speaks mostly to the role of early attachments in the formation of the child's psyche and denotes the inter-psychic connections between mother/primary caregiver and infant, or more specifically, what occurs in these interactions. Bion (1977)speaks of the ability of the mother to contain the projections of the child's phantasy and to make some meaning of it that then validates the child's instinctual urges and inner states. This leads to the child being able to gradually internalise this process from the mother in order to self regulate (Bion, 1977). Thus the maternal function represents the ability of the primary caregiver (in this case father) to

make sense of the inchoate projections of the infant and to survive and digest these experiences. The participants in this study struggled to name the inner transformations that occur when attachment occurs and this process evolves. In some sense, it feels as if this child is not a part of the father because it did not come from inside of him. As discussed above the absence of a pregnancy may have an impact on the *belief* that these gay fathers hold about their own ability to relate to their infant's inner world. It is not surprising that these fathers struggle to articulate the maternal functions that they provide for the child as they have no vocabulary of primary relatedness that often accompanies pregnancies in women. However, this difficulty in naming this sense of underlying affection or desire to be wholly open to receiving the projections of the infant is a defining factor that links all the narratives obtained from the participants. Thus there is a definite sense that these fathers have an unconscious and authentic pull towards primary attachments and towards fulfilling maternal functions, but they struggle to explain this pull to others without resorting to gender based (and therefore ill-fitting) descriptions.

Of course, as has been shown, there were many ways in which the paternal function was illustrated through the discussion of paternal roles which appear to come more naturally to gay fathers, likely due to the *fact* of maleness as suggested by one of the participants. However, these descriptions of behaviours do not speak to the maternal function as it evolves and is internalised by father and baby. Really, what is being spoken about is the introduction of thirdness *to the child in his mind* and not as a behavioural action that introduces children to others in the physical environment. Davies and Eagle (2013)suggests that the paternal function is often conflated with the paternal role and that actually fathers provide affect management, object safety and mental structure to the psyche of the child through his interactions. Maternal and paternal function are not therefore inherently linked to biological sex but are difficult to describe without sex based language as very often the maternal and paternal function are provided in majority measure by mothers who are female and fathers who are male.

This then highlights the fact that gay fathers have a difficult time deciding who represents the maternal and paternal function, or how much each individual father exhibits the ability and tendency to provide both. Descriptions of individuality suddenly return to the narratives of the participants at this point as they struggle to describe these inter-psychic processes which now occur without the ease of sex based descriptors. This is also where the feeling of vulnerability and intimacy return to the narratives. There emerges a very strong pull to see these fathers as being mothers in the moment, as if to see past the fact of maleness and into the bond that they have with their children. This is of course not inherently good or bad, but it highlights how different these fathers are when approached directly about how they view themselves as fathers and as gay men. Here, instead of offering similarity and identification with the mainstream, they offer themselves as individuals and fathers, as fathers really are and can be.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

No theory in the social sciences can maintain a position of relevance or usefulness if it cannot adapt to the fact of social change and de/reconstruction. Psychoanalysis is no different in this regard. Despite the fact that psychoanalytic theories can account for, and do apply to, the experiences of gay fathers, there remains a need for further thinking and revision. This is made apparent by the difficulty that these fathers face in integrating their maternal and paternal functions and roles through having no words to describe their inner

worlds as fathers who also mother. In this sense, they are not dissimilar to straight fathers, who also mother, however gay fathers have no luxury of leaving their female counterparts to hold the ideas of maternal functioning for them when description becomes difficult. It would appear that gay fathers are inadvertently trapped in hegemonic masculine ideas of fatherhood and through a need to feel included they may abandon their own inner exploration for the safety of knowing what to say and how to say it when asked to think and talk about being a father.

You need to give a brief summary of the main findings of your research here. Similar to what you say in your abstract. This is so that if someone only reads the conclusion chapter of your research, they get a general sense of what you did and what you found. What you are doing here is providing final answers to your research questions.

