Inside the minds of psychodynamic psychotherapist fathers: An exploration of psychotherapists' experiences of fatherhood.

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Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

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1. Introduction

Becoming a psychodynamic psychotherapist involves rigorous training aimed at facilitating the internalisation of perspectives and values that inform particular identity performances. The identity of psychotherapist is constructed to shape a particular manner of engaging with others and oneself. Some of the most deeply pervasive conceptual tenets within the body of psychodynamic theory surround theories and discourses with fairly prescriptive ideas concerning the role of parents in facilitating the healthy psychological and emotional development of the child, as well as the consequences of deviating from these prescriptions. Although the identities of psychotherapist and father are likely to interact dynamically upon one another in the experience of being a father and performing fathering, no research has been conducted on how the identities may interact and shape such experiences, giving way to particular performances of fathering.

1.1. Aims and description of the study

The aim of this study is to explore how psychodynamic psychotherapist fathers interrogate their identities of father and psychodynamic psychotherapist, with a focus on how they understand the influence that the interrelation of these identities has on their fathering. The manner in which these identities interact upon these fathers' experiences is reviewed within the context of a multitude of influencing factors, namely their own unique psychological processes, societal expectations of fathers and fathering theory within the body of psychodynamic literature. The results of the study are interpreted through the lens of psychoanalytic theory which is suited to capturing complex subjective and intersubjective experiences. This was a qualitative study, in which data was gathered through individual semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of six psychologist fathers who had completed their psychological training prior to becoming parents to children who were between 1 and 11 years old at the time of the interview. The collected data was analysed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) qualitative six step thematic analysis in order to determine the predominant themes in the fathers' experiences.

1.2. Rationale

There are various gaps in the literature which explore the experiences of fathers, psychologists and psychologist fathers and there are limited studies on psychologists' experiences of parenting (Sheridan & Bain, 2020). While there is a significant body of

research regarding the importance of fathers for children's emotional, mental and moral development, little is known about the way that fathers perceive their fathering and the way in which their identities shape their experiences of being fathers. The majority of parenting research of this kind gives voice to the experiences of mothers and children (Madhavan, Richter & Gross, 2015). There is also a gap concerning practicing psychologists' experiences of themselves and how their career impacts their day-to-day living. Studies on psychologists tend to focus on burnout or identity formation in the process of becoming a psychologist (Rupert & Miller, 2015; Tsuman-Caspi, 2012). There is only one study which explores children's experiences of being parented by psychologists (Zur, 1994).

Psychotherapist fathers are particularly under-researched and it could be interesting to see how this unique population, immersed in psychodynamic theory and child developmental theory, works with this body of knowledge in their own parenting and how they construct meaning from that experience. Male psychologists are a minority of their own and as common sense would hold, psychologist fathers are more so (Skinner & Louw, 2009).

Furthermore, little of this research has been conducted using a psychoanalytic framework. Langa (2016) argues that a psychoanalytic framework is geared towards engaging with subjective experiences and brings to light conflicting desires, and emotional dynamics within the negotiation of identity. Given the nature of this study, a psychoanalytic framework would aid in exploring the emotional dynamics and defences involved in shifting fathering performances through psychotherapist fathers' self-reported lived experiences. Unconscious ideas, emotions, desires and fantasies are powerful and influential forces upon the performances of identities and the negotiation of tensions in identities (Hollway, 1989).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Father-Related Terminology

There are several ways to define the word *father*, and debates have centred on biological versus social fathering, the role of gender in fatherhood, and the shifting performance of fatherhood. Some, particularly in the West, prescribe to biological definitions whereby a father is a male who sired a child (Morrell, 2006). According to Bhana, Knight, Makusha,

Richter and Rooyen (2013), African communities generally prescribe to a social definition whereby the father is a male who has taken on some sort of a caregiving role in a child's life. Hence men who contribute financially in the rearing of a child, reside in a household with a child or take on a measure of responsibility for the rearing of a child are considered fathers. There has also been a consideration in recent psychodynamic literature regarding whether fathers need to be biologically male or not. While psychoanalytic literature has long held a more ridid stance on gender in parental theories, whereby only those born as men can be fathers, this is changing as researchers have begun to explicitly declare that in psychodynamic terms, 'father' is synonymous with 'secondary caregiver', consequently sidestepping any identity-related criteria (Diamond, 2017; Davies & Eagle, 2013). The performance of fatherhood is also changing a great deal, as absentee fatherhood is challenged and biological fathers are becoming more involved in their children's lives than ever before (Diamond, 2017; Dick, 2011).

The terms fatherhood and fathering require differentiation. *Fatherhood*, for the purposes of this study, will be operationally defined as what it means to be a father – the father identity. *Fathering*, for the purposes of this study, will be operationally defined as the way that fathers perform their role as parents in raising their child(ren). In changing social contexts which come with new demands, namely increasing financial pressure and consequential increasing participation of women in the workplace, the father identity appears to be adapting to meet them, albeit slowly. Recent research suggests that South African fathers have gradually been taking on more traditionally maternal roles (Mncanca, Okeke, & Fletcher, 2016; Smit, 2002). These new areas of participation include taking on house work, and spending time nurturing their children by performing more caregiving activities. This would suggest that the father identity and the performance of fathering may be shifting away from traditionally hegemonic constructions of fatherhood and masculinity towards a more transformative egalitarian model.

Given that psychodynamic literature is predominantly based upon Western ideas and research conducted in the West, there is a possibility that Western social constructions of fatherhood may feed psychologists' constructions of fatherhood, particularly through psychodynamic constructions of fatherhood.

2.2. Identity

From a psychoanalytic perspective, identity is viewed as emerging from the interplay of both intrapsychic and social processes (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). It could be argued that the identity of fatherhood is relational by definition: one cannot be a father without a specific kind of socially and personally defined relational attachment to a child. In conceptualising the relational aspect of identity, Hollway and Jefferson (2008) draw on Ogden's (1994) concept of the analytic third. The analytic third refers to the unconsciously co-created dynamic between an analyst and analysand - a relational process that has a life of its own. Through interacting, there is a continuous identification between both parties below conscious awareness, which generates this transformative dynamic. Hollway and Jefferson (2008) propose that this takes place through processes occurring in moment-by-moment relational practices i.e. identity infused performances. In this way, identities play a key role in how individuals and groups interpret and interrogate performances – both interpretee's and interpreter's identities would colour their interpretations of said performances through a complex dynamic interplay.

Although the relational aspect of an identity like fatherhood is crucial, it would be remiss to exclude the interplay between the identity of fatherhood and the father's individuality. Hollway and Jefferson (2008) further argue that navigating relational and individual forces is an ongoing dialectic. Part of the researcher's task is exploring how the continuous shifting forces between individuality and intersubjectivity interrelate, as these processes inform a sense of self.

With regard to psychotherapist identities, being a psychodynamic psychotherapist is often compared with parenting. Despite differences between parenting and psychotherapy, there are significant commonalities, such as mirroring, containing, reflecting and enforcing of boundaries (Offerman-Zuckerberg, 1992). Given the overlap in the 'performativity' (Butler, 1988) of being a psychodynamic psychotherapist and a father, there are likely to be unique perspectives and experiences to be explored.

2.3. Sociocultural Constructions of Masculinity and Paternal Identity

Hegemonic masculinity is particularly relevant to the performance of fathering. As a masculine role, ideal social constructs of masculinity play a significant role in shaping

expectations of what it means to be a good father. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as the most socially valued form of masculinity which has traditionally emphasised qualities such as strength, financial success, leadership, rationality and control over one's emotions. As the most socially valued form of masculinity, society largely measures men's social worth by the extent to which they achieve and perform these values. Traditional conceptions of masculinity have been found to espouse that fathers are expected to be financial providers who are strictly authoritarian, disinterested, absent, and emotionally distant (Johansson, 2011).

Research suggests that there has been a trend towards shifting away from traditional attitudes and expectations of fathering and masculinity within western society (Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2017; Mncanca, Okeke, & Fletcher, 2016). However, there is an ongoing debate regarding whether the rising increase in expectations of fathers to perform more traditionally maternal roles is the result of a redefinition of masculinity or simply an elaboration of pre-existing hegemonic masculine values. According to Hunter, Riggs and Augoustinos (2017), primary caregiving fathers in the West have increasingly been expected to be more involved in caregiving and adopting maternal parenting norms instead, such as being more thoughtful, invested and present (emotionally and physically). Despite their seeming position as opposing masculinities, more involved, present caring masculinities may not necessarily be mutually exclusive to hegemonic masculinities. Brandth and Kvande, (2003) found that professionally and financially successful fathers expressed an openness toward the prospect of retiring and embracing caregiving full-time. This may suggest that at the very least, the traditional value of the father as provider remains especially valued, as it seems that men only appeared willing to consider embracing their roles as primary caregiver once this criterion was thoroughly met. This may also highlight the role of class in the construction of fatherhood, with financial freedom allowing for greater flexibility in the construction of fatherhood roles. However, despite the increasing social value placed upon more involved and caring fathers, men appear reluctant to forego the benefits of hegemonic privilege. According to Plantin (2003), even though Swedish men have been increasingly taking on more housework and childcare, women are still largely expected to take charge of the lion's share of both child and homecare. Plantin (2003) specifies that men demonstrated greater eagerness towards taking on more enjoyable aspects of caregiving while leaving the more difficult responsibilities to women. Thus, it should be held in mind that the shift toward men becoming more caring and involved does not necessarily mean men are relinquishing

hegemonic masculine values in favour of more gender equal ones. While men appear to be becoming increasingly involved and caring in their fathering, they appear only willing to do so if they do not have to relinquish the privilege granted by current gender norms. They do not seem willing to shift so far as accepting reduced financial status, reduced social status, the burden of managing housework and the burden of managing more difficult caregiving responsibilities (Plantin, 2003).

Although this shift toward a more emotionally expressive and involved father may not be a result of a striving towards gender equality, there is a certain apriori tension between traditional and modern fathering norms. Frosch (1997) argues that men are experiencing increasing tension in their negotiation of traditionally maternal and paternal roles, especially with regards to meeting their child's dependency needs; a negotiation made more difficult if one has had a traditionally emotionally absent father:

> Expecting to be looked after but fearful of dependency, men who become fathers must struggle with the gap between their own fathers' emotional absence and their own needy response. As their children make increasingly urgent demands, so these men often find themselves – ourselves, of course – fluctuating wildly between caricatures of the prohibitive patriarch (do as I say) and the overinvolved mother. What is hardest of all to do is to find a way of meeting the child's actual demand for presence, calm, and thoughtful love (p. 51).

Hence, some men may have trouble drawing on their own experiences of being parented in coherent ways - oscillating between a maternal performance, reflective of a mother who could meet those needs, and a paternal performance, reflective of a father who did not (Frosh, 1997).

2.4. Identity as Psychodynamic Psychotherapist

Although the body of research on psychologist identity focuses on its formation during training, research suggests that a psychologist's professional identity is strongly influenced by their theoretical leanings and their choice of supervisor (Bischoff, Barton & Thober, 2002; Brott & Myers, 1999). Bozeman and Feeny (2007) explain that throughout the mentorship process, the mentor provides a model of identification for the mentee and actively influences

the mentee's identity formation through the provision of capital perceived as valuable by the mentee in the form of information, networks and connections as well as psychosocial support.

The paradigm to which psychologists subscribe is also likely to influence their professional (and personal identity). Heinonen and Orlinksky (2013) found that psychodynamic psychologists perceived themselves as professionally less genial and practical than other paradigms. Importantly, Heinonen and Orlinksky (2013) emphasize that the influence of theoretical orientation to these self-perceived traits is not always as clear as it may appear. For example, while Boswell, Castonguay and Pincus (2009) found that psychodynamic therapists experience more negative affect than therapists prescribed to other paradigms, they could not discount the possibility that they may actually have just been more comfortable in reporting them.

At risk of over-generalising, it may be important to contextualize the meaning of a psychoanalytic frame of reference, likely to be found in the participants. Although there is still a great deal of disagreement within the psychodynamic paradigm, there are several theoretical points regarding how the mind works and how the client is framed, upon which there is agreement. Lemma (2003, p. 53) summarises them as follows:

1. We have a conscious as well as an unconscious mental life.
2. Meaning systems include both conscious (i.e. verbalisable) and unconscious aspects of experience.
3. Causality is as much a characteristic of external events as it is of other processes in the psychic world.
4. Our early relationships contribute to the development of representations of relationships that are affectively toned.
5. We have an internal life that gives texture and colour to each new situation that we encounter: meanings and phantasies shape behaviour and thinking whether or not they are the originators of the behaviour or thought.
6. The inner world of process and experience mediates the individual's relationship with the external world.
7. The internal world is in a perpetual dynamic interaction with the external world, so that both influence each other.

8. We all have a developmental history and a current life: both need to be understood in the context of therapy.

9. In therapy, we are always dealing with developmental pathology and conflict pathology, though their respective contributions will vary between patients.

These common assumptions form crucial aspects of psychodynamic psychotherapist identities, as these theoretical points underpin their understandings of human development and relationships. However, interestingly, not all aspects of psychologists' professional identities carry through into their personal lives. Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2014) found that this was particularly true for less experienced therapists who were less inclined to have consolidated their professional and personal identities. In support of this disjuncture, Heinonen and Orlinksky (2013) found that psychodynamic therapists reported themselves as being significantly warmer and more genial in their personal relationships than with their clients, yet Peter, Bobel, Hagl, Richter & Kazen (2017) conversely found that despite the immense lenience and acceptance that psychologists had for their clients, this did not extend to their personal relationships.

