

**MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF FATHERING SONS: ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENCE
AND DISAPPOINTMENT**

ROBERT HAY PLUKE

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

DECLARATION

I, Robert Hay Pluke, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, and is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Robert Hay Pluke

12th November 2014

Supervisor: Professor G. Lindegger

Signature _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of the following people:

- My supervisor, Graham Lindegger, who has been instrumental to the genesis, process, and production of this research project. I sincerely thank him for his outstanding guidance, his scholarly contributions and feedback, and his patient and generous support.
- Peers and staff at UKZN, for their support and constructive advice at various stages of the research process.
- The research participants, all of whom gave of their time in order to engage thoughtfully and sincerely with the research topic.
- My family. To Linda, who has been in so many ways my ballast, and to Dylan, Megan and Matthew for tolerating my weekend absences and for cheerfully supporting me throughout.
- My friends, who have somehow managed to remain interested in, and supportive of a project that must have begun to seem interminable.
- My father. You and we have been in my mind and heart throughout.

ABSTRACT

Previous research indicates that fathering can contribute to the psychological well-being of both men and their children, but that these benefits depend on the quality of relationship between father and child. Focusing on disappointment as a common relational experience, this qualitative study explores how fathers describe their experiences, actions and resolutions in the face of disappointment in their sons. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews with eleven fathers from similar socio-economic and cultural contexts. The study adopted a psychosocial perspective, and interviews were analysed by combining a thematic analysis with psycho-discursive and psychoanalytically-informed readings of the texts. The results indicate that participants expected their sons to be similar to them as fathers, such that disappointment talk tended to be founded on talk about difference. Additionally, most fathers expected to mentor their sons, particularly in the context of sports activities. However, differences in interest and attitude frustrated and disappointed these mentor hopes, presenting fathers with a dilemma. Many participants negotiated this dilemma by distinguishing between encouraging and ‘pushing’ their sons to conform. This distinction was used to demarcate good fathering and to defend against the implication that fathers were satisfying their own desires for achievement. Fathers were also concerned by, and tended to defend against, the notion that their responses to disappointment could damage their relationships to their sons. Some participants responded by renegotiating the mentor position, changing their expectations regarding achievement, and giving priority to their relationships with their sons. In some cases, the mother was positioned as a mediator between father and different son, and as a bridge to renegotiated mentor positions. These results suggest that analyzing the ways fathers respond to disappointment sheds light on the ways patriarchy may be (re)produced within the details of every-day interactions. But the results also suggest that the experience of disappointment represents a challenging opportunity for fathers to articulate new versions of fathering and masculinity through accepting and validating the different son.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Overall Objectives Of The Study	1
1.2. A psychosocial study	3
1.3. Power Within the Father-Son Relationship	4
1.4. Vulnerability Within the Father-Son Relationship	5
1.5. Summary	6
1.6. Summary Of Thesis Structure	7
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FORMULATION	10
2.1. Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Fathering and the Father-Son Relationship	10
2.2.1. Freud's concept of the oedipal complex	11
2.2.1.1. <i>Implications for the current study</i>	12
2.1.2. Subsequent theoretical perspectives on the mother – father – son triangle	16
2.1.2.1. <i>Flexibility and flux in parental and maternal functions</i>	17
2.1.2.2. <i>The 'goodenough father of whatever sex'</i>	18
2.1.2.3. <i>Genital fathering</i>	19
2.1.3. Recognition and domination in the father-son relationship	20
2.1.3.1. <i>The paradox of recognition</i>	21
2.1.3.2. <i>The intersubjective and intrapsychic as co-occurring relational dimensions</i>	23
2.1.3.3. <i>Gender 'overidentifications' within the father-son relationship</i>	25
2.1.3.4. <i>The ethics of recognition: transcending complementary relating</i>	28
2.1.4. Summary	29
2.2. Masculinities, Hegemonic Masculinities, and Fathering	30
2.2.1. Discursive psychology and the discursive production of masculinities	31