Implications

What is implied by these findings is that psychoanalytic theory requires a deepening rather than a revision when it comes to ideas of fatherhood. Perhaps taking paternal functioning as a starting point and working outwards towards biological and physicals differences would be a more meaningful approach. Before accusations of misreading and superficial investigations arise, it must be stated that many psychoanalytic theorists do look from the internal to the external. Indeed, many theories do not explicitly speak of gender when speaking of fathers, despite a heavily gendered approach towards mothering. However these theories are alive only through the assumption that the 'other' is a father and an unspoken assumption about his actual difference; in biology, in society and in the eyes of the child, it is his difference which drives this development of a sense of otherness. Gay fathers (and lesbian mothers) are then a challenge to this central assumption, since the fact of similarity then becomes a primary question in the parent-child relationship, if we are to strictly adhere to psychoanalytic theories.

What is then implicated in clinical work is a need to be open to the possibility that gay fathers may grapple with their fathering identity not only because of their own experiences of being fathered (as would any father) but also because a tension may exist between one's internal sense of oneself as a father and an overarching hegemonic expression which can limit or confuse both the gay father and the clinician into thinking in binary male/female biases. Essentially what is needed is recognition by clinicians that although maternal and paternal roles may be confused there is no need for maternal and paternal functions to be likewise thrown into disarray. Rather the clinician needs to be open to the nuanced and individual ways in which these fathers struggle to express both their maternal and paternal sides. Clinicians may need to help some gay fathers find a language for their maternal functioning and primary relatedness so as to allow for a healthier development of a fathering identity which does not feel it is in conflict with, or lesser than, hegemonic ideas of what it means to be a father.

Limitations

It must be recognised that this research only tentatively begins to put forward findings and ideas around gay fatherhood, but as such it still presented obstacles to the researcher. The snowball sampling used means that those fathers interviewed tended to come from a homogenous background of race and class, as well as being in a position to adopt children, which in and of itself represents a certain level of access to resources. Alongside the sampling was the fact that these fathers were certainly more hidden than originally anticipated and difficult to contact or find. Therefore further research is required in order to widen the range of data that is available to researchers in this field through seeking out more fathers than the small sample presented here.

Directions for future research

In many regards the ideas put forward in this research require further development. Whilst a purposive sample of gay fathers was sought out it must be noted that even this sample has variations which may account for much difference, or perhaps further similarity. For instance, gay fathers who have children with their female partners prior to publically identifying as gay may have somewhat different views to the gay fathers interviewed here. Furthermore, all of the fathers represented here have children below the age of 10 and as such there is room for the voices of fathers of older children, who are further along their own journey of fatherhood. There emerged some minor but interesting differences between single gay fathers and married gay fathers which were not within the scope of this paper but which may merit further research as well. It is the privilege of the researcher to witness the lives that these gay fathers live quietly on the fringe of hegemonic masculinity. There is a hope that further research in the field will uncover the more nuanced and enlightened ways these fathers develop as a way to further our understanding of fathers as a whole and to inform future thinking and direction for theorising what it means to be a man and love a child – in every sense, to be a father.

REFERENCES

Baetens, P., & Brewaeys, A. (2001). Lesbian couples requesting donor insemination: An update of the knowledge with regard to lesbian mother families. *Human Reproduction Update , 7* (5), 512-519.

Bailey, J. M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M., & Mikach, S. (1995). Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. *Developmental Psychology , 31* (1), 124-129.

Benkov, L. (1994). *Reinventing the family: The emerging story of lesbian and gay parents.* New York: Crown.

Bigner, J. J., & Jacobson, R. B. (1989b). Parenting behaviours of homosexual and heterosexual fathers. In F. W. Bozzet (Ed.), *Homsexuality and the family.* (pp. 173-186). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Bigner, J. J., & Jacobson, R. B. (1989a). The value of children to gay and heterosexual fathers. In F. W. Bozzet (Ed.), *Homosexuality and the family* (pp. 163-172). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Bion, W. (1977). Container Contained. In W. Bion, *Seven Servents: Four Works* (pp. 127-133). New York: Jason Aronson.