2.5. The Construction of the Father in Psychodynamic Theory

Historically, psychodynamic theory has been far more focused on the role of the mother in child development. Palkowitz and Hull (2018) argue that despite the increasing number of empirical studies on fathering, coherent theorizing about fathering within psychoanalytic spheres has been sparse. Said theories tend to be formed and applied in a piecemeal fashion tailored to describe or explain specific aspects of fathering. Diamond (2017) argues that this phenomenon may be a result of Western constructions of fathers as providers as well as the harsh, punitive and threatening father figure portrayed in early conceptions of psychoanalytic literature. The most notable example whereby psychoanalytic theory has focused on the role of the father is through Freud's (1900) notion of the Oedipus Complex. Through the Oedipus Complex, the father has been postulated to play a significant role in the development of self-identity in the child. There has recently, however, been a shift the body of psychoanalytic literature with acknowledgment of the fact that the father's role in child development has not been engaged with to the same extent as the mother within the field (Freeman, 2008). Although the equivalent of Winnicott's (1960) *good enough mother* has not been coined, Davies and Eagle (2013) have managed to piece together four facets of the *paternal function* from psychodynamic literature – a set of roles traditionally fulfilled by fathers that contribute to the

mental and emotional development of the infant/child. The father is positioned as a parental figure outside the entwined dyad with the primary attachment figure who thus serves as a secondary attachment figure (Davies & Eagle, 2013). A brief discussion on the four functions of the father as defined by Davies and Eagle (2013) follows.

F1: Separating third. While Freud (1900) first established the importance of triangular relationships in child development through his notion of the Oedipus complex, the forefather of psychology laid the foundation for Lacan (1966) to extend this notion and add that the mother-infant dyad may not come to separate without the real or intra-psychic presence of a third object. Eagle and Davies (2013) emphasize the importance of the gender-neutral state of the term because it is the individual's 'separateness' as an outside entity rather than their gender that is crucial (Maiello, 2007). When the father is the primary attachment figure, as Diamond (2017) points out, the father operates dyadically with the infant. Interestingly enough, Diamond (2017) adds that such fathers take on more maternal characteristics and both traits and dynamics operate more similarly to those of the psychoanalytic mother. In such cases, another 'outsider' is needed to separate the dyad. This fits with Eagle and Davies' (2013) argument that paternal functions are synonymous with those of a secondary caregiver who are in the role of father, rather than fathers as a rule. The father's status as an outsider to the mother-child relationship is a core aspect of what makes the father crucial to kick starting the infant's process of individuation. This separation is essential to the infant's psychic development as an individual and should this be unsuccessful, psychic arrest is possible as a consequence. Frosh (1997) argues that there is building tension in psychoanalytic thought concerning the role of the father, as literature has historically suggested that fathers served as a separating and prohibitive Oedipal force, yet has increasingly shifted to arguing for a flexible father who can be nurturing and meet the dependency needs of the child as well as the mother.

F2: Facilitator of mental structure and capacity to think. Linked to the previous function, the father's role as 'separating third' also facilitates the infant's capacity to think. Lacan (1966) postulated that through reconciling the psychic separation and oedipal triangle, the ability to think, work with symbols and express creativity are given space to develop within the infant. This is supported by Fonagy and Target

(2002) who argue that through the infant's development as a separate individual, a need to think about a place for father in mother's mind and mother in father's mind becomes a necessity; this early journey towards internalizing their parents and simulating their perspectives is one of the crucial stages of development in the infant's capacity to mentalize. Lacan (1966) argues that the infant's success in navigating this milestone largely depends upon the father's capacity to uphold the symbolic Law of the Father and separate the infant-mother dyad. This symbolic internalization of the father is thought to contribute to the infant's unconscious paternal representation, influencing their capacity for intimacy and their expression of sexuality during adulthood (Diamond, 2017; Lansky, 1992).

F3: Facilitator of affect management. In a more physical sense, rather than the more psychic functions listed thus far, Davies and Eagle (2013) argue that through rough play, withholding and demanding behaviours, fathers help children deal with frustration and anxiety. In contrast to the manner that the mother seeks to reduce frustration and anxiety through attuned affect-mirroring and soothing, the father's separateness and lack of attunement allows for a different kind of interaction where they can gauge the infant/child's ability to tolerate both frustration and anxiety and stretch it. It might be tempting to consider the more masculine aspect of the father as being essential to the fulfilment of this function, but Samuels (1996) disagrees and points out that fathers who identify as primary caregivers play very similarly to mothers - further supporting the major body of research suggesting that it is the primary or secondary nature of the parental caregiving that matters most.

F4: Provision of psychic safety. Both Davids (2002) and Winnicott (1987) postulate that by acting as a physical container and holder for the infant/child's negative feelings towards mother, the internal representation of the 'good' mother is preserved. As a result, the infant/child is left with a stabilizing sense of psychic safety. Perkel (2006) proposed that the father also serves as a container for the mother's negative feelings, namely the mother's aggression and hatred that she may feel in relation to her baby. This is argued to be protective and prevent these destructive feelings from overwhelming the mother-infant dyad.

2.6. Identification with One's Own Father

According to Freud (1923), primary identification was postulated to be the first and earliest form of emotional attachment to someone; a combination of a dynamic interaction between internal and external forces which causes one to assimilate one or more qualities of another namely their attitudes, values and behaviours. This was argued to be one's most important identification which was formed in relation to one's parents. Importantly, it should be noted that boys initially identify with their mothers, but that this shifts to identification with their fathers. Freud (1927) considered it an essential process necessary for resolving the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1927). For boys, in order to be rid of the resulting castration anxiety resulting from the desire to usurp the father and sexually possess the mother, the boy must begin to identify with the father. This shift can be accomplished by viewing the father as a role model rather than a rival, relinquishing old desires and endeavouring to emulate the father's qualities. This was postulated to be essential for facilitating the development of the superego. Even beyond one's childhood relations with one's parents, later significant relationships involve some degree of identification as it is a necessary process for shaping one's personality (Freud, 1923). Freud considered identification a necessary and fundamental process for facilitating the development of empathy as it is the most primitive means whereby one is able to consider the mental life of others (Freud, 1921).

Trowell and Etchegoyen, (2002) conceptualise the transition to fatherhood as a process of identification that includes an internal shift where the child's needs are prioritised over the father's. The success of this journey is conditional upon a man having experienced a childhood which facilitated an internal world enriched by 'good-enough' caregivers and a robust sense of self-identity. Expanding upon this notion with reference to Freud's Oedipal Complex (1900), the successful navigation of this internal shift could further be predicated upon the father successfully navigating their ambivalence towards their children in their internal world. Freud (1900) postulated that fathers simultaneously feel adoration and envy toward their baby through the loss of the attentions of the mother. Should they successfully reconcile these feelings and the mourning of this loss, their sense of security in their masculinity is bolstered and they experience a strengthened identification to their own father, assisting them in embracing their role as a third 'other' to the mother-infant dyad. Thus, having had a father who successfully transitioned into fatherhood may assist men to make this transition themselves.

The process of identification may not always be quite so straightforward. Greenson (1954) postulated that antagonistic early relationships with a parent can result in a striving to 'disidentify' with that parent – a striving to avoid the prospect of becoming like them in order to deeply reject them. This takes place through the dedication of psychic energy to consciously and unconsciously reject the parts of one's self associated with the disfavoured parent and adopt behaviours and attitudes which were opposed to the disfavoured parent. However, this striving may give way to the parent consuming so much of one's psychic space that it can paradoxically result in an unconscious identification with that parent. As such, the disfavoured parent and their most salient (and often emotionally distressing) behaviour is internalised, giving way to a potent internal representation of them within the unconscious. This representation can be experienced as fundamentally ego dystonic and consequently, necessitates ruthless repression. This can lead to psychological tension in later life when one attempts to consciously access, regulate and/or accept parts of one's self which are unconsciously associated with the 'disidentified' parent.

2.7. The Intergenerational Transmission of Relational Dynamics

Psychoanalytic schools of thought have long emphasised the powerful effect of childhood experiences with one's early care givers in shaping behaviours, personality traits and relational dynamics in later life. Freud (1920) postulated the Repetition Compulsion in explaining how people who find themselves stuck repeating traumatic situations and relational dynamics from early development, often to their detriment:

> The repressed drive never abandons its struggle to achieve full gratification, which would consist in the repetition of a primary gratification experience. All the sublimations and reaction-formations and surrogate-formations in the world are never enough to resolve the abiding tension; and the gulf between the level of gratificatory pleasure demanded and the level actually achieved produces that driving force that prevents the individual from resting content with any situation he ever contrives…
> The way back, the way to full gratification, is usually blocked by the resistances that keep the repressions fully active, and there is accordingly no alternative but to proceed in the one direction still available, namely that of development – though without any prospect of bringing the process to a conclusion and attaining the desired goal (p. 33-34).

In this way, people often find themselves continually unconsciously attempting to overcome past dynamics and traumas by repeating them, which often impedes their functioning and causes distress. These are attempts to meet powerful unconscious needs from early childhood relational and developmental processes. However, due to unconscious defence mechanisms keeping what is unconscious away from conscious awareness, these need(s) remain(s) unmet and one finds themselves stuck in a cycle of repetition. Fraiberg, Adelson and Shapiro (1975) reflect on how some of the most significant challenges and fears experienced by new parents are rooted in their own childhood experiences of being parented:

> In every nursery there are ghosts. They are the visitors from the unremembered past of the parents; the uninvited guests at the christening… Even among families where the love bonds are stable and strong, the intruders from the parental past may break through the magic circle in an unguarded moment, and a parent and his child may find themselves re-enacting a moment or scene from another time with another set of characters (p.100).

Here, Fraiberg et al. (1975) further highlight that all parents, even those who were raised in the most ideal caregiving environments, may find themselves repeating distressing past relational dynamics from one's own childhood. In Bowlby's (1979) writings on Attachment Theory, he postulated that one's early relational patterns with caregivers shape the formation of a 'template' or working model for the manner in which a person forms relations with others – which continues to operate in later life:

> '[A person] tends to assimilate any new person with whom he may form a bond, such as a spouse, or child, or the employer, or therapist, to an existing model (either of one or other parent or of self), and often to continue to do so despite repeated evidence that the model is inappropriate. Similarly, he expects to be perceived and treated by them in ways that would be appropriate to his self-model, and to continue with such expectations despite contrary evidence'' (p. 141–142).

In this way, one's early experiences of being parented play a significant role in the manner in which one relates to others, including the manner they expect to be viewed and treated. These templates are resistant to the prospect of novelty in new relationships. Such attachment dynamics can contribute to a dynamic whereby relational and defensive processes that one experienced in their relationship with their caregivers are repeated in later relationships, including with one's children. More recently, Koch (2000) noted that finding oneself behaving or thinking like their parents is a common fear, which extends to finding oneself

repeating aspects of their own parents' parenting. Joffe and Sandler (1965) wrote that discovering that there is a significant difference between one's self-representation and ideal-representation, representations of how one sees themselves versus how one would like to be, can result in great distress. As such, a father who finds characteristics in himself reminiscent of his father, including his behaviours and attitudes, may be greatly distressed if he strongly desired to be a different sort of man and parent.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Question

How do psychologist fathers understand the interrelation of their identities of father and psychodynamic psychologist in their experiences of fathering?

3.2. Research Design and Analysis

This study made use of a qualitative design, which is considered to be particularly suitable for exploratory research and for seeking an in-depth understanding of individual experiences, thoughts, opinions, and trends (Bowling, 2014). No hypotheses were made and data was not quantified numerically, but instead, analysed thematically. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) interpretive thematic analysis within a psychoanalytic framework. This framework is conducive towards gaining insight into both the relational and psychological aspects of human experience and thus greatly assisted in capturing the interaction between participants' unique individual identities both as psychologists and as fathers (Langa, 2016). As such, this study focused on how they understand the ways in which their identities as psychotherapists influence their experiences of fathering within the context of social discourses on fathering and their relationships with the other members of their current and childhood families. This included conscious explicit perspectives, as well as tentatively postulated unconscious perceptions, desires and wishes.

3.3. Theoretical framework

A psychoanalytic theoretical framework highlights the relational, unconscious and narrative processes involved in the construction of identities (Clarke, 2002; Clarke 2006; Frosh, 2003). According to Lamb (2000) as well as Liebman and Abell (2000), the use of a psychodynamic approach allows for a detailed grasp of a person's unique experiences both socially and intrapsychically.

This research borrows heavily from Cartwright's (2004) outline of how a psychoanalytic theoretical framework can be applied to interviews and analysis in research. Cartwright (2004) argues that this theoretical framework is useful for investigating the unconscious meaning of behaviours, relational interactions, psychological processes and life situations. Through adapting psychoanalytic ideas, intrapsychic and unconscious dynamics are emphasised in order to expand upon constructions of meaning. Examples of these emphasised intrapsychic dynamics include: hidden wishes, object relations, salient defences, as well as more complex dynamics surrounding meaning such as symbolic meaning and the manner in which meaning shifts.

Cartwright (2004) argues that the interview is about holding a process which facilitates the interviewee scaffolding a narrative and expanding upon it. Drawing on psychoanalytic emphasis on free association, this method views the manner in which the narrative flows and the structure of the narrative as both being as important for the analysis as the narrative's content. Cartwright (2004) explains that the moment and manner in which the narrative shifts, and even the manner in which the interviewee's tone of voice shifts in association with particular subjects, and the manner in which things are described, all provide clues for unconscious associative links. These links provide an underlying structure that can be used to understand the intrapsychic processes most apparent in the interview material. Cartwright's (2004) approach also emphasises the importance of drawing upon context when making interpretations in the analysis. Part of the interviewer's role is to ask questions that foreground a particular context for the narrative relevant to the research topic.