2.2.2.	Connell’s notion of hegemonic masculinity _____	33
2.2.2.1.	<i>Subordinated masculinities</i> _____	37
2.2.2.2.	<i>Complicity</i> _____	37
2.2.2.3.	<i>Marginalization</i> _____	38
2.2.3.	Psycho-discursive applications of the concept of hegemonic masculinity _____	39
2.2.4.	Discourses of fathering _____	40
2.2.5	Fatherhood in South Africa _____	45
2.2.6.	Bringing recognition and hegemonic masculinity together _____	46
2.3.	Disappointment _____	48
2.3.1.	A psychosocial analysis of disappointment and difference _____	50
2.3.2.	Locating disappointment in discourse _____	51
2.3.3.	Disappointment and difference _____	52
2.4.	Conclusion _____	53
CHAPTER THREE: CONSIDERING EMPIRICAL RESEARCH _____		55
3.1.	Father Involvement: The Centrality of the Relationship _____	55
3.2.	Disappointment as a Challenge to the Father-Son Relationship _____	56
3.3.	Father Expectations _____	58
3.3.1.	Expectations of ‘good’ fathering _____	60
3.4.	A Psychosocial Study of Fathering, Difference and Disappointment _____	61
3.5.	Conclusion: Contributions of the Current Study _____	62
CHAPTER FOUR: ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS TO THE STUDY _____		64
4.1.	Theorising the Unconscious _____	64
4.2.	Understanding Research Participants _____	69
4.3.	Conclusion: A Reparative Reading? _____	76
CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY _____		78
5.1.	Rationale _____	78
5.2.	Research Aim _____	80

5.3. Research Questions _____	80
5.4. Research Design _____	80
5.5. Participant Recruitment and Sampling Procedure _____	81
5.6. Data Collection Method _____	85
5.6.1. Pilot interviews _____	87
5.6.2. Single Interviews _____	88
5.6.3. Biographical Information _____	89
5.6.4. Reflexivity and the Use of Field Notes _____	90
5.7. Analysis of Data _____	94
5.7.1. Thematic analysis _____	94
5.7.1.1. <i>Familiarization with the data</i> _____	95
5.7.1.2. <i>Generating initial codes</i> _____	95
5.7.1.3. <i>Searching for themes</i> _____	95
5.7.1.4. <i>Reviewing themes</i> _____	96
5.7.1.5. <i>Defining and naming themes</i> _____	96
5.7.2. Psycho-discursive analysis _____	97
5.7.2.1. <i>Interpretative repertoires</i> _____	98
5.7.2.2. <i>Ideological dilemmas</i> _____	99
5.7.2.3. <i>Subject positions</i> _____	99
5.7.3. Combining psycho-discursive analyses with psychoanalytically informed readings _____	100
5.8. Standards of the Research Enquiry _____	102
5.8.1. Credibility _____	103
5.8.2. Dependability _____	103
5.8.3. Confirmability _____	104
5.8.4. Transferability _____	105

CHAPTER SIX: CONSTRUCTIONS OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FATHER AND SON _____ 106

6.1. Analysis of data _____	107
6.1.1. Similarity, difference, and understanding _____	107

6.1.2.	Similarity, difference, and sport _____	111
6.1.3.	Negotiating different ‘versions of the world’ _____	120
6.1.4.	Sameness _____	131
6.2.	Summary _____	142
CHAPTER SEVEN: MAKING AN EFFORT _____		146
7.1.	Analysis of Data _____	148
7.1.1.	Falling short _____	148
7.1.2.	Good fathering and ‘the big rule’ of effort _____	153
7.1.3.	Effort and potential _____	164
7.2.	Summary _____	178
CHAPTER EIGHT: MENTORING _____		180
8.1.	Analysis of Data _____	181
8.1.1.	Bonding _____	181
8.1.2.	Frustrated Mentoring _____	192
8.1.3.	Guidance from Below _____	208
8.2.	Summary _____	213
CHAPTER NINE: PUSHING _____		216
9.1.	Analysis of Data _____	218
9.1.1.	Other parents _____	218
9.1.2.	Pushing, encouraging, and the intrinsic /extrinsic frame _____	220
9.1.3.	Defending the damaging father _____	229
9.1.4.	Acknowledging damage _____	239
9.2.	Summary _____	248
CHAPTER TEN: WOMEN’S WAYS _____		251
10.1.	Analysis of Data _____	253
10.1.1.	Mentor father on the inside, mother on the outside _____	253
10.1.2.	Mother on the inside, disappointed father on the outside _____	259
10.1.3.	Mother as mediator between father and disappointing son _____	270