Bos, H., van Balen, F., & van den Boom, D. (2003). Planned lesbian families: Their desire and motivation to have children. *Human Reproduction , 18* (10), 2216-2224.

Bozzet, F. W. (1988). Social control of identity by children of gay fathers. *Western Journal of Nursing Research , 10* (5), 550-565.

Cartwright, D. (2004). The Psychoanalytic Research Interview: Preliminary Suggestions. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association , 5* (3), 208-242.

Conceptualising the Paternal Function: Maleness, Masculinity, or Thirdness?2013*Contemporary Psychoanalysis 49*4559-

Crosbie-Burnett, M., & Helmbrecht, L. (1993). A descriptive empirical study of gay male stepfamilies. *Family Relations , 42*, 256-262.

Davids, M. F. (2002). Fathers in the Internal World. In J. Trowell, & A. Etchegoyen (Eds.), *The Importance of Fathers: A psychoanalytic re-evaluation* (pp. 67-92). Brunner: Routledge.

Elliot, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *The British Journal of Clinical Psychology , 38*, 215-229.

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry , 36*, 717-732.

Freud, S. (1963). Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. In S. Freud, & J. Strachey (Ed.), *The standard edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud* (J. Strachey, Trans., Vol. 16, pp. 243-448). London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1923). The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex. In A. Strachey, a. Freud, J. Strachey, & A. Tyson, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* London.

Freud, S. (1905). Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. In A. Strachey, S. Freud, J. Strachey, & A. Tyson, *The Standard Edition of the Complete PSychological Works of Sigmund Frued* (pp. 123-246). London.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2003). Taking a stand: Using psychoanalysis to explore the positioning of subjects in discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology , 42*, 39-53.

Golombok, S., & Tasker, F. (1996). Do parents influence the sexual orientation of their children? Findings from a longitudinal study of lesbian families. *Developmental Psychology , 32*, 3-11.

Golombok, S., Spencer, A., & Rutter, M. (1983). Children in lesbian and single-parent households: Psychosexual and psychiatric appraisal. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry , 24*, 551-572.

2004Grounded TheoryLondonSage

Harris, M. B., & Turner, P. H. (1986). Gay and lesbian parents. *Journal of Homosexuality , 12* (2), 101-113.

Harris, M. B., & Turner, P. H. (1985). Gay and lesbian parents. *Journal of Homosexuality , 12* (2), 101-113.

Hequembourg, A. L., & Farrel, M. P. (1999). Lesbian motherhood: Negotiating marginal mainstream identities. *Gender & Society , 13* (4), 540-557.

Huggins, S. L. (1989). A comparative study of self esteem of adolescent children of divorced lesbian mothers and divorced heterosexual mothers. In F. W. Bozzet (Ed.), *Gay and Lesbian Parents* (pp. 123-135). New York and London: Praeger Publishers.

Ivey, G. (2009). Wilfred Bion: Thinking, feeling and the search for truth. In J. Watts, K. Cockroft, & N. Duncan (Eds.), *Developmental Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 112-137). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Jones, K. (2005). The Role of Father in Psychoanalytic Theory: Historical and Contemporary Trends. *Smith College Studies in Social Work , 75* (1), 7-28.

Klein, M. (1933). The early development of conscience in the child. In H. M. Ruitenbeek (Ed.), *Heirs to Freud: Essays in Freudian Psychology* (pp. 253-269). New York: Grove Press.

Kohut, H. (1984). *How does analysis cure?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kvale, S. (1999). The Psychoanalytic interview as qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry , 5* (1), 87-113.

Laird, J. (1996). Family-centred practice with lesbian and gay families. *Families in Society , 77* (9), 559-572.