Cartwright's (2004) method makes use of subjective relational interpretations of feeling states with reflection on the interview in the analysis of the narrative i.e. transference and countertransference impressions. Cartwright (2004) argues that this self-reflexivity regarding one's own subjectivity is useful for two reasons: Firstly, one's subjectivity plays a crucial role in the analysis. Interpretations require a measure of reflexivity regarding one's own subjectivity, otherwise depth and accuracy is often compromised. Secondly, researchers are drawn to particular topics for particular internal and external reasons. If these rationales are ignored by the researcher rather than reflected upon, then the interview situation and its analysis are more likely to be be unconsciously compromised by confirmation bias. While there is certainly a significant measure of subjectivity and room for error in making these

interpretations, this can be mitigated by the researcher being in their own therapy and through the aid of supervision.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, subjects are viewed as inherently defended in a particular set of identities – and employ defences to protect vulnerable aspects of self against threats to these aspects of self (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). As such, participants may not explicitly acknowledge more vulnerable thoughts, feelings, dynamics and emotions. However, these may be implied through their narrative structure, body language as well as vocal and phrasing patterns. In this way, the use of a psychoanalytic approach allows for interpretations to be made beyond what is explicitly acknowledged.

A psychoanalytic approach to research is not without its limitations. The transfer of clinical technique, such as the interpretation of countertransference, across to the research setting, needs to be carefully managed (Holmes, 2014). It is acknowledged that interpretation of interview material as revealing aspects of unconscious material or defences needs to be done sparingly, and with respect for the limitations of a once-off interview. The inclusion of the evidence to support these interpretations can allow readers to assess the reasonableness of interpretations.

3.4. Participants

The sample consisted of seven South African, male-identifying, psychodynamically-oriented educational, counselling or clinical psychologists who obtained their psychodynamic training before becoming a consistent caregiver to a child for a minimum of one year from his/her first year of life up to 11 years of age at most. These criteria ensured that participants have a degree of familiarity with psychodynamic literature about fatherhood such as triangular relating dynamics, thirdness and the paternal function. The current age of the child has been limited to 11 as parenting adolescents involves different developmental challenges to parenting a younger child. While it could be interesting to interview fathers who became so before becoming psychodynamic psychologists, the scope of this study is limited and therefore focus on a more homogenous group was preferred. This also applies to participants with children who have grown passed childhood as much of psychodynamic theory is preoccupied with parenting during infancy. The sample was obtained by purposive sampling and snow-balling. This purposive snowballing sampling method was chosen because psychodynamic psychologist fathers are a small population and this method provided broader

access to a greater numbers of potential participants. This involved emailing participants that match the required descriptions and inviting participation. Note that pseudonyms are being used to ensure confidentiality. Twelve potential participants were contacted directly via email with a request to participate. From those, only 'Daniel, 'Mark' and 'John' responded affirmatively. However, a few of those contacted recommended other potential participants. I contacted another twenty potential participants through a university staff member's email list. From this round, 'Luke', 'Shaun' and 'Matthew' responded affirmatively. Notably, the sample is very homogenous as all participants who volunteered were Caucasian. While psychotherapists from other racial groups were invited to participate, unfortunately none responded affirmatively.

As this is a qualitative study, the results of the analysis are not generalizable but may provide more insight into this unique segment of the population.

3.4.1. Participant backgrounds. Participants will be introduced using their pseudonyms. All potentially revealing information has been omitted. Some of the participants were clinical psychologists, some were psychoanalysts and some were educational psychologists. All reported using a psychoanalytic orientation in treatment. Participants were based in both Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Daniel is married with two little children – a boy and girl. He came across as very powerful, sincere and serious. My interactions with him evoked a tenderness in me, in response to his sense of vulnerability, fraught with an anxious need to 'get it right'.

John is married and is father to two little girls. He came across as humorous and reflective. His adoration for his wife and children was very noticeable.

Mark is married with two children – a boy and a girl. Mark came across as fairly light-hearted but very frank. Of all the participants, I found Mark to be the most in touch with the difficulties of being a father and the sense of loss that comes with it.

Luke is married and is father to two children, both boys. Luke appeared to enjoy the interview more than the other participants. I had the sense that he enjoyed reflecting

on his performance of his role as a father specifically and sharing that. He came across as being very gentle yet dominant in his family.

Shaun is married and father to a boy. Shaun appeared to enjoy applying his sharp mind to the reflective process of the interview. I found interviewing him to be very intellectually stimulating, though it was difficult, at times, for me to be in touch with where he was emotionally.

Matthew is separated from the mother of his little girl. Matthew came across as relaxed but passionate. This came through in his anger and clear investment in changing societal attitudes towards fathering practices and in his processing of the separation process with his former wife.

3.5. Data Collection

Participants participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Open-ended questions were prepared to help glean insight into the impact of social and psychodynamic prescriptions on fathering and individual psychic processes on participants' experiences of fathering. The first 5 questions were crafted to be open-ended. Thereafter, questions had a narrower focus. A psychoanalytic approach was used to inform the interview process as well as the framing of prepared questions. This included allowing for open stretches of narrative that allow for free associations to be made (Cartwright, 2004; Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). Questions were posed with the purpose of eliciting particular aspects of participants' experiences, namely, the sources from which they construct their identities as fathers, the personal biographies of the participants regarding their experiences of their own fathers and their relationships with them, their experiences as fathers themselves, their fathering as well as how participants make meaning of the intersection of their identities as both psychodynamic therapists and as fathers. With permission from participants, interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviews with Daniel, John and Shaun took place at each of their places of practice while interviews with Mark, Luke and Matthew took place over Skype.

3.6. Data Analysis

This study made use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of interpretive thematic content analysis. In the first step of the analysis, the data was transcribed. It was reviewed several times while impressions and associations were noted. This process also involved an initial investigation of possible unconscious processes through reflecting on perceived transference, counter-transference ordering and participant phrasing (Cartwright, 2004). Through this process, the researcher familiarised himself with the data. For the second step, preliminary codes were assigned to the impressions and associations. For the third step, the data was organized per their respective code. Impressions and associations that emerged from the transcripts were then reviewed and clustered into broader recurring themes while particularly unique impressions and associations were noted.

For the fourth step, themes were reviewed and checked against the coded extracts. Initially, the data was broken down into four main themes with various subthemes. The main themes were as follows: 'Constructions of a good father', 'Reprocessing their relationships with their own fathers', 'Feelings of envy and rivalry', 'Experience of psychodynamic theory in the transition to fatherhood' and 'Societal pressures of being a father'. At first, the final theme did not appear particularly strong. However, after going through the narratives again, more content on this was found. Additionally, later on, it emerged that there was a strikingly salient theme that had been omitted: the difficulty that these fathers had in negotiating the fulfilment of nurturing and separating functions. The initial omission of this theme is explored in the Reflexivity section below. This theme was then added as 'Negotiation of Nurturer Role vs Separating Role'.

For the fifth step, themes were named. Impressions and associations from the first step were reviewed and added to after they had been positioned within the broader context of grouped themes. For the sixth step, salient themes related to the research question were expanded upon in the report under *results* and later, under *discussion* which involved a more detailed interpretation through the use of a psychoanalytic lens and themes were situated in relation to the literature. The headings within the Discussion section underwent fewer iterations. Initial themes included 'Ideal Performances of Fathering', 'Traditional vs Modern Performances of Fathering', 'Fear of Repetition', 'The Experience of Theory and Psychological Training' and 'Notable Absences: Explicit Feelings of Envy, Rivalry and Shame'. After the first draft, 'Fear of Repetition' became 'Disidentification and the Fear of Repetition' and was integrated with

'Ideal Performances of Fathering'. Participants' experiences were interpreted as their subjective realities as rather than objective truths (Saville Young, 2009).

3.7. Credibility and Trustworthiness

Several steps were taken to establish credibility and trust in the findings and interpretations within the study. A detailed record of the research procedures was established. This context assisted both the researcher and supervisor in framing their interpretations and analysis as well as frame any potential critique of the study (Shenton, 2004). The initial results of the analysis were discussed and reviewed with the researcher's supervisor. In this way, the supervisor served as a more experienced perspective, who ensured that the researcher's analysis grasps the inevitable complexities of the data (Shenton 2004; Lincoln & Guba 1985). The use of quotes in the reporting of the results also allows for the reader to judge the quality of interpretations made. Extensive descriptions of the interviews and the researcher's experience in them were provided in order to further aid the analysis of the data (Shenton 2004). the use of quotes in the reporting of the results also allows for the reader to judge the quality of interpretations made The researcher's theoretical leanings and understanding of his own life experiences relevant to the study were disclosed and continuously engaged with through a journal in the interest of transparency regarding potential bias (Shenton 2004; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Additionally, in the examination process this study will undergo academic scrutiny by other experienced academics, who have research experience in the field and can provide critique as a quality-assurance measure (Shenton 2004).

3.8. Reflexivity

Reflexivity was practiced regularly through journal writing to record and reflect on thoughts and feelings elicited throughout the research process. This assisted in exposing the subjective position of the researcher in order to understand the influence this had on the process of the interviews and the interpretation of the interview content (Shenton, 2004). Regular consultations with the supervisor regarding reflexive content aided in protecting the research from the researcher's own bias and subjective position resulting in a more credible and ethically rigorous study (Shenton, 2004).

As a student researcher carrying out this study, I was aware of my attraction to this project as a male on his way to becoming a psychodynamic clinical psychologist in South Africa. As I

am not a father, the vast majority of my experience of fathering has been on the receiving end - as a child with my own father. While I assumed that not being a father myself would have aided in minimizing the presence of assumed, shared experiences and understandings, I found that I strongly identified with the narratives of each and every one of my participants. This powerful identification was a result of our location within a broader shared masculinity, whiteness, and professional orientation, however, what felt the most consciously significant area of identification was our shared desire to be a good father. When they spoke of the challenges that they faced in parenting and ways in which being a psychodynamic psychologist could help or hinder them in their practice of fathering, I found myself curious at a very personal level. Their answers felt like pearls of wisdom for the prospective possibility of my own fatherhood.

Like many of the participants, my father performed a very traditional rendition of the paternal role in raising me. He was the financial provider, disciplinarian and our relationship was coloured by a strong sense of emotional distance. I resented him terribly for many years, wishing for a father with whom I could feel a warmer emotional connection. This planted the seed of a wish: that I could heal the sense of loss and resentment towards my father by becoming the father that I wished for.

While I found myself generally identifying with all participants, the extent of this identification was stronger with some than with others and shifted throughout the process of this report. During the interviews, I found myself most strongly identified with 'John'. He came across as especially passionate about being a loving and emotionally present father. Even the really hard moments he had experienced as a father seemed overshadowed by the sense of closeness he had nurtured with his children. Although he appeared to have remained fairly distant from his father in later life, it sounded like he had been able to be the father he wanted to be, had the kind of relationship with his family that he had wanted, and gained a significant amount of fulfilment from doing so.

The participant with whom I identified the least during the interviews was 'Mark'. Despite Mark's endeavours to be an emotionally present father, Mark appeared to be acutely in touch with the sense of loss and emotional toll that came with fatherhood. He missed having more free time to focus on his career and he missed his wife having more capacity to be attuned to his needs. He also had a more difficult time building a relationship with his son. During our

interview, I was taken aback by his sense of clarity regarding these incredibly taxing aspects of fatherhood. I had assumed that each participant would focus more on the warm and fulfilling aspects of fatherhood. Upon reflection, I realised this had disrupted my idealistic wish: that one could heal their childhood wounds by becoming the parent they wished they had. Throughout the interview, I felt afraid. Consciously, I thought this countertransference was a fear that I would insult or anger Mark unintentionally due to his resentment towards those who pressure him to necessarily enjoy every aspect of fatherhood – which I had unwittingly been guilty of. Unconsciously, I strongly suspect that I was afraid that Mark would prove that my wish was not the salvation I believed it would be.

However, while writing the discussion, my sense of identification shifted – I found Mark's experience to be at the fore of my reflections. I found myself thinking about whether I was prepared to deal with that sense of loss that comes with fatherhood and considered the real possibility that I may not have the kind of early relationship with my child that I wished for. I also considered how Mark had been able to use his experience to move towards understanding and forgiving his father, knowing how difficult fulfilling such a role could be. I was confronted with the fact that my wish to become the father I did not have was a defence against mourning my sense of loss, but also with the danger of repetition. A repetition which I suspect could leave me devastated. I began to consider that my wishful fantasy of being a 'better' father than my own would likely perpetuate my holding on to my resentment towards my father, rather than trying to understand how difficult fulfilling such a role could be. This struggle likely contributed towards my overlooking of the tension in the narratives around negotiating between performing a nurturing role and a separating role. I suspect that an unconscious parallel process had been playing out, as I had been having difficulty negotiating balancing maternal and paternal function in my own therapeutic practice during internship. As such, my own unconscious tension with a similar process may have given way to a blind spot in my analysis. Both the literature and participant narratives have left me with a great deal to reflect on. I have been reflecting on my own relationship with my father and my desire to be an emotionally present father and I am negotiating an internal tension at several levels, between resentment and forgiveness, and possibility.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Human and Community Development Ethics Committee before the data collection commenced. Informed consent for the interview and audio recording was gained after participants read the participant information sheet briefing them on the study and inviting them to participate voluntarily. They were informed that they may refuse to answer any questions and withdraw from the study until submission of the research for examination. The topic is one that may evoke a fear of judgement. The researcher endeavoured to help participants to feel at ease, and all reporting of findings has been conducted in a manner that is respectful and holds these fears in mind. It was also held in mind that while these participants were in a position to understand that the psychoanalytic method of analysis may uncover defensive positions or conflicts of which they were not previously consciously aware, that this might be experienced as exposing by participants. As an added measure of assurance, participants were told that in the event of publication, the manuscript draft will be sent to them in order to ascertain comfort levels with the anonymization of the data prior to journal submission.