10.1.4. Assimilating the maternal	275
10.2. Summary	290
CHAPTER ELEVEN: GENERAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	293
CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUDING REMARKS	308
12.1. Limitations of the Study	308
12.2. Implications for Theory and Practice	309
12.3. Suggestions For Future Research	315
12.4. Final Comments	316
REFERENCES	317
APPENDIX 1: Copy of informed consent document	340
APPENDIX 2: Interview prompts	3402
APPENDIX 3: Thematic analysis index	3423
APPENDIX 4: Ethical clearance letter	358

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Dombey, exulting in the long-looked-for event, jingled and jingled the heavy gold watch-chain that descended from below his trim blue coat, whereof the buttons sparkled phosphorescently in the feeble rays of the distant fire. Son, with his little fists curled up and clenched, seemed, in his feeble way, to be squaring at existence for having come upon him so unexpectedly.

“The house will once again, Mrs. Dombey,” said Mr. Dombey, “be not only in name but in fact Dombey and Son; Dom-bey and Son!”

The words had such a softening influence that he appended a term of endearment to Mrs. Dombey’s name (though not without hesitation, as being a man but little used to that form of address) and said “Mrs. Dombey, my – my dear.”

A transient flush of faint surprise overspread the sick lady’s face as she raised her eyes towards him.

“He will be christened Paul, my – Mrs. Dombey – of course.”

She feebly echoed, “Of course,” or rather expressed it by the motion of her lips, and closed her eyes again.

“His father’s name, Mrs. Dombey, and his grandfather’s! I wish his grandfather were alive this day!” And again he said “Dom-bey and Son,” in exactly the same tone as before.

1.1. Overall Objectives Of The Study

As the above excerpt from Dickens’s Dombey and Son portrays, many fathers carry compelling expectations into their relationships with their sons. For Mr. Dombey, the birth of his son galvanizes a taken-for-granted fantasy of father and son unification through shared dedication to the family enterprise: “Dom-bey and Son!” This fantasy sees grandfather, father, and son aligned as Dombey men, and such is Mr. Dombey’s gratification, that even the mother is granted a brief moment of unusual warmth.

This research project focuses on the ways a sample of men negotiates the experience of fathering a son who does not meet his father’s expectations. The context of fathering has been identified as

a site of ambivalent potential. On the one hand, fathering may shore up patriarchy, justifying fathers' position as the domineering authority in families (Blackbeard, 2011; Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2006; Seidler, 2006). On the other hand, fathering may represent an opportunity for men to develop egalitarian and caring versions of masculinity (Finn & Henwood, 2009; Richter, 2006; Morrell, 2006). It may be argued that, by focusing on the ways that men negotiate the challenge of fathering a son who disappoints, this research project can add insight into the ambivalent potential of fathering. How does the father respond to his disappointing son? Some fathers may respond to disappointment by attempting to enforce their preferences, and so entrench their authoritarian positions. However, other fathers may respond to disappointment by reviewing and perhaps revising what they know and expect, thereby moving towards more egalitarian versions of masculinity and fathering.

Hosegood and Madhavan (2012) point out that fathering is an important aspect of men's identity in South Africa. Accordingly, this research project holds the view that masculinity and fatherhood implicate each other, that in positioning oneself as the father one is also positioning oneself as a man (Morrell, 2006). It may be argued that, in particular, being the father of a son foregrounds issues of gender and gender difference, since fathers commonly take on the task of introducing their sons to masculinity (Benjamin, 1995; White, 1994) and assume greater competency and involvement as parents of sons as opposed to daughters (Nydegger & Mitteness, 1991; White, *ibid.*). As such, analyzing how a sample of men speaks about the father-son relationship affords a particular view of the ways men perform masculinity within the context of fathering. Again, however, this research project focuses on the father's experiences and responses to the son who differs from his father's expectations. If fathers expect that their sons will be 'like' them as males, and that they will be able to share activities and interests with their sons, then clearly the experience of difference complicates the father's task of introducing his son to acceptable versions of masculinity. It is this complication that is of central interest to this research project.