Lamb, M. E. (1997). *The role of the father in child development.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Lynch, J. M. (2000). Considerations of family structure and gender composition: The lesbain and gay stepfamily. *Journal of Homosexuality , 40* (2), 81-95.

Oswald, R. F. (2002). Resilience within the family networks of lesbian and gay men: Intentionally and redefinition. *Journal of Marriage and the Family , 64* (2), 374-383.

Patterson, C. J. (1992). Children of lesbian and gay parents. *Child Development , 63*, 1025-1042.

Patterson, C. J. (1994). Children of the lesbian baby boom: Behavioural adjustment, self-concepts, and sex-role identity. In B. Greene, & G. Herek (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian and gay issues: Vol. 1. Lesbian and gay psychology: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 156-175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perrin, E. C. (2002). Technical Report:Coparent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents. *Pediatrics , 109* (2), 341-344.

Peterson, L. M., Butts, J., & Deville, D. M. (2000). Parenting experiences of three self-identified gay fathers. *Smith College Studies in Social Work , 70* (3), 513-521.

Swartz, S. (2009). Heinz Kohut: Self psychology. In J. Watts, K. Cockroft, & N. Duncan (Eds.), *Developmental Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 183-214). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Tasker, F. (1999). Children in lesbian-led families: A review. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry , 4*, 153-166.

Tasker, F. (2002). Lesbian and gay parenting. In A. Coyle, & C. Kritzinger (Eds.), *Lesbian and gay psychology: New perspectives.* (pp. 81-97). London: Blackwell.

Turner, P. H., Scadden, L., & Harris, M. B. (1990). Parenting in gay and lesbian families. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy , 1*, 55-66.

Watts, J. (2009). Donald Winnicott. In J. Watts, K. Cockroft, & N. Duncan (Eds.), *Developmental Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 138-152). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Weston, K. (1991). *Families we choose: Lesbians, gays, kinship.* New York: Coumbia University Press.

Wind, L. H. (1999). Developmental identity crisis in non-traditional families. In N. B. Webb (Ed.), *Play therapy with children in crisis.* (pp. 318-338). New York: Guilford Press.

Winnicott, D. (1964). *The child, the family and the outside world.* New York: Penguin Books.

APPENDIX A





Invitation to participate in research on Homosexual Fathers' Subjective Experience of Fatherhood

Participant information Sheet

Dear Research Participant

My name is Brett Pepper and I am a student currently studying at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on gay fathers' experience of their fatherhood and would like to invite you to participate in a study that I am conducting in partial fulfilment of my course requirements for Masters in Clinical Psychology.

I am looking at the ways in which gay fathers experience their fatherhood and am interested in your personal experiences. I would like to see if the ways in which gay fathers understand their role as a father differs or is similar to how psychological theories understand the role of a father in general.

If you would like to participate in this research you will need to know the following:

- Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right decline the invitation or to withdraw at any time during the research process.
- If you do not participate you will not be negatively affected in any way nor will participation benefit you in any way.
- Participants will be required to participate in an interview of roughly one hour duration in which I, the interviewer, will ask you broad questions about your experiences of fatherhood and your understandings of what it means to you to be a father as well as your ideas about fatherhood in general. The information disclosed in the interview will be safe-guarded and will only be accessible to myself and my supervisor.
- All information given in the interviews will be strictly confidential. All information will be stored in password protected files on my computer for the duration of the study and only my supervisor, Mr Gareth Mitchell, and myself will have access to it. No identifying information will be included in the presentation of the study. No names will be publicly displayed, disseminated or divulged to any persons at any

time. Pseudonyms will be used when referring to individual participants and any other persons they name in the research interview. The data will be stored for two years if publication of aspects of the study occurs or for six years if no publication occurs and then the data will be destroyed.

- The results will be presented in a written report to the Department of Psychology and the Faculty of Humanities and may be published or presented in other forums, however all participants will remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms.
- A summary of the results of the study will be made available to you in an online format after completion of the study.