Anonymity is assured as participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms and all identifying information has been omitted from the final submission of the study. In the event that the study is accepted for publication, all audio recordings will be erased and with participants' consent, their anonymous transcripts will be archived as a potential resource for future studies.

While any harmful outcomes or emotional stress did not seem to be likely outcomes for these interviews, if they had arisen and it was clear that a participant was not in their own therapy, suggestions for a suitable psychotherapeutic space that was both affordable and accessible would be discussed. A free service may not have been appropriate for this participant group as these are often telephonic or conducted by students. However, a low-fee service offered by another professional such as a social worker or organisation, namely FAMSA, would have been arranged. That being said, all participants had access to (and could afford) their own private psychotherapy and no instances emerged where it was necessary for the researcher to arrange counselling.

4. Results

In this section, the significant themes and subthemes are explored with accompanying narratives related to how these psychotherapists interrogated their identities as fathers and psychotherapists. The theme 'Constructions of a good father' is presented first, in order to understand the role of father to which these men aspire. The theme 'Reprocessing their relationships with their own fathers', explores the participants' reflections on their relationships with their own fathers since becoming fathers themselves. Regarding the theme 'Feelings of envy and rivalry', narratives appeared to emphasise the sense that these men felt that their needs were no longer prioritised within the immediate family. Although not extensively reflected upon the narratives, when it emerged, this theme was significant. In the theme 'Experience of psychodynamic theory in the transition to fatherhood', narratives revealed a tension between experiencing psychodynamic theory as containing with hindsight, but at times, a source of anxiety. This anxiety concerned pressure to meet particular standards of parenting. Additionally, there was a sense of anxiety about drawing on theory as many participants had the sense that theory may remove their minds from being fully in the present moment. Lastly, narratives regarding the theme 'Social pressures of being a father' highlighted that these men appear to have experienced contradictory pressures from society. Some experienced the pressure to be more emotionally present and supportive while others felt pushed to be a firm boundary setter and provider.

4.1. Constructions of a 'Good Father'

All of these men had ideas about what makes a 'good father'. Though participants' beliefs varied quite widely, each account seemed to emphasise the embracing of a supportive role in facilitating the development of the child. Some narratives emphasised the importance of context in the construction of good fathering; that variations in both the environment and in the child's development appear to influence the performance of ideal fathering. Other narratives highlighted the need for a father to be emotionally present and supportive, and in a similar vein, humble and self-reflexive. Some included the significance of performing the separating functions of 'being another mind' and boundary setter.

4.1.1. A good father definition as context and development dependent. A few of these men tried to provide a broad, flexible definition of fathering in an attempt to acknowledge the influence of culture and context. Shaun emphasised the importance of context, acknowledging that the family circumstances play a role in how a father-child relationship may look. However, for him, a father's level of investment in his child's story was significant:

> Somebody who is...who's invested...in fathering and I would extend that... and not necessarily...but I would extend that beyond the relationship with the child... But then to the relationship to the system that supports that child...and so I'm not saying that that person needs to be married...or...um... um...but there is an investment in the child and in the space. that the child... So these things are contingent on context... so... I'm... very reluctant to want to nail down...you know... a specific relational way of being... but...that man would be a good father in my eyes if... he, if he is mindful of the fact that he has family...and that he is invested in their story... otherwise he's just a guy who's got kids... somewhere... and he's fulfilling an obligation somewhere or he's... and that for me wouldn't be good enough (Shaun).

John was also cautious about providing a specific definition, but reflected around the importance of flexibility in grappling with the various developmental stages of the child:

> I suppose I'm wary of the idea... yeah, like I was saying earlier about essences and essentials... I worry about prescribing a role too clearly... for a father... um, but there [are] many roles and what might be good at six months is maybe not so good at three and a half years...explaining how it feels... um so yeah... (John).

Shaun also highlighted the idea that a father is a role that needs to evolve as the needs of the child change over time:

> …for me it's an ongoing dialect... so you know what is it to be a dad to an infant?... what is it to be a dad to a... latency child?...or to an adolescent?... what is it to be a dad to a… a…. child who's become a parent...you know... now you're a grandfather... so I... I… I... for me these are not static

things...you know this is where I sit now...this is an evolving story... that will...that will change (Shaun).

However, within this broader appreciation for the fluidity of the father role, a more specific image of a 'good father' emerged.

4.1.2. A good father as emotionally present and supportive. Some of the men emphasised the importance of a father being emotionally present and supportive. Matthew strongly emphasised this in his definition:

> "For me the definition of a [good] dad has always been about being present, about being engaged, about being caring, about teaching, about setting an example showing the way, um... about the deep emotional connection and relationship" (Matthew).

Luke also constructed a good father as fulfilling an emotionally supportive role both in relation to the mother as a partner and the child as a parent:

> I would say someone who is a good father… someone who is available and nurturing and supportive and um... empathic… yeah, playful... I suppose to, to be a partner to their mother, you know to…yeah, that kind of both supports and affirms and strengthens her role as well… also about tolerating limits and within, within yourself so being a human as well (Luke).

'Being present' was also understood to entail a shift in identity. Shaun conveyed that becoming a father meant a shift from thinking as an 'individual' to thinking as a 'relational being' – or someone that needs to consider his family when making decisions:

> For me... the critical sense, the change...is in becoming a relational being...as opposed to an individual….ya…. so that...whatever I think about in relation to myself...goes through the loop of...a...not just [I] the individual….or the psychologist...or the friend...or the whatever... or the husband...am...I am also for...so that...so that is....part of my identity....part of how I see myself… (Shaun).

4.1.3. Father as 'another mind' and boundary setter. A few of the men also introduced the idea of a good father as being the person who sets limits. While Luke spoke about fathers as teaching children rules: "…being the voice of reality I think is a good one where you're linked to the… outside world and helping your kids realize what's what is allowed and what's not…" (Luke), John constructed the father's presence as a third, or as an 'other' who interrupts the mother-child relationship, as an important limit. He spoke about the importance of the child having another mind to use: "…having another mind: "I think there needs to be another… when it comes to babies... as the baby comes into the world via the mother or... by adoption... or any other way... I think there needs to be another mind, be a third mind..." (John).

4.1.4. A good father as humble and self-reflexive. Three of the fathers spoke about the capacity to make space for the child as a separate person with whom they relate as important. Mark reflected on the importance of being open to being invested in their children's development of their own goals and desires, rather than father's imposing their own desires and goals on their children:

> A good father is one who is open to um... feeling joy and pride at seeing… at seeing his child actualize himself and develop a comfortable secure relationship with his dreams, wishes and desires, and be able to distinguish between what he wants and what he should do and when he needs to say goodbye to what he wants… A good father is one who is proud of his children as they are different to him, not as they become his dreams come true (Mark).

Within the relationship between father and child, Daniel emphasised the ability to accept responsibility for his own role in relationships as a characteristic of a good father: "Maybe a present, reliable... thoughtful father...a father who can... accept his shortcomings and bad states and apologize and repair things and... to be open-minded to things as opposed to authoritative..." (Daniel). Luke also emphasised the ability to repair the relationship when things go wrong: "So the father that can somehow convey to the child that we're not superhuman beings that we have limits and we make mistakes and we get it wrong, but then we repair and we come back and we try and rebuild relationships if things got messy or difficult and apologize for mistakes" (Luke).

4.2. The Reprocessing of Relationships with their Own Fathers

All these men found themselves reprocessing their relationships with their own fathers upon becoming fathers themselves. The vast majority were able to reflect on how they have made sense of their relationship with their fathers. Of all the topics covered in these interviews, this one tended to elicit the most significant affective turmoil as participants reflected largely on a sense of loss in relation to their own fathers and fear of repeating their dynamic with their children.

4.2.1. Desire for their own fathers to have better negotiated their nurturing and separating roles. The majority of participants felt comfortable reflecting on their fathers' perceived failings and successes which varied around their father's fulfilment of their nurturing and separating roles. These participants expressed the desire for a stronger and closer emotional connection to their own fathers. Despite some sadness around what their fathers were not able to provide emotionally, these participants were able to value the more practical support that their fathers had provided. Mark reflected on how he values the fact that his father has been there to support him, even if it may not be in a manner that meets his emotional needs:

> It's good to see that there's a guy that I can turn to at any time. No matter how much he might go through stages of not understanding me. He ultimately will see my well-being in his interest. That's amazing um... and he may, may be completely out of tune with me and contemptuous of all of my aspirations and values but… he may not see, may not see... his idea of what's best for me, may be radically different... from my idea. But he wants what he thinks is best for me. That's awesome… He might not be able to see the difference between me and him. He may not be able to tolerate the differences between me and him… but he's got my back... even if he'll make me feel shit about needing it sometimes… (Mark).

Although Mark's narrative conveyed the pain caused by his father's difficulty with allowing his son to determine his own goals and withholding of approval, it was clear that his father's dedication to being there for him meant a great deal – the latter becoming more striking since Mark became a father himself.

In contrast to Mark's narrative, Matthew's reflection portrayed his desire for his father to have pushed him harder rather than just provide support for his life choices.

Matthew conveyed a measure of anger in expressing his wish for his father to have been firmer with him:

> I feel like I would have wanted a bit more push back from him as opposed to the constant sort of support and encouragement and it sounds, as I'm saying it, I know it's… it sounds absolutely absurd to say that I got too much encouragement from him but suppose that's… that's the reality… (Matthew).

Daniel's reflection highlighted his wish that his father had worked harder on his personal growth and his relationship with him, his son:

> I had a very...authoritative father and was there practically... materially and unfortunately not emotional… [I] welcome father[s] coming to therapy...and try... to improve themselves as husbands, as fathers, as people... which can only, hopefully, benefit their relationship to their child as well… So maybe that is...one positive shift...that has happened...and probably wasn't… when I was growing up...but maybe it could have made my experience with my dad different or...doubted some things...you know, cause as much as I say...one can only do as best as one can...one also needs to be able...should be able...to put up one's hand and say...this is what I'm going through...it's not working...I need help...as opposed to burying one's head in the sand. There needs to be accountability...especially when one has children...especially to children...to say, if I'm not gonna do it for myself at least let me try do it for my child...you know…better father, give them peace... (Daniel).

While Daniel acknowledged that therapy wasn't as acceptable an option a few decades ago as it is now, he communicated a wish that his father could have had an opportunity to receive help, which he fantasizes would have allowed for a better father-son relationship. A sense of loss for the father-son bond he never had pervaded his narrative and sharing it with me seemed to be painful and difficult.

Luke's account highlighted his sense that although his father served as a source of moral guidance, his father did not aid him in what was a lonely and demanding journey of finding his own independence as an adult:

> Dad worked very hard and was gone most of the day, but would come home. He was very caring gentle man, quite principled, and there were kind of rights

and wrongs and ways of living life and what was acceptable and what wasn't and so a pretty clear guide… I think my father would... have been really helpful if he'd been more involved in terms of helping that... separation, that taking on life… That internal confidence as a kind of, you know, growing young man. I suppose in that transition from adolescence into adulthood if he'd been more… more of a presence there. I think that would have, would have... helped and would have been less of a personal kind of pursuit... would have been, kind of, felt more supported. Yeah (Luke).

Like Daniel, discussing his relationship with his father appeared difficult for Luke. His usual exuberance and clarity appeared to falter in his telling. There was a sense of sadness in giving voice to his wish for a more present father, who may have been able to guide him in his challenging journey transitioning from a teenager to an independent adult. John's account also highlighted his difficulty connecting emotionally with his father:

Loving relationship? Not always... perhaps what he lacked was that ability within the process to have a robust engagement that, you know, that sometimes you need to be able to meet your dad... head on and you know and I think that there is… sort of that backing away from some of the emotions and perhaps lack of the emotional presence in certain times... I think that he struggled with that… (John).

John's engagement around this topic was also rather striking in contrast to the rest of his interview. The sadness in his voice was palpable. This sadness about difficulty connecting to their fathers was also evident in Mark's narrative:

That sort of love and affection and emotion would always come from my mom. With my dad, it was, you know, hugs and kisses and things was not something… that that sort of would… would… would just kind of flow easily and freely even kind of saying I love you on the phone when he had phoned from… from overseas just that was quite difficult for me personally… (Mark).

4.2.2. Fear of repetition. Some of the participants either alluded to their fear of repeating their own relational dynamic that they had with their fathers or voiced this fear explicitly. The prospect of repeating relational patterns from the past with their own children emerged largely as something to be feared and resisted.

Daniel recounted his experience of finding out he was going to be a father to a son. His narrative conveyed a palpable sense of anxiety that his own ghosts from his relationship with his father would follow him into his relationship with his son:

> I have two children...the first was a boy...I was convinced or I convinced myself it was going to be a girl, just because I think that....looking at the relationship to my father...I thought it would be a lot easier for me to have a girl...as there's not as much memories or difficulties...I have encountered from my own relationship with my father and obviously it turned out to be a boy and it was a huge shock and...having to face the reality...and not just through lots of therapy the reality was that I was put into this situation, [to] work on the relationship of being a father to a son and hope that... I would do things a lot better… (Daniel).