1.2. A psychosocial study

A psychosocial perspective has been adopted in order to address the research topic. Psychosocial research typically involves a combination of discursive and psychoanalytic readings of interview material, so providing a ‘binocular’ account of the subject (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008).

Falling within the ambit of social constructionist theory, discursive psychology contests essentialist and unitary notions of masculinity and fathering (Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Edley, 2001). Instead, discursive psychology proposes a multiplicity of masculinities and father discourses and attends to the ways these discourses are taken up or contested within social contexts, such as the research interview (Finn & Henwood, 2009; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). As indicated, this research project is interested in the ways participants position themselves as fathers within the challenge of fathering a different or disappointing son. Consequently, the discursive psychological perspective enables an analysis of the ways participants negotiate different and perhaps conflicting father discourses in order to account for themselves in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons.

In addition, as a psychosocial project, this research incorporates psychoanalytically-informed readings of the texts, because psychoanalytic theory provides a rich vocabulary for conceptualizing emotional investment and fantasy (Frosh, 2012). The combination of psychoanalytic and discursive psychological perspectives is by no means unproblematic, as they are based on differing epistemologies and ontologies (Billig, 1997). Nonetheless, previous research on men and masculinities has tended to exclude the emotional tensions and vulnerabilities men feel when under the obligation to live up to the norms of prevailing masculinities (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009; Seidler, 2006). This research project is especially interested in the emotional tensions and vulnerabilities experienced by fathers of different and disappointing sons and consequently psychoanalysis is a valuable conceptual tool as “it offers the most developed and challenging ideas currently available on what might comprise such an ‘interior point of view’” (Frosh, 1994, p.94).

If, as research suggests, fathers carry particular expectations into their relationships with their sons, then it may be anticipated that the tensions and dilemmas elicited by the disappointing son will be fairly marked. What does the ‘good father’ do when he encounters a son who does not accede to the father’s expectations? Clearly a variety of responses is possible, each implicating

different father and masculinity discourses. But it is proposed that analysing how men successfully account for themselves as the ‘good father’ of a disappointing son addresses only certain facets of subjectivity (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). As is confirmed in the extracts that follow, reflecting on the different or disappointing son is an emotive topic that elicits powerful and contradictory experiences such as loss, intense frustration, anxiety, and love. Seidler (2006) argues that many fathers are eager to maintain richer relationships with their sons than they themselves experienced as children. But how do fathers manage the dilemma posed by the frustrating other that one loves? Again, psychoanalysis provides concepts to analyse the emotionally “excessive” elements of participants’ subjectivities (Frosh, 2003), as they vacillate between experiences of love and hate, anxiety and the impulse to reject the frustrating other.

1.3. Power Within the Father-Son Relationship

By analysing the ways fathers respond to the challenge of the disappointing son, this research project foregrounds issues of power within the father-son relationship. If the father sees it as his task to introduce his son to masculinity, or to his world, then the different or disappointing son presents something of a crisis to the father. As indicated, in some cases, fathers may respond by taking up assertive father positions, and accounting for their actions through recourse to discourses that naturalize paternal dominance. In other cases, fathers may construct more egalitarian and caring versions of fathering that preserve their attachments to their frustrating but loved sons. One also may expect that fathers vacillate between these contrary positions.

In order to give close attention to the ways participants negotiate power within the father-son relationship, this research project draws on the insights of relational psychoanalysis and intersubjectivity theory (Benjamin, 1988; 1995; 1998; Mitchell, 2000) together with the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; 2005). Benjamin’s (ibid.) concept of recognition emphasises the centrality of the other in the experience of our own subjectivity, giving special focus to the challenge of recognising the other as “an equivalent centre of being” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 201), as both like and different from the self. The concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to the “currently most honoured way of being a man” requiring “all other men to position themselves in relation to it” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Benjamin’s perspective enables close analysis of intersubjective issues such as similarity, difference and agency within the father-son relationship. Connell’s (2005) work on hegemonic masculinity facilitates an

analysis of the ways fathers position themselves and their sons within taken-for-granted discourses of acceptable masculinity and the ways fathers negotiate their experiences of sons who ‘fall short’ in various ways. Taken together, these theoretical concepts allow for an analysis of the ways power is expressed in participants’ self and other positioning within discourses of difference and disappointment.