If you have any further questions, please contact me on 072 277 7062 or Brett.Pepper@students.wits.ac.za or you can contact my supervisor, Mr Gareth Mitchell on 011 717 4506 or Gareth.Mitchell@wits.ac.za.

I thank you for your consideration of participation and look forward to working with you if you are interested in taking part in the study.

Brett Pepper

If, for whatever reason, you feel that you would like to seek help for related concerns or difficulties that may already exist, or may arise from participation spontaneously, I have provided the following list of family and counselling services:

Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA)

- Tel: (011) 975 71076/7
- Web: www.famsa.org.za
- Family/relationship counselling and related services

Child and Family Unit (Johannesburg Child Welfare)

- Tel: (011) 298 8500
- Web: www.jhbchildwelfare.org.za
- Child welfare, adoption and family services

Emthonjeni Community Centre

- Tel: (011) 717 4513
- Web: www.wits.ac.za/emthonjeni
- Community counselling and psychological services (minimal charge)

APPENDIX B





<u>Participant Informed Consent Form to take part in a research interview conducted by Brett Pepper</u>

I understand the following with regard to the abovementioned research interview:

- This interview is entirely confidential. My name will not be given out to anybody and a pseudonym will be used in any correspondence and in the report. The interview transcripts will contain no identifying information and will be stored safely for the duration of the study.
- My participation is entirely voluntary and I will receive no benefits or suffer any disadvantages by participating in this study.
- I may withdraw my participation at any time.
- During this interview I may decline to answer any question that I do not wish to answer without requiring to give any reason and I will be treated with respect and courtesy at all times.
- The study may make use of direct quotations from my interview. However, my identity will remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms at all times.

If I have any queries regarding this study and my participation in it, I can ask the researcher or his supervisor so that one of them may clarify anything for me.

I, (name)_____ have read the informed consent form and am aware of the requirements of the interview. I agree to partake in this interview with a full understanding of the above statement.

Signed: _____

Date:_____

APPENDIX C

Consent to be Audiotaped

This consent form gives Brett Pepper permission to audio record my research interview for data analysis and transcription purposes. This is simply a method that is used to maintain the integrity of the data and to make analysis easier.

I have noted the following:

- My identity will be protected and I will not be required to give out my name in this recording.
- Access to these recordings will be restricted to Brett Pepper and his supervisor, Mr Gareth Mitchell. No other persons will have access to these recordings.
- The recordings will be kept safe, in a private location known only to the researcher, and will be stored in password protected files.
- The recording will be destroyed after 2 years if the study is published or after 6 years if it is not published.
- These recordings will **not** be presented publicly or as a part of the study results.
- All identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and although direct quotes from the transcripts will be used in the final write-up, these will not be linked to any identifying information and will be used in conjunction with quotes from other participants.

If I have concerns or queries regarding the audio recording of this interview I can ask Brett before we begin the interview so that he may clarify them for me.

I, (name)_____ give permission for my research interview to be fully audio recorded with a full understanding of the above statement.

Signed:_____

Date:_____

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule

I would like to invite you to talk to me about your experiences of being a gay father and what that has been like for you. You may tell me anything you like, and you may begin at any point. We will explore as we go along, but at this point I am simply interested in your experiences.

Potential probing questions:

What is your relationship like with your child?

What has been good about being a gay father?

What has been difficult about being a gay father?

In what ways are you different from other fathers?

If you had to tell a crowd of gay men who are not yet fathers, but are considering it, about being a father, what is the most important thing for them to know?

If you could change anything related to how you are as a father, what would it be?

How have you managed your identities of being a gay man and being a father?

What do you think the world sees when they see you as a father?

Are there any things that you have not spoken about here, but which you feel are important to tell me, even if they seem unrelated to the topic of discussion so far?

Is there anything you'd like to ask me regarding your participation in this interview?

APPENDIX E

Ethics Clearance Certificate