In contrast to the content of this narrative, Daniel recounted this experience with a light-hearted candour. There was the sense that Daniel felt that over time his fears proved unfounded. The fear of repetition was very alive in Mark's narrative. He reflected on the fact that he has found himself repeating a relational dynamic from his relationship with his father, despite his efforts to avoid doing so:

> Having a father and um, wanting to, I suppose, repair my own relationship with him through avoiding the same kinds of issues... trying to be, this is the... paradox. On the one hand feeling like, geez… I don't like sitting with children for hours and hours on end. I'm not, it's not the most... you know, I do love being with my children, and I do enjoy time with them. I cannot get lost in play with them. I just can't... It's hard... for me... to be present in that way... and my relationship with my father was... I don't think he ever… I cannot remember one moment where he… would sit in that kind of connected way… knowing the... how much more I would have wanted to be connected with him and how much I would have liked him to have seen me... and to have tried to... get to know me and um apart from what he would have liked to see me as... that didn't happen... and... I placed a lot of

emphasis on that... in my relationship to my son. I should elaborate with my daughter - it's different. That just feels like a pure simple loving interaction. It's just joyful. With my son, it's feels like an effort not to repeat which no doubt is as the unconscious does... in the end be a repetition, but we will do our best to... try and avoid making the same mistakes... The thing I'm doing differently is like I'm trying to value his point of view... I'm trying not to shame him. And I want to try to build him up. I'm trying to...it's hard… I don't know if I'll succeed, but I'm gonna try… (Mark).

There was sadness that he had been battling so much in his relationship with his son, yet he was determined to keep trying his best to avoid the repetition by engaging with his son and helping him be his own person, as he could recall his experience as a child and how desperately he wanted those things from his father. Luke spoke of his desire to have a stronger emotional connection with his children than he had with his father:

Perhaps, you know, seeing the value of being involved, you know, I think I always had the sense that I was going to be more involved than my dad. I wanted to be more present, had studied so that I could have a more closer link to my children... yeah... and I mean it wasn't why I studied but it was certainly something that came out of it... was an awareness of kids and the value of relationships with them, um... but I think perhaps having become a dad... just seeing how rewarding it is... Um... finding that it's possible to have these kind of levels of relationship and connection and um... it probably just it, it... took that that desire to be a close and connected father to that kind of next level. Actually, you know, I'm really going to and… and it's really possible. So um... yeah, perhaps that it's… it's… it's deepened my understanding of what those kind of attachments can feel like and, you know, what's possible (Luke).

Luke seemed both gladdened by feeling a sense of emotional closeness with his children but also saddened as his mind moved to consider his father's emotional distance from him and what they had not been able to share together. Shaun also related the theme of repetition, but did so in a way that revealed a sense of acceptance that fathering (and mothering) will inevitably be influenced by history: "…when we come to mothering and fathering it is... not just about the head... it is about... how we

have been shaped, we come with history… we come with ghosts… and we come...
and we come with the desires that that brings…" (Shaun).

4.3. Negotiation of Nurturer Role vs Separating Role

To some extent, the majority of these men had experienced difficulty negotiating a nurturing
role alongside a separating role in their relationships with their partners and children. Many
of these men appeared to have a strong desire to be very emotionally close with their children
and prioritise their children's needs, often at the detriment of their spousal relationships and
felt that they either over or under performed a separating function.

4.3.1. Desire to be involved. Nearly all of the participants explicitly declared that
they wanted to be emotionally involved with their children. On the whole, this tended
to be centred around helping their wives with hands-on tasks such as feeding and
changing while also engaging with their children emotionally.

> Luke expressed his desire to be engaged in the direct upbringing of his
> children. This took the form of taking a kind of paternity leave and reducing
> work days so that he was working an equal number of days as his wife: "I
> wanted to and was very involved and, as much…as much as I could in this sort
> of life and so between my wife and I and she was on maternity leave and I
> took two weeks off work and then went back to work… For the first two years
> almost, I chose to work four days a week and then my wife also worked four
> days a week…" (Luke).

Luke spoke of how he values the close emotional bond that he has with his children,
that he did not experience with his own father, and despite conveying that it has not
been easy, he spoke with pride in his voice. John also described how he felt that part
of his desire to be closer was driven by his father's absence, but also described how
sometimes he overextends himself as a result:

> I think that there is… sort of that backing away from some of the emotions
> and perhaps lack of the emotional presence in certain times... but there was…
> yeah and I think that [my father] struggled with that here and it did come

through…it comes through as a pressure with me with my children... being present... which is fine which is good but you can push that too far and I can push that too far in a sort of unrealistic expectations... when you place an unrealistic expectation about being present and there for them… I wouldn't say unconscious cause I'm conscious of it now...this pressure to come…be there, my own fault...sensing my father's absence emotionally and it drives me unrealistically then you...um, and there's another part that starts pushing back like, as if I could break...I've got my own needs (John).

John conveyed measured sadness and anger as he relayed this account of how his father's absence still affects him in the present. Matthew spoke of how he desperately wanted to be involved but had the sense that there was no room for him to assist:

I'm able to be much more actively involved and present with her and the older she's got... you know... the youngest when she was quite young and not ready to engage with the world, you know, as very young children… It's just… they just seem to be in a little bubble and just very dependent on being fed and clothed and changed. That was a really difficult time because...my wife at the time was breastfeeding. So my role as a dad was sort of hovering around the edges wanting to really be involved but feeling like well, what can I do?... You know, her mom was with her all day, every day while in maternity while I was at work, so I felt very kind of on the sidelines… (Matthew).

Matthew's tone shifted from a cheerful buoyancy to a low and frustrated tone during this part of the narrative. It was as though he felt an outsider to the newly formed relationship between his wife and his daughter and he felt excluded.

Thus, while most found ways to express the nurturer role and be involved in the more day to day care of their children, some more consistently than others, some found their desire to be involved frustrated by the close relationship between mother and child.

4.3.2. Regret in not having put more effort into their relationship with their wife.

Some of these men expressed regret in how they engaged in their relationship with their wife during the transition to fatherhood. This took various forms. One felt that he

had not invested enough in his relationship with his wife, another felt that he had not given his wife enough space to develop her confidence as a mother. Another felt that he had not fully comprehended the importance of the marital relationship as a supportive system for their children.

Daniel told of how his desire to protect his child and do his best as a father often took precedence over building a stronger relationship with his wife:

> I can be very protective of my children... probably to the detriment of my relationship with my wife... and so probably one thing that... which I could take from my father is holding the relationship better with the mother... I know that's been a struggle for me and does impact our children...and is an area that needs work... in ways I have probably over-compensated...the need and desire to be there for the children...I really wanted to be there and I do think it's kind of been to the detriment of my marriage certainly (Daniel).

Daniel spoke with a measure of guilt yet conveyed a sense of determination to work on this aspect of his relationship. Mark's account expressed a similar sort of dynamic:

> I wish I could have a better relationship with my wife. Maybe that's what I would... try to do. I would um... have paid more attention to her... and placed more effort in me and my wife being better friends than we are... because hell man, you want to really know that you're together in some things... in some in the darker times... So yeah, I think that would have been a good idea. The other thing is maybe I'm not so sure I would've moved down to [place] and had babies miles and miles away from my family... that I would do differently so, so what I would do differently is restructure the setting so that... I and my wife would be more contained and supported so that I and my wife... could be more psychologically available to my children… less reactive... and maybe...yeah, that's all… (Mark).

Mark's narrative also conveyed a measure of guilt and regret in capturing how supportive he realised a stronger relationship with his wife could be for times of stress. His excerpt captures his appreciation for how hard the journey into parenthood is, and how he imagines that remaining closer to family so that he and his wife could have been more supported may have helped them to maintain a closer relationship. He

wondered if better meeting their own emotional needs would have allowed them to have an easier time handling the demands of parenthood.

Luke spoke of how he feels he may have taken on a kind of 'lead-parent' role by virtue of his status as a mental health professional, which he feels may have prevented his wife from finding her confidence as a mother:

> I spoke about that she was anxious too. I would have sort of stepped in to help hold the fort a bit more quickly whether I might have kind of stepped back and said, you know, [name], you can you can do this or let me help you do this, although again. I'm not sure that I was… that was over the top but you know looking back. I wonder if I might have taken slightly bit more of a step back and not just drawing on my own psychological understanding and insights to kind of fill in that gap um... maybe (Luke).

Beyond the overt guilt and regret, Luke's account conveyed a great deal of empathy for his wife.

4.3.3. Meeting dependency needs vs encouraging independence. Some of these men expressed regret at having pushed their eldest child to independence too early while one felt that he had stepped in too readily. Feelings of guilt were evident for not meeting what they believed to be the perfect balance in negotiating their children's journey towards independence.

Daniel expressed that he believes that his eldest child may have been less anxious if, in his early years, his eldest child had been given more room to tolerate his distress and make his own mistakes:

> …Not wanting to have impingements...my child to have any necessary suffering...and by doing that, probably jumped the gun too much for me and at… um some points allowing to make some mistakes and allowing him to cry a bit more than he could...and might be able to manage a bit more than he could (Daniel).

John expressed a similar sentiment but for the contrary; he felt he had not given his daughter enough room to be dependent for long enough:

…if I could do it again, I would relax even more. It's not like I'm… yeah... I think if I could do it again... I would feel guilty about my older daughter... about my expectations which were...which were perhaps communicated subtly and maybe not so subtly at some points... but my expectations of her to kind of... grow up and be more independent, then I would be more gentle with that process… The older one I think, you know... was between two and a half and three when her sister arrived... and that was a challenging time for her and I think it could have been more gentle and I could have had less expectations about sort of separating and I could have been more gentle about what her loss means to her... I don't beat myself up too much about it there's always time for repair but... I think in hindsight my wife and I were discussing this the other day... I can see it now, in the younger one now... she's like potty training and we kind of just relaxed about it... if it gets to her, she'll get to it but what the older child is a little bit more, not hectic, but there was a little bit more pressure to grow up and I do regret that a little bit... (John).

Luke had a similar sentiment about his eldest son:

Um… yes, I think with my first born I might have… allowed him to be dependent for longer. It's a very kind of sweeping blank statement. But, but, that I think is very much a. personal struggle that I, you know, continue to kind of kind of work through… kind of being allowed to be dependent… um... rather than independent. So, I might've of...and he's a very sensitive boy. He's a very kind of gentle soul. And I think I might have, you know taken the pressure off his developmental to developmental trajectory and just listen. You play it out as you need to and um... I certainly wouldn't describe myself as being a strict harsh parent at all. Um... but I think in his case, he might have just benefited from yeah...ah... I suppose that an example would be the kind of sleep training idea where the child's not sleeping enough on their own. So, you kind of have to sort of separate yourself from the sleeping and sort of encouraging sleep on their own I think. With him, he would have, he would have been a better child today at age five had he been allowed to kind of sleep in our bed, um you know, or in our bedroom at least, you know for longer... so might have been a bit gentler with him... (Luke).

It appears that fathering for the first time was accompanied by an anxious pressure to ensure independence in their children, perhaps prematurely, as for these fathers parenting a second child allowed for a more relaxed approach that tolerated dependence for longer.

4.4. Feelings of Envy and Rivalry

It was striking that so few of the men who were interviewed explicitly acknowledged their feelings of envy or a sense of rivalry felt in their relationships with their wives and children. There was a striking sense that participants felt that their emotional needs were not held in mind by anyone else in the immediate family at all. Mark alluded to his ambivalent feelings about not being the primary attachment figure:

> ... like with my girl... my daughter... she's like more interested in me, but then with my wife, my son was but... my babies are my wife's babies and it's not because I want it that way it's because it is, you know, like, since I have a daughter, my son's kind of noticed that maybe I could be of some use, you know. I'm not just some guy, you know, that's... there for unsure purposes...Yeah. Um, she, she… my role is to contain her to contain them. It's like that but she's the most central. She's in charge of most of it. She… is... preoccupied with it in a way that I'm not... she kind of takes pleasure and joy from it in the way that I can't… and derives meaning from the way she is… full time periods... and I am sort of... like come in and support. So we can't say what role is wrong. It's like all the roles. She does it all… and not that I mean, I also do it all... but not like that. I do it all... according to the instructions that are provided. It's a little bit unfair to say quite like it because it's not that's not so true... If my little girl wakes up in the middle of the night and I go and try to calm her down… she will scream louder... most of the time and the same with my son. It was like that a lot; it has changed now. They know who they want. They want her often. And so I suppose that's her role. She's the one that they turn to most of the time. And I'm the one that they turn to when she's not available... like I mean, it's a bit of a kick in the ego you like... Oh, come on, man, and don't you love me too? I can do this. I could do this. Come on. I'll see you, come on, let me do it. Um... I don't want to be the central one. It doesn't feel very nice to be rejected one either. I suppose it's mixed (Mark).

Mark's sense of envy and rivalry towards his wife regarding being the primary attachment figure is alive in the above excerpt, though it appears ambivalently held in mind. While he

refers to feelings of rejection ("a kick in the ego"), he also acknowledged that being the primary attachment figure may not be something he would actually prefer. In trying to make sense of the gendered nature of the attachments between children and their mothers and fathers, Shaun drew on theory, and in particular, a paper by Andrew Samuels, to try to help him manage the clear differences in the way that bodies are experienced by young children:

> …and the idea that father's form a bond on the grounds of desire…and that, that desire has an element of sexuality to it…okay…and so you are in a very…very sort of…um…what's the word?… indefinite space between…on the one hand the need for…sexuality, to bond and the notion of incest…and sexual misconduct…so you know… how does it work for me that I have a body that responds to touch, and warmth, and, and, and the friction of bodies and the aliveness of bodies and this is an adult sexuality and then I engage with the child… I think about this in terms of mothers… how, how do you move from breast as erotogenic zone… to breast as… you know… udder that feeds… and I think there is something of that in fathers too… and so I think that some of the time fathers don't engage with their bodies for fear of that story or if they do engage with that…cannot distinguish…you know…what is appropriate and what is inappropriate… and transgress… um… but also then that there is this space for children to grow up… with the notion that the male body… can be a comforting body… too… they don't grow up with this… clear distinction somewhere… that bodies that nurture and hold and soothe and, and all of those things are maternal bodies… (Shaun).