1.4. Vulnerability Within the Father-Son Relationship

Lindegger and Quayle (2009) point out that vulnerability is inherent to hegemonic masculinity, such as the abiding threat of being shamed for falling short of dominant norms of masculinity. They go on to argue that critical reflections on such vulnerabilities can inform interventions aimed at helping men to live out more authentic masculinities. By identifying the tensions and vulnerabilities involved in being the father of a disappointing son, this research project hopes to contribute to current knowledge regarding the ways that the relationship between father and child might facilitate expressions of positive masculinities. Studies suggest that fathering has the potential to promote men’s personal growth (Daly, 1995; Eggebeen & Knoester 2001; Richter, 2006; Snarey, 1993) and the current study is attentive to the ways fathering a different or disappointing son may be constructed as generative by this sample of men. Again, fathering a disappointing son is dilemmatic in that, whilst fathers may look to induce conformity in their sons, too heavy-handed an approach could see fathers damaging an important relationship. In this sense, fathers are vulnerable to the risk of ‘losing’ their sons as loved others. Furthermore, being the father of a disappointing son may mean that the father becomes vulnerable to the potential shame of accepting and perhaps even embodying versions of masculinity that deviate from hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, the ways men account for themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons may be considered a germane forum for a critical analysis of the vulnerabilities inherent to hegemonic masculinities.

Because this study implicates notions of gender likeness and difference, attention is also given to the ways participants position the mother in their experiences of the different or disappointing son. It is popularly held that fathers hold particular importance to their sons’ masculine identity development (Biddulph, 1997; Clare 2001). In addition, research indicates that fathers are more likely than mothers to encourage children towards independent, goal-directed, and assertive behaviours (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Henwood and Procter (2003) have

identified men's tendency to divest their emotional vulnerabilities into mothers and Blackbeard (2011) argues that positions of invulnerability and independence are hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity. Taken together, these factors may nourish taken-for-granted assumptions regarding what it is that fathers and mothers can bring to their sons, such that father and mother are left parenting different 'sides' of their sons. However, it has already been proposed that being the father of a disappointing son has the potential to take men away from implicit assumptions regarding the fathering project, and towards less certain and perhaps uncharted territory. What if the son does not want to take up what the father offers, and what does the father do when his son seems more 'like' the mother in his choices and interests? Again, the implication is that being the father of a different and disappointing son may represent something of a dilemma to men, with the potential to challenge and perhaps invert the power of the father within the mother-father-son triangle. Consequently, this research project attends to the ways participants position the mother in their accounts of themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons.

1.5. Summary

There has been considerable research into fatherhood over the past few decades together with increased recognition that fathers are often very important to their children (Hakoama & Ready, 2011). In recent years, primacy has been given to the quality of relationship between father and child (Lamb, 2010). In their poignant analysis of children's views of fathers, Richter and Smith (2006) point out that, over and above material provisions, it is the father's attention and affection that children want.

This research project focuses on the father-son relationship as seen through the eyes of the father. By foregrounding the issue of difference and disappointment, this research analyses the ways a sample of fathers negotiate challenges or disruptions to their relationships with their sons. If it is quality of relationship that matters, then it is important to study how fathers go about the task of preserving, restoring or creating good relationships with sons in the face of difference and disappointment. Schafer (1999) points out that disappointment is a "pervasive and inevitable" aspect of life (p.1093). In addressing the ways men respond to disappointment in the father-son relationship, this research adds to existing literature on father-child relationships and the ways fathering might serve as a challenging but potentially generative context for men (Coltrane & Adams, 2001; Richter, 2006).