While questioning the role of socialisation in these gendered attachments, there was a poignant sense of unfairness that fathers, and specifically their male bodies, are not also recognised as possible places of safety and comfort.

In Daniel's case, his rivalry was an anticipated rivalry with their domestic worker, that he wished to avoid. Daniel linked his fear of repeating his own childhood attachment to his domestic worker with his children, which suggests a sense of jealousy over his childrens' attachments:

> I think also from my own upbringing... There were very close attachments to my… my maid I had her throughout in my childhood... but I didn't want my child to develop really close attachments to any outsiders. We would like the main attachments to be me and my wife... (Daniel).

Shaun referred to a sense of competing with the children for the attentions of the mother, but in a fairly abstract way, that perhaps signals ambivalence around these feelings:

> ...so you hear this...from... particularly from therapist fathers who are inclined somewhere to some notion of object relationships, so they can in a sense end up competing for mother…. which I think is an interesting concept, I mean, what does that mean... why are you claiming a space exclusively here…. how am I competing? I'm not breastfeeding... (Shaun).

In the same vein, Mark reflected on his sense of loss that transpired in his relationship with his wife, as his needs and wants were no longer prioritised or as sufficiently met. His envy for the attention of his wife is very alive here:

> You find someone that you love, you think 'wow'. This person's really beautiful and I like spending time with them and we've got this intimacy and that's nice and and hey, let's kind of spend… let's let's do this forever. And that's the thing you choose and you go and yeah we'll have and we'll have babies. And that's the thing you choose if you choose that because it can, you know, is when they lose the survival instinct of the species is much more powerful than if you don't want to, you just have babies often. But um... then you introduce these children into the equation, into the equation. Right?... So the thing that you chose is now thoroughly disrupted because mom is not available. Your wife, your partner is not there for you and you are not there for them. You are both there for your children all of the time and so you're now in a situation where many of the needs that you had and what you thought that life would be like is just not being met in many many ways, right? That's me (Mark).

John's reflection on his sense of loss and resentment in his relationship with his wife was moving. He appeared to be in touch with his pain in his fantasy of returning to a state in his life where his needs were met more readily:

> I suppose there's something with the first child to come to terms with that separation, that loss which was a time of huge personal growth for me and my own therapy and there's nothing quite like that... and issues of about separation and loss... that really came to the fore there… I think there's this part of me that has this fantasy... of going back to some kind of... childless state, where, my needs are much more higher up the

food chain... um... what I discovered is there's… there's no going back to that... you can go away but you never away… 'cause they're always on your mind… (John).

4.5. Experience of Psychodynamic Theory in the Transition to Fatherhood

All of these men could reflect on their experience of theory during their transition into fatherhood. Many experienced theory as being a combination of providing them with a sense of confidence and a reassuring thinking space, while, at times, also removing them from the present. There appeared to be a common shared sense of anxiety about this latter phenomenon.

4.5.1. Winnicottian theory as more forgiving and containing. Some of these men made reference to finding Winnicottian theory attractive as an assuaging source of comfort that fostered a sense of trust in and acceptance of themselves. A few of these men contrasted Winnicottian theory against their experience of Kleinian theory, which they found more rigid, distressing and less forgiving.

Daniel spoke about how he experienced Kleinian theory as reinforcing his own rigidity as a therapist and a father and that he has found embracing Winnicottian theory helpful in terms of accessing his own playfulness:

> Klein is something that we need to verify... as children to parents, therapists... there's room for therapists like that... and then again...Winnicott's way, being more chilled, allowing play...allowing space... to let out frustration, and give a child the chance to explore the world... probably softening, to some extent, not quite there...to soften the extent to which one really let one's child's play, and not just therapeutically but like what it means to be a child, to play... (Daniel).

John also reflected on his move away from Kleinian theory, stating that he found areas of Kleinian emphasis quite distressing and anxiety provoking. In contrast, he found Winnicottian theory more forgiving:

> I do think I became less interested in Melanie Klein after children and more interested in Winnicott... that felt like something more conciliatory...in Winnicott than Klein...and then trying to find and I think that's it's not that I'm inclined in anyway... but…. I…. like I say, I think some of it was

defensive...it's hard to think of some of the mess Klein gets into...quite a lot…. you know, the projection, the envy...all of that... it's hard for me to think about that... in my baby... and in myself, I guess…. by extension... especially in those early times...like I perhaps needed to hold something else... something more conciliatory... which in my sense what Winnicott is... (John).

John went on to explain how he found Winnicottian theory reassuring and encouraging:

> I remember a psychologist friend gave me a Winnicott...she gave me a Winnicott book... and one of the things that stuck out was...that, he said that...um...he said all a child needs is love and consistency and the only way to... give them that is to be yourself...cause, you know, because I think what's very confusing, or...you know, or like a bit upsetting... like... all the baby books... there's so much like injunction in those books... like do this, don't do this... don't overstimulate that baby,x...y...z... it will drive you fucking mad, and so there was something very really relieving about what [Winnicott] was saying: "Just trust yourself... that you're good enough.." um... that, I had to keep... saying to myself… There's a great consolation - you get a sense that good enough is quite a broad church... it's that idea that you just trust what you're doing... because you need this idea to sustain you… (John).

In both of John's reflections, he appeared to convey a deep sense of gratitude for what Winnicottian theory has been able to do for him as a father – permitting authenticity and space to make mistakes and still be 'good enough'. Luke also spoke of how Winnicottian theory aided him, particularly in understanding his role in supporting the mother-infant dyad:

> I think one thing you can just add as a thought that comes to mind about Winnicott that helped me... I'm sure he's the one who says that the mother contains the child and then the father must contain the mother to help the mother contain the child. So it's likely that you know, that kind of container role and in a way. Yeah, that would have that, you know would have been a helpful one for me (Luke).

4.5.2. Theory can provide a reassuring thinking space after the fact. Many of these men expressed that theory can provide a reassuring thinking space for reflecting on what has occurred. Daniel reflected that theory helps him make sense of what happens with his son. However, he expressed that it was often hard to be thoughtful in the moment in comparison to reflecting with hindsight:

> It's always there after and you think about what happened, what was going on, how did I act...could I have done something different...what else might be going on with my child and then...you know, come back now and revisit that...and then at the next...encounter or engagement with a child turned into being a self-reflective process...to think about something that...has happened... (Daniel).

Luke's account conveyed a similar sense that while theory can be helpful in understanding various interactions with his children, it can also interfere at times, perhaps inhibiting the more spontaneous 'human' responses:

> Yeah, I said the key things for me with a kind of to the two parts of the role you play in as a parent is… one is wanting to just be a parent who is a human in the room and responds to the child as a human would... the other one is someone who is thinking and has theory and has understanding of just what might be playing out in the space...and that sometimes can sort of interfere... I mean, it's a bonus, it helps and you get to really understand sort of a bit more of some of the mayhem that might be sort of looks like mayhem but that you can get a sense of maybe what might be going on (Luke).

John shared a similar sentiment in that theory has helped him make sense of very chaotic and difficult experiences with his children:

> It can feel like forever...getting pulled into, for want of a better word…. that counter-transference...or with the transference comes the child into the world…and they are...in a very unintegrated state...let's say at a month and a half to eight...and so there is something about...having a psychoanalytic understanding...that they all agree...on what that state is...what you would have received from your core...um...but they do provide consolations...on things that, sometimes, you know...that feeling just has to be...endured...and, you

know...you can just hold the baby through that, and,...and so, as I was saying, I think there is huge benefit...in that sense... (John).

John spoke very passionately as he related his account. It seemed that he spent a great deal of time reflecting on his relationship with his children and the consolation offered by a psychoanalytic understanding, especially when his children were pre-verbal, appeared to be of significant value.

4.5.3. Creating a psychological thinking space can remove you from being fully present in the moment. There was an implicit sense in the narratives that having psychological understanding could help them parent better and avoid problems down the line with their children, but the balance between use of this knowledge and being authentically present appeared tricky to establish. Some of these men spoke of their sense that taking their minds to a thoughtful space and/or drawing on theory can remove them from being mentally and emotionally present with their children in the moment.

Luke spoke of how he feels pressured to think before engaging with his child which he seemed to feel ties him up in knots of anxiety:

But I do think sometimes it's… it [theory] can be um...paralyzing and the things that you kind of think... What I found personally, we overthink things and feel like I needed to really think things through before actually just acting instinctively, which actually I think parenthood really is... is an instinctual kind of relationship... But if you overthink it, it can kind of get a bit messy, not messy, messy's not the right word. Just yeah, feels less and less grounded perhaps in a way and then a bit too kind of in one's head…. I mean I would have thought I was brilliant in the beginning but I think this growing awareness and I've just come to understand it that sometimes you're not nearly as present as you think you are because you're thinking a little bit too much about what's important and what's not... rather than just being there (Luke).

Daniel reflected on how he has found it difficult to be simultaneously thoughtful and present in the moment with his children:

so as much as one can be and try to be present I think that...the child's really
pushing buttons on their reality and sometimes...you don't have that luxury
just to be thoughtful and it [theory] can come only sometimes later but in that
moment it just kicks in spontaneously, having to look at that… (Daniel).

Matthew's account told of how he has ambivalent feelings over the role his training
has played in his parenting. He appeared to find the ability to be more thoughtful and
considerate of future effects useful for his parenting but also compromising his ability
to be fully mentally and emotionally present:

…Between sort of being sort of absolutely present and overthinking and
overanalysing um... probably swing either way depending on the, on the day, but
there certainly is a challenge. Constantly having to remind myself that I am a dad
and I must just be present and then at other times constantly reminding myself but I
have knowledge and experience and understanding so, let me use that. Because if I
don't want certain things to happen, you know, 10 20 30 years down the line. I need
to be cognizant of that...um but at the same time I am not a magician. I'm not a
wizard and I can't be absolutely certain and my actions today are going to lead to
the result that I want. So again, that's that um...it's balancing it trying to just control
what I can. Without being to... sort of um… too focused on trying to control things
(Matthew).

4.5.4. Theory and experience can serve as a persecutory pressure as a parent. At
times, the psychological knowledge held by these men was experienced as exerting
pressure, resulting in doubts about their parenting. This pressure was experienced in
unique ways by each of the fathers, but common to them was the potential to damage
their children. Daniel's comment below implies an envy for non-psychologist parents
whom he fantasizes have an easier time:

Then why can't we use that defensive denial...which might be easier for parents to
do? Not having to think about what's really going on because it might be too painful
or too difficult, but as a psychologist, I think, there is an often constant reminder of
what is going on... whether one likes it or not...but it leaks without you even
knowing it and then...one day have to face these things because...it will be

inevitable one day...that's most likely there's going to be surprises... of sort of...what is going on what is happening and what our struggles are... like with my daughter and I think that's about taking responsibility... whereas I think, you know,...like with other parents are on some autopilot mode...there's either avoidance or denial of it... (Daniel).

Daniel appeared to resent his training at times for sensitizing him to interpersonal dynamics and for the sense of responsibility he feels in this regard. He conveyed a longing for a 'defensive denial' which he imagines would be less painful. John reflected on how his training as a psychologist predisposes him to thinking too much about what is happening with his children which can give way to a kind of paranoia about his parenting:

...the paradox is that...well, a part of it, is that...you can...start to get a bit neurotic about it...like, you start to like... see… seeing dragons where...there's maybe not dragons...there, okay, you know, sometimes you just have to get on with it. You know, sometimes, being a father...and being a parent...is not about analysing...every-single-thing. that's happening in your child's life...it's about saying...it's okay (John).

John came across as angry with himself. It seemed that managing the balance of being thoughtful versus overthinking was a very stressful aspect of his parenting that he expected himself to manage better. Shaun also commented on an internal pressure that he experienced with regards to a need to be emotionally present. He appeared to experience a tension between this expectation and the need to provide financially:

I might judge myself… you know... I... if I do this... if I step up to my own expectations I've got… I do feel… um... I do feel… um... I do feel an expectation, but that's not dissonant… I feel an expectation to be a father... yeah... and I suppose... I'm aware somewhere that I'm caught between…. the pressure of, of providing financially... and providing relationally… and I suppose, to be emotionally present... as a... as a psychotherapist with a full practice is a problem invariably... a lot of days I come home feeling like I got, I don't want to listen to anything... leave me alone... I suppose that sets up a conflict... so it's, it's those tensions where I would feel the pressure… (Shaun).

While Shaun's comment implies a pressure to be emotionally present, likely from his understanding of children's developmental needs, his comment also highlights the practical difficulties that being a psychotherapist father, in particular, may pose on his capacity to be emotionally present.

4.6. Social Pressures of Being a Father

These men appeared to have experienced contradictory pressures from society. Some experienced the pressure to be more emotionally present and supportive while others felt pushed to be a firm boundary setter and provider. A few experienced a combination of the above. Daniel reflected on how he felt pressured to provide financially as a father and how society still discourages fathers from deviating from this role in various ways, including legislation on paternity leave which provides far fewer days than maternity leave.

> Pressure maybe… maybe just in terms of providing...financial stability and I think that's just seen in the western traditional concept of being a father...a breadwinner… I'm not sure if that is a societal error or factor, but that's the way it is… I do...wish that there was more equality, with the gender roles, both in terms of legislation around paternity leave is only a few days and I think a more progressive societies...like… in… Denmark... there's an absolute equality... in parenting and it just comes from the outset, there's no given at all that the child adopted by the father, paternity leave exactly the same as maternity leave, and very common to see the father pushing the pram, doing the shopping... here we are very far...from it… (Daniel).