1.6. Summary of Thesis Structure

Chapter Two: Theoretical Formulation

In this chapter I establish the theoretical basis for this research project. I begin by focusing on psychoanalytic perspectives on fathering and the father-son relationship and show how these perspectives have moved away from deterministic accounts towards conceptualizing notions of flux and flexibility within the father-mother-son triad. Particular attention is given to Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity and recognition as a way of understanding the challenge of fathering a different or disappointing son.

I then turn to social constructionist notions of masculinity and fathering, and the notion of the plurality of masculinities. Particular attention is given to discursive psychology as a variant of the social constructionist paradigm. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity is introduced and discussed, together with psycho-discursive applications of the concept, which critique the structural reductionism of the concept and argue for analyses that explore hegemonic gender identities are constructed in every-day talk. Applying a psycho-discursive sensibility to hegemonic masculinity, I look at ways that the concept may be brought into dialogue with Benjamin's concept of recognition.

Fatherhood as a social construction is discussed, together with the ways men might negotiate between 'new' and more traditional father discourses in their self-accounting as fathers of different or disappointing sons.

The concept of disappointment is discussed and social constructionist and psychoanalytic perspectives are raised in order to develop a psychosocial 'take' on the concept.

Chapter Three: Considering Empirical Research

In this chapter previous research is reviewed in order to situate the contribution of the current study. Research indicates that fathers can make important contributions to their sons' wellbeing, but this hinges on the quality of relationship between father and child. Research into parent-child disappointment is scarce, although the concept of disappointment has been relevant to research

on the experience of parenting children with disabilities. Disappointment implies the presence of expectations, and consequently research into fathers' expectations of their sons is cited. Research into the expectations that fathers hold for themselves is also reviewed, together with research showing the centrality of sport to current middle-class notions of 'good fathering'. Finally, previous psychosocial research on the father-son relationship is reviewed in order to illustrate how this approach generates a dual analysis of investments in discourse and the ways these investments might be mediated by personal biography, life contexts and subjective experiences.

Chapter Four: Ontology and Epistemology

This chapter discusses the ontological and epistemological issues underpinning psychosocial research. The vexed issue of 'the unconscious' is discussed together with notions of researcher reflexivity. Both Kleinian and Lacanian-inspired psychosocial approaches are acknowledged, although arguments are made for the selection of relational and intersubjective psychoanalysis as an ethical epistemology.

Chapter Five: Methodology

In this chapter the methodological approach to this research project is described. The rationale for the research design is given, as well as issues such as sampling procedure and data collection method. The merits and limitations of using single interviews are discussed, and an argument is made for their compatibility with the epistemology and ontology of this research project. Again, based on the epistemology of this study, the issue of reflexivity as data is discussed. The method of analysis is then described, and the chapter concludes with a review of the standards of this research enquiry.

Chapters Six to Ten: Research Findings

These five chapters include the results of the data analysis. Each chapter represents a major theme and, in each chapter, the major theme is subdivided into subthemes. Interview excerpts are included and analysed and each chapter ends with a summary that refers back to the primary research questions. The five major themes are: Constructions of similarity and difference between father and son; Making an effort; Mentoring; Pushing; and Women's ways.

Chapter Eleven: General discussion

This chapter includes a general discussion of the main findings in the light of the research questions.

Chapter Twelve: Conclusion

This final chapter begins with a consideration of the limitations of the study. The implications of the research findings for both theory and practice are posed and recommendations are made for future research in this field.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FORMULATION

This section focuses on those theoretical perspectives that have been integral to the overall structure and rationale of the study. Taken together, these theories provide conceptual frameworks that have been used to address the main research question: ‘how do fathers describe their experiences and responses in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons?’ The theories included in this section are quite distinct from each other in terms of their ontological and epistemological assumptions. Nevertheless, in the sections that follow, particular attention is given to the ways that these theories might be brought into conversation with each other, converging to provide a psychosocial perspective on the ways men position themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons.