Daniel appeared to resent this obstacle toward allowing fathers to explore other ways of relating to their children. Given that his desire to be a very emotionally present father figure was very salient throughout his narrative, such obstacles would make it difficult for like-minded men to perform their parenting differently. Matthew's account emphasised the pervasiveness of the manner in which society reinforces that fathers do not occupy a caregiving role for their children:

> I still get very frustrated with society's general view that the dad's role is kind of in the background that dads are not present... that dads, you know, don't sort of change nappies. Dads don't spend that sort of prolonged significant time with children. You're going to shopping centres and there's mommy and baby parking bays and you know,

there's pictures of baby changing rooms and it's a mother and a baby. So I'm… I'm constantly frustrated with the whole… sort of general idea that well that's significant... sort of caring role is only for moms and it's all very subtle and subliminal... (Matthew).

In line with fathers experiencing a pressure aversive to developing a stronger emotional bond with their children, John reflected on how his peers pressure him to distance himself from his wife and child:

I think from society, even with me and my sort of broader peer group... there is a dynamic between some of the guys where, you know… when… some of them will say… they won't say it… exactly like this but "You're a man so check out from that... that's women's work". They fell back on the sort of... patriarchal way of understanding things… the pressure can get played out in that sort of masculine register, you know, real men don't... do that... (John).

John was angered by this and felt a strong sense of injustice. It appeared that he felt this perpetuated displacing an onerous burden on mothers, depriving them of much needed support during what can, at times, be an exhausting and demanding task. Mark's account highlighted his sense of feeling the simultaneous pressure to be a financial provider and fulfil his children's emotional needs at home:

… I can tell you what the effect is. I think it's a similar effect to what we're seeing with women in life, there is now a pressure to be super successful in the workplace and super successful in the home. It is very hard... You know, like I have the same pressure… (Mark).

Mark appeared to feel that the pressure to successfully meet the ideals of both aspects was an exceptionally difficult task. He expanded on the manner in which society underplays the difficulty of being a parent and how there is a pressure for an ideal father to feel a complete sense of fulfilment from childrearing alone.

I feel like is it a... huge pressure from society that this is meant to be the most rewarding... fun thing in my life. That everything is supposed to centre around it. That now the development of my children and spending time with them is supposed to be the thing that I get the greatest amount of satisfaction and joy from. That if I get frustrated for moving into a two-hour play limit... Being unable to be present because

my mind starts trying to solve other things in my life, but if this means some kind of terrible thing about me... (Mark).

This appeared to evoke a great deal of hurt and resentment in Mark. Luke's account highlighted a similar sense that he feels pressured to meet his occupational, social and more formerly maternal expectations.

I think traditionally… it might have been a sense of the mother is more involved than the dad. The dad is away but returns and, and is the kind of voice of the law from time to time. Where now I think there is a greater sort of shift that the dads are more involved, but I'm not sure anyone knows exactly what that means and so we in many ways we're having to kind of plot this terrain...without any clear guides or mentors and I think we're finding that quite hard... but I think that the fathers now are I think they kind of still the law, but I just mean the other kind of rules of life and but are being drawn into being um... a bit more involved… I think the conflict comes when trying to strike that balance. Wait, actually you've got to kind of have a social life, work life and the father life, you know, that is it's really hard and when those roles aren't is clearly defined… (Luke).

Luke's account particularly highlighted his sense of difficulty in not only meeting all of society's varied expectations for respective domains of one's life, but also how difficult it can be to navigate a changing societal expectation. Despite acknowledging how the pressures he experiences are aligned with his own expectations of himself, Shaun still found areas of tension where meeting those expectations felt difficult. The most significant area of difficulty for him centred on the demands of providing financially and meeting his family's emotional needs i.e. how taxing it can be to meet the emotional needs of one's family as a psychologist with a full practice.

...I don't really feel in conflicts with expectation I'm invested in being a good father, fathering... is a central theme for me... so...so I don't really feel...pressure in a sense of being a good father…no...um... I might judge myself… if I step up to my own expectations I've got… I do feel an expectation, but that's not dissonant… I'm aware somewhere that I'm caught between…. the pressure of, of providing financially... and provide in relationally… um... and I suppose to be emotionally present... as a... as a psychotherapist with a full practice is a problem invariably... a lot of days I come home feeling like I've got, I don't want to listen to anything... leave me alone... I

suppose that sets up a conflict... so it's, it's those tensions where I would feel the pressure… (Shaun).

4.7. Conclusion

All of these men had ideas about what makes a 'good father'. Though participants' beliefs varied quite widely, each account seemed to emphasise the embracing of a supportive role in facilitating the development of the child. Some narratives emphasised the influence of context and the child's developmental stage in determining the performance of ideal fathering. Other narratives highlighted the need for a father to be emotionally present and supportive, and in a similar vein, humble and self-reflexive. Some focused on that the significance of performing the separating functions of being another mind and boundary setter. All these men found themselves reprocessing their relationship with their own fathers upon becoming fathers themselves. The vast majority were able to reflect on how they have made sense of their relationship with their fathers. Of all the topics covered in these interviews, this one tended to elicit the most significant affective turmoil as participants reflected largely on a sense of loss in relation to their own fathers and fear of repeating their dynamic with their children. To some extent, the majority of these men had experienced difficulty negotiating a nurturing role alongside a separating role in their relationships with their partners and children. Many of these men appeared to have a strong desire to be very emotionally close with their children and prioritise their children's needs, often at the detriment of their spousal relationships and worried that they were either over or under performing a needed separating function. Some of these men expressed regret in how they engaged in their relationships with their wives during the transition to fatherhood. This took various forms. One felt that he had not invested enough in his relationship with his wife, another felt that he had not given his wife enough space to develop her confidence as a mother. Another felt that he had not fully comprehended the importance of the marital relationship as a supportive system for their children. It was striking feature of the narratives that so few of the men who were interviewed explicitly acknowledged their feelings of envy or a sense of rivalry felt in their relationships with their wives and children. When mentioned, there was a significant sense that participants felt that their emotional needs were not held in mind by anyone else in the immediate family at all.

5. Discussion

This section will discuss the reflections from this group of South African psychodynamic psychologist fathers, particularly how they interrogate their identities of father and psychodynamic psychologist. The manner in which these differing identities interact will be reviewed within the context of various influences: their own unique psychological processes, societal expectations of fathers, and fathering theory within the body of psychodynamic literature.

Both identities of father and psychologist were complex and varied for each of these men. While identities may seem conceptually distinct, this is not consistently so in practice (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008) and in this study it was evident that the participants' identities as psychodynamic psychotherapists clearly influenced their experiences as fathers and how they constructed their fatherhood identities. Alongside the influence of psychodynamic theory, these men also appeared to be strongly influenced by their childhood experiences of their own fathers. A fear of repeating difficult father-child dynamics was evident. Societal expectations of fatherhood also played a part in their constructions of their fatherhood identities, most notably in problematic ways, as the contradictory and inconsistent expectations of society seem to have contributed to a difficulty in negotiating the dialectic between the nurturing and separating functions of their fathering identities. This may have been compounded by the lack of a coherent body of theory within the psychodynamic field explicitly clarifying the fathering role. Many participants appeared to move away from Kleinian theory since becoming fathers, finding it punitive and anxiety provoking, shifting allegiance to Winnicottian theory which they appeared to find more containing and forgiving. Interestingly, these same participants often did not openly disclose their feelings of envy and rivalry toward both their wives and their children, indicating the possibility that part of their aversion to Kleinian theory may be that the envious and rivalrous aspects of themselves were not seen as congruent with their constructions of their identities since becoming fathers.

5.1. Disidentification and The Fear of Repetition

From the participants' definitions of 'a good father', it was apparent that their experiences of being fathered played a crucial role in the shaping of their identities as fathers. It was striking that many narratives appeared to reflect a fear of repeating unhappy relational dynamics and leaving their children with the same sense of loss regarding unmet emotional needs that they

experienced in relation to their own fathers. Participants' specific and personal definitions of a 'good father' largely tended to highlight what participants' felt they had needed from their fathers but did not get. It was notable that participants' definitions veered sharply away from their own experiences of being fathered. Several participants chose definitions which emphasised the importance of the father being emotionally present and supportive by holding the needs of the family in mind and being there to support their interests. For these participants, fathering was understood as physically and emotionally relational, but also reflective of their desire for their fathers to have better met their physical and emotional needs. In a similar vein, a few of these men also emphasised the importance of a father being humble and self-reflexive. For them, the identity of father entails being mindful of the developing, separate identities of their children while respecting one's own fallibility and separate perspective and desires. This too ran contrary to their experience of their fathers. Such examples illustrate that for many of the participants, their identity as fathers appeared to be strongly influenced by a striving to disidentify with their own father as "they [try] to deny any resemblance to the external object by adopting characteristics, actions and behaviour which were in direct opposition to those qualities" (Greenson, 1954, p. 203).

Similar to the observations of Fraiberg, Adelson and Shapiro (1975), many of the participants expressed a fear of repeating the mistakes of their own parents. Given that these psychotherapist fathers may have a sense of psychic and emotional 'wounding' from their experiences of being parented, a similar parallel process may have taken place when they became fathers: they may have wished to seek reparation and healing through these experiences by striving to provide an experience of being parented to their children, in which their emotional needs are more successfully met (Freud, 1920). On the other side of the coin, this effort toward healing through inverting their childhood experience of being fathered could also be understood as a striving to disidentify with their fathers (Greenson, 1954). Through the endeavour to parent so differently to the way that they had been fathered, they may be avoiding the ego-dystonic potential of seeing themselves as the object that left them with such a poignant sense of loss. This was present in the participant reflections on using psychodynamic theory in their parenting. While there was a sense of gratitude toward psychodynamic theory, expressed at times in relation to the containment and potential understanding it offered, at other times, the need to think or understand or 'make sense of' was experienced as being pulled away into their minds, which they feared prevented them from being fully engaged in the moment with their children. This fear about the prospect of

being pulled away from being in the present could be understood as a fear of repeating the sense of distance that participants described experiencing in relationship to their own fathers (Freud, 1920; Frosh, 1997; Greenson, 1954). As such, it appeared that this thinking space, which seemed to have been facilitated through their training and their knowledge of theory, appeared to be bittersweet – both a boon and a curse. The prospect of repeating may be all the more fearsome due to the psychodynamic emphasis on the power of the repetition compulsion, but also on the emphasis on the role of parents in facilitating the healthy emotional and psychological development within psychoanalytic thought (Freud, 1920). There was a level of anxiety present in the narratives that their parenting, if not performed well enough, could cause long term psychological damage to their children.

5.2. Traditional vs. Modern Performances of Fathering: Negotiating Nurturing and Separating

A significant conflict that appeared central to the experiences of these men was negotiating their performance of fatherhood as a dialectic between the functions of a nurturer and a separator. This particular area of tension highlighted a sense of responsibility that their dual identities seemed to place upon them in facilitating the healthy psychological and emotional development of their children. Many of these men felt a sense of conflict in grappling with the extent to which they should allow for their children's dependency needs to be gratified and to what extent they should encourage their children to be more independent. Half of the participants felt that they may have compromised their children's development by unsuccessfully navigating the tightrope between these two choices and appeared to experience a sense of guilt and shame. Only two of these psychotherapist fathers emphasised the importance of the 'thirdness' of the father and the use of this position as being able to serve as another mind and a boundary setter for the child to internalise. The small number of participants who emphasised this sort of performance is surprising given that the majority of them described their own experience of being fathered in this manner.

There are many potential contributing factors to this sense of tension between nurturing and separating roles. Paradoxically, their own experiences appear to play a significant role in this tension. Given that experiencing a more traditional performance of fathering appears to have left these men with a poignant sense of loss in relation to unmet emotional needs, it is possible that they may have experienced increased distress as their own wounded dependent

and needy parts are evoked in relation to their children (Frosh, 1997). Despite so many of these men having a strong internal drive to be more able to meet the emotional needs of their own children, they do not appear to have internalised a relationship with a father who could meet their own. In addition to disidentifying with the fathers, it is possible that many of these fathers drew upon early identifications with their mothers. This may have caused them to struggle to draw upon a coherent internal representation that can meet this ideal resulting in "[fluctuations] between caricatures of the prohibitive patriarch (do as I say) and the overinvolved mother" (Frosh, 1997, p. 51; Greenson, 1954).

The tension between nurturing and separator roles appeared to be exacerbated by perceived social pressures around fathering. Participant's experiences of social pressures appeared to be inconsistent and at times, contradictory. Some of these men felt socially pushed toward performing a more traditional role of the father which appeared to be a distant, financial provider and disciplinarian, versus a 'modern' performance which entailed being more physically and emotionally present and supportive to one's children (Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2017). A few participants expressed feeling pressured to perform both. These opposing messages appear to highlight an external tension in society which may have contributed toward their difficulty negotiating the internal tension around the inner nurturer separator dialectic. Although most participants appeared to identify more closely with more recent shifts in fathering expectations, this navigation appears to have been confounded by their discovery that gendered roles such as fathering are maintained in personal histories, their bodies, and within societies' rules around their bodies, and in the body of psychoanalytic theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Frosh, 1997).

Given that the majority of these men expressed that their experience of being fathered left them with many unmet emotional needs related to nurturing and separating, it seemed apparent that their own fathers had experienced a measure of difficulty navigating the same dialectic. Thus, while it appears that the tension between these two roles may have begun in earlier generations, or perhaps even be ubiquitous to the father role, shifts in psychoanalytic theory appear to have foregrounded this tension for these psychotherapist fathers.

Historically, psychoanalytic literature has suggested that fathers serve as a separating and prohibitive Oedipal force, yet this has increasingly shifted to arguing for a flexible father who can also be nurturing and meet the dependency needs of the child as well as the mother

(Frosh, 1997). These shifts are alluded to in scattered papers on fatherhood from a psychodynamic perspective (Diamond, 1986, 2017; Liebman & Abell, 2000), but is a topic that has not been extensively explored within current psychodynamic literature. As such, these men appear to have little in the way of clarity both internally and externally guiding their negotiation of these nurturing and separating roles.