2.1. Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Fathering and the Father-Son Relationship

As an overarching theoretical framework, psychoanalysis incorporates several divergent and often conflicting perspectives (Frosh, 2012). Nonetheless, psychoanalytic theories provide particularly well-developed and sophisticated ways of understanding the vicissitudes of relationships. In psychoanalysis one finds, as Gough (2009) puts it, “a rich, long-established literature which has been dedicated to studying family interactions and relationships, including those between fathers and sons” (p. 530). Thus it may be argued that this body of knowledge is well suited to a study of interpersonally charged issues such as difference and disappointment in the father-son relationship. Psychoanalysis conceptualizes the subject as emotionally invested and irrational (Saville Young, 2009) and therefore its theoretical frameworks facilitate a close examination of the emotional investments and contradictions that are likely to be implicated when research takes family relationships as its topic.

The range of psychoanalytic perspectives is both varied and vast. However, as the research questions indicate, this project focuses on what may be termed the father-son-mother triangle. What follows then, is an account of some of the main ways that psychoanalysis has theorized this family configuration and the insights these theories give into masculine/father subjectivity in the context of parenting a different or disappointing son.

2.2.1. Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex

For Freud, the concept of the oedipal complex was considered to be foundational to individual development and a cornerstone of the “structured order of society” (Frosh, 2012, p. 77). It could be argued that, through his formulations of the Oedipus complex, Freud placed the mother-son-father triangle at the center of psychoanalytic thought. Freud's theorizing on the oedipal crisis has been broadly criticized for offering a perspective that is fundamentally sexist and normative (Hird, 2003; Langa, 2011). With reference to these criticisms, Frosh (2012) points out that Freud's theory of feminine development was “made to fit the (Oedipal) model later, always clumsily and less than satisfactorily” (p. 78). However, Frosh (ibid.) goes on to suggest that the Oedipus complex is best understood as a metaphor that gives insight into unconscious processes that are involved in gender formations. For Fakhry Davids (2005) the concept may be seen as descriptive rather than prescriptive, and that in a truly “matriarchal order we would expect mother and father to be ascribed different roles” (p. 72). Seen in this light, the Oedipus complex can be read as a psychosocial metaphor, in that it provides a striking account of the ways that masculinity practices might be deeply implicated by personal experiences within the father-son-mother relationship. In addition, because of the ways it foregrounds notions of gender difference (Frosh, 1994), gender identification, and power, the concept provides productive ways of reflecting on fathers' responses to difference and disappointment in their sons.

In Freud's reformulation of the oedipal myth, the crisis arises out of the child's desire to enjoy an exclusive relationship with the parent of the opposite sex, which places the child in a position of rivalry with the parent of the same sex (Etchegoyen, 2005). In the case of boys then, the oedipal crisis is precipitated by the son's desire to possess the mother, and his resulting fantasized rivalry with the father. The son fears that his father knows his covert ambitions and so the father is experienced as a threat (Target and Fonagy, 2005). For Freud, the threat centers on the son's sexuality, his penis; giving rise to what Freud termed the ‘castration fear’. However, because the son also loves his father, the son experiences guilt, which is partly managed by projecting hostility into the father. However, this psychological maneuver simply amplifies the fantasized threat of the father and thus intensifies the son's experience of crisis. In the face of this overwhelming threat from a far more powerful male, the son submits and shifts to a strategy of appeasement. The son represses his desires for the mother and instead identifies with the father,

leading to the formation of the superego (Frosh, 2012). The formation of the superego means that the paternal function now operates within the child's psyche, as an abiding check against forbidden drives. In effect then, the Oedipus complex is resolved through a transition from fear of authority to self regulation and conscience. Fear of the father is replaced by identification with the father and internal guilt (Benjamin, 1988). It is through these processes that the son becomes a 'moral' male subject (Segal, 1990). This strategy of appeasement comes with some consolations since, by identifying with the father, the son incorporates the fantasy that someday he will take his father's place. The son can look forward to a time when he will be like the father, powerful and with a wife of his own.

For Freud, the above processes depict what he termed a 'positive' Oedipus complex. Alongside this, Freud proposed a 'negative' Oedipus complex, which articulates a child's love for the parent of the same sex, and the child's jealous rivalry with the parent of the opposite sex. Frosh (2012) makes the point that oedipal experiences inevitably involve a composite of these two forms and that Freud assumed a complex interplay between hetero and homosexual relating in the individual. Thus it may be argued that, in caricatured form, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex may appear normative and formulaic. However, when notions such as repression and the coexistence of ambivalent desires are borne in mind, the concept expands into a rich metaphor for the tensions, contradictions and repressed identifications that constitute the gendered subject.