The difficulty that participants experienced negotiating between these broader nurturing and separating roles also appeared to manifest in tensions between various relational needs: the need to have a dyadic relationship with the child that excludes the mother, a triadic relationship that includes a holding function for the mother-infant dyad as proposed by Winnicott (1964), a dyadic relationship with their wives that excludes the child, and perhaps even their need for an identity and relationships outside of the family system (both work and social). With the need for an emotionally attuned dyadic relationship with the child being prioritised, these tensions seem to have left them feeling, at points, that they did not balance these competing needs well. Some worried that they had neglected their wives and themselves, compromising the caregiving system for their children. Several participants were aware that by neglecting their relationship with their wives, they may have unintentionally undermined their wives' sense of confidence as mothers. This appeared complicated by a 'rivalry' that emerged through their status as mental health professionals. Some expressed a realisation that a stronger relationship with their wives would have provided for a more robust, confident, supportive and capable practice of caregiving (Beaton, Doherty & Wenger, 2012).

It is also possible that their roles as psychotherapists may predispose them towards wanting or needing a more exclusive dyadic relationship with their children. The practice of psychotherapy within psychoanalytic spheres has been compared to that a parent-child dyad (Celenza, 2010; Lichtenberg, 1996). Celenza (2010) writes about how gratifying it can be for therapists to experience the intense intimate dyadic relationship rooted in parent-child dynamics - specifically, relationships characterised by the navigation of the tensions in power relations and boundaries between themselves and the other. Additionally, while psychotherapists use paternal functions at points, maternal functions such as mirroring, reflecting and containing (which are often used to build and maintain the dyadic connection) tend to be more strongly emphasised in literature and general practice (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Thus, it is possible that male psychodynamic psychotherapists may feel comfortable

with maternal ways of relating to their children. This, together with the reparative wishes that many of these men expressed around being more nurturing than their own fathers, and regrets at neglecting their relationships with their wives, suggests potential for possible rivalry between mother and maternal psychotherapist father, and difficulty negotiating triadic relating.

5.3. The Experience of Theory and Psychological Training

The narratives were clearly influenced by various psychoanalytic understandings and, albeit to differing extents, the fathers in this study appeared to use theory when trying to make sense of both their roles as fathers and difficult feelings that may arise. Many participants expressed that they found Winnicottian theory a source of reassurance that aided them in providing a sense of latitude for their own fallibility as fathers. Winnicott's (1953) notion of just needing to be "good enough" helped them become more lenient with themselves regarding their fathering practices. Interestingly, a significant number of those participants who were drawn toward Winnicottian theory expressed that they found themselves feeling more aversive toward Kleinian theory as they experienced it as unforgiving and persecutory – inflaming their anxiety. Perkel's (2006) notion of the phallic container was also noted as helpful in understanding the role of the father when parenting an infant. For some of the men the notion of acting as a container for the mother was reassuring in a chaotic and confusing period of fathering.

The narratives concerning the role of psychological training and theory highlighted that for these men, the identities of psychotherapist and father place value on two performative aspects of fathering: firstly, having a thinking space for being thoughtful about interpersonal, psychological and emotional dynamics and secondly, being mentally present and engaged with one's children. These values appeared to be difficult to reconcile or hold as a dialectic. Although this thinking space was valued when created in moments when they were not with their children, there was concern that their tendency to try to draw on theory or intellectualise in moments with their children undermined their performance of fathering. Bion (1962) argues for the importance of a thinking space in aiding the infant to process thoughts and affects which serves to facilitate a capacity to process their own thoughts and affects. This provides a foundation for healthy emotional and psychological development. Ogden (1994) argues that this thinking space helps psychotherapists make sense of the present, infusing the experience rather than removing them from it. The participants' descriptions of the times that

theory felt problematic for them suggest that they use it as a sort of flight to intellect, which could explain participants' sense that this removed them from the present. However, it is possible that the resultant self-persecutory thoughts are a product of these men projecting their own harsh judgements of themselves onto the theory. For these psychologist men, psychological training and theory can simultaneously serve to assuage anxiety but also exacerbate it.

5.4. Notable absences: Explicit Feelings of Envy, Rivalry and Shame

Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) notion of 'the defended subject' allowed for interpretations around aspects of experience that were alluded to, but not explicitly verbalised. Very few of these men explicitly acknowledged their feelings of envy and rivalry towards their wives and children, despite its salience in the narratives, especially in relation to strong themes of unmet needs as children, and currently as fathers where they expressed not feeling 'held in mind'. Their aversion to Kleinian theory, which emphasises envious and rivalrous dynamics between children and their caregivers, may be a parallel process of this dynamic. This may reflect that many of these men are still in the midst of reconciling their contrary feelings of envy and adoration and mourning the losses that come with being a father in order to feel secure in their role as a third 'other' to the mother-infant dyad (Freud, 1900). Navigating this process may be more difficult for these men, given that many appeared driven to either take on the role of primary caregiver or at least develop a close emotional relationship with their children – possibly foreclosing the traditional conception of the father as a third other. Another way of understanding the extent that these men prioritised their relationship with their children, may serve as a sort of reaction formation; some of these men may be acting in direct opposition to their rivalrous and envious desires in order to provide a sense of protection them from these 'less acceptable' emotions (Freud, 1911).

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of findings

For these men, their identities as fathers and psychotherapists were found to broadly emphasise that ideal fathering needs to involve investment in facilitating the development of the child. Additionally, contradictory messages from theory and society appear to have

created tensions with regards to the performance of ideal fathering, particularly in the negotiation of the fathering roles of nurturer and separator. Finding the balance between allowing dependence and encouraging independence in their children emerged as difficult to manage. Feelings of envy and rivalry appeared to be largely disavowed, possibly due to the sense that they were dystonic with their values embedded within their collocated identities. Engagement with psychoanalytic theory and practice could assuage anxiety through the provision of a thinking space. However, this thinking space was devalued in particular contexts. At times, theory may have been used defensively, serving to disconnect them from their children in moments. This dynamic may be due to multiple factors including a seeming conflict in ideas within their collocated identities of how to perform fathering and projecting harsh judgements on to the theory.

6.2. Limitations of the study

This study has a few limitations concerning its scope as well as the participant sample. The sample was very homogenous, consisting of white males only. It is likely that fathers from other races, cultures and class backgrounds may have expressed different understandings of fatherhood and foregrounded different aspects in relating their experiences. Additionally, due to the small sample size and qualitative method, the prospect of generalising to a greater population is not possible. However, this study was not designed to be generalizable. Instead, this study sought to investigate the experiences within this specific sample. As this study is a research report, its scope is limited by necessity. As such, conducting more than one interview per participant was not feasible, although a second interview could have allowed for greater depth and possibly more engagement with the more difficult aspects of fatherhood such as feelings of envy, loss and anger.

6.3. Clinical implications of the study

The knowledge generated from this study could aid psychotherapist fathers in normalising the potential fear of repetition and their sense of tension in the negotiation of their maternal and separating functions in the performance of their role. It may also inform future interventions between fathers, their partners and their children in modern contexts, where many conflicting and contradictory narratives make negotiating how to be a father a potentially onerous task. It may be beneficial for psychotherapists to fathers to explore these potential tensions in therapy.

6.4. Recommendations for future research

Given that this population is likely to be reflective around their experiences, it could be valuable to utilize them as a sample in future research. For example, insight gained from this study could potentially further inform future interventions between fathers, their partners and their children. Additionally, given the literature supporting the foregrounding of professional status in men's negotiation of their paternal role (Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Plantin, 2003), investigating participant narratives within a similar sample around professional status in relation to their partners (including working hours and income earned) may further elaborate on the intersection between gender and class in their negotiation of their identities and experience.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information Sheet

School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Dear Sir,

My name is Chris Glover. I am currently completing my Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand and am conducting research as part of my degree. My research entails exploring the influence that being a psychologist has on being a father. Part of this research involves interviewing male psychologists who are also fathers about their experiences and understandings of fatherhood in light of their psychological training and practice as a psychodynamic therapist. It is hoped that through this process we would be able to explore how the experiences and meanings attributed to fatherhood by male psychologists are understood and created within the context of having a deeper understanding of the 'psychology of fatherhood' than other male populations.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research and to share your fathering experiences with me. Participation in this study will involve being interviewed by me. The interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed time and place where privacy and confidentiality can be assured. At all times, your right to confidentiality will be respected. Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that no identifying information is disclosed in the research. The researcher and will be the only people who will be aware of your identity and participation in this research. Participation is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to. There are no right or wrong answers and you may stop the interview at any time with no negative consequences. In addition, you may withdraw from the study up until submission of the research for examination.

The interview will be digitally recorded and only I will have access to the digital tapes. It is necessary for me to record the interview in order for me to remember as much detail as possible. Your interview will not be heard by anyone else other than me. The digital interviews will be kept in a password-protected file on a computer which only I will be able to access. The anonymised transcripts will be

kept on password-protected computers to which only myself and my supervisor will have access. Although I know who you are, confidentiality will be maintained by not disclosing any information that may identify you in the paper. I will assign a pseudonym to your information in the paper. Direct quotes from your interview will be used in the paper, however, no identifying information will be included and they will be used with quotes from other interviews. After the paper is finished your interview recording will be deleted and with your permission, the anonymised transcript will be archived with my supervisor for use in future research studies. These studies will also maintain your anonymity.

It is our intention to publish the results of this study. Before publishing the paper, we will send you the final draft in order for you to check your level of comfort with the anonymization of data. My contact details and those of my supervisor are attached to this form. If anything should arise in the interview that is distressing for you, please let me know if there is anything I could do to help you access psychotherapy, where you could explore these issues further.

If you do choose to participate please can you fill out the two consent forms attached and give them back to me; the one is consent to participate and the other is consent for the audio recording.

Please feel free to contact either me or my supervisor if you would like any further information, have any further questions, or would like to report any negative affects the study has had on you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards

Chris Glover   Dr. Katherine Bain

(Clinical Psychology Student)   (Research Supervisor)

0726105748   011 717 4558

Email: chrisglover24747@yahoo.com   Email: Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B

Consent Form (Interview)

I, _____ give consent to being interviewed by Chris Glover for his study on exploring the experience of being both a psychodynamic psychotherapist and father. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.

- I may refrain from answering any questions that I do not want to answer.

- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time.

- All information provided will remain confidential. Although direct quotes may be used in the journal paper, these will not be linked to identifying information.

- If I am quoted, a pseudonym (Respondent X, Respondent Y etc.) will be used.

- None of my identifiable information will be included in the journal paper.

- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report and journal paper for the partial completion of the degree, Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

- The research may be presented at a local/international conference and be published in a journal and/or book chapter.

- There are no direct benefits for me in participating in this study.

- There are no anticipated risks for me participating in this study.

I agree to the anonymised transcript being archived for future research purposes:

Yes___ No___

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

Consent Form (Audio Recording)

I _____ give consent for my interview with Chris Glover for his study on exploring the experience of being both a psychodynamic psychotherapist and father. I understand that:

- The recording will not be heard by anyone other than the researcher.

- The anonymised transcript will not be seen by anyone other than the researcher and his supervisor.

- The anonymised transcripts will be kept in a password-protected file on a computer which only the researcher and his supervisor will be able to access. The printed transcripts will be kept in locked offices.

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or journal paper.

- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the journal paper, I will be referred to by a pseudonym (Respondent X, Respondent Y etc.).

Signed _____

Date   _____

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule

1. Please tell me what being a father has been like for you?
   - Kids?
     - Names
     - Ages
   - Becoming a father?
     - Introduction of a third in the family
     - Infancy -> toddler -> childhood

2. Please tell me what being a psychodynamic psychologist has been like for you?

3. What is it like being both a psychodynamic psychologist and father?

4. How do you understand fatherhood as conceptualised in psychodynamic theory?

5. How has this influenced your experience of being a dad?
   - How has this lined up with the theory?

6. What would you say has influenced you in your journey as a father?

7. What psychological theories around fatherhood and childhood development did you cover in your psychological studies? What psychological theories do you think most influenced your thinking on fathering and what a father should do?
   - Which of these theories have helped you as a father?
   - Are there any theories that have made fathering more difficult?

8. What role has your psychological training and practice played in your life as a father, if any?

9. Do you feel it has helped you? Hindered you? Has it led to any emotions? How have you handled these feelings?

10. Do you think being a psychologist has made fathering different for you, when compared to fathers who are not psychologists? Please elaborate.

11. What do you think is the dominant understanding of what it is to be a father within your particular culture and social class?

12. Do you have a definition of a 'good father'? Did you bring it to your fathering? Has it changed? How did it influence your experience and understandings of being a father?

13. What kinds of pressures from society and theory around fathering and being a good father have you experienced?

   - There is a move towards more present, involved fathers. How have you made sense of this?
   - What does being more present mean to you?

14. Has being a father influenced/shifted your psychological practice or professional views on fatherhood at all? If yes, please could you expand on how?

   - Has your understanding of the theory changed in your mind?

15. What is the difference for you in your role as a father and as a psychologist? Given that a psychologist has been compared to being a parent, how do you separate out these roles?

16. What role would you say your wife has played in parenting? How has this influenced your role?

17. In terms of your own upbringing: please tell me a little about what your experience of being fathered was like. What would you say was difficult for you in this relationship? What was good? How would you describe your relationship with your father (mother)?

18. Given your experience as a father, has your conception of your own father shifted from before you were a father to now? If so, how?

19. What, if anything, have you tried to do differently or the same as your own father?

20. If you could father your child(ren) again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

21. Is there anything else on this topic you feel is important for me to know?