2.2.1.1. Implications for the current study

Even on the basis of the above outline, it is possible to identify a series of implications that the concept holds for this thesis. To begin with, it is clear that the metaphor positions the father in particular ways and that he is allocated distinct functions within the mother-son-father triangle. The father represents the law (Loewald, 1951) and his task is to place limits on the mother-son dyad and to direct the son towards socially sanctioned ways of being. Further, the Oedipus metaphor constructs notions of gender difference and sameness, with gender sameness explicitly referring to identifying with, or being like the father. In Freud's account, the Oedipus complex has the effect of fixing "the individual subject in a gendered position from which no escape is allowed" (Frosh, 1994, p.26). Thus Freud proposed that 'anatomy is destiny' (Diamond, 2004), with the father playing a pivotal role in orienting the son towards acceptable versions of

masculinity. Freud further suggested that we are born with a phylogenetic disposition to endow the father with power and authority. According to Freud “whilst the mother is the primary caretaker, when we encounter the second parent, we are preprogrammed, so to speak, to recognize him as the powerful father” (Fakhry Davids, 2005 p. 73). The father figure represents patriarchal power in society and sons both fear this power and wish to assume it themselves (Edley & Wetherell, 1995; Frosh, 1997).

Freud’s development of the oedipal metaphor also gives primacy to the psychoanalytic concept of identification. Frosh (2012) points out that the concept of identification has been crucial to the evolution of relational psychoanalysis and, according to Benjamin (1995) the category of identification “continues to be central to all theorizing about gender” (p. 52). Laplanche and Potalis (1973) define identification as a

...psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified. (p.205)

In as much as the son is ‘transformed ... after the model’ the father provides, some feminist scholars argue that Freud’s Oedipus complex describes how patriarchal ideology is perpetuated within the institution of the family (Mitchell, 1975; Morrell, 2006). The father represents masculinity and power, and the son’s gender development is predicated on repressing his identifications with the mother and identifying with paternal power, such that patriarchy is sustained in the process. However, being the father of a different or disappointing son may work against this flow in that the father’s task (if he is to continue to be a ‘good father’) involves preserving his relationship with a son who does not wish to take up the father’s ways. Consequently, it may be argued that this situation has the potential to unsettle both the issue of masculinity and the issue of power. For the father to remain attached to his different or disappointing son, the father may need to restrain his power and perhaps renegotiate just what masculinity ‘is’. According to Hollway (2007), identification refers to “the unconscious flowing of mental states between one person and another that constantly modifies them” (p. 50). Hollway’s observation infers that identification between father and son may be understood as a two-way process, and that the father may be transformed via his identifications with his son.

Frosh (2010) argues that the concept of identification represents “one of the most powerful methods whereby personal change occurs” (p. 110), which supports the notion that fathers may be transformed as men via their identifications with their different sons. Accordingly, this research project attends to ways fathers are able (or unable) to identify themselves with, or be ‘like’ the different son, and to the ways that this gives rise to modified discourses of masculinity.

If we accept that gender is routinely accomplished by emphasizing difference (Benjamin, 1995; Brickell, 2005; Diamond, 2004; Frosh, 1994), then it may be assumed that the challenges faced by fathers of different sons will be deeply gendered in their content; that gender will be implicated in fathers’ constructions of similarity and difference between themselves and their sons. According to Freud’s formulations, accomplishing masculinity requires the repressing of feminine/maternal identifications. This implies that the father-son relationship is in some ways founded on not being feminine and that the son’s differences from the father may be perceived as transgressing this divide. A closely related implication is that fathering itself has to do with not being the mother and that, following Freud’s logic, this involves a repressing of the feminine by the father. However, it has already been argued that being the father of a different and disappointing son has the potential to unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions regarding gender and it is anticipated that this will include constructions of fathering. So, in the face of difference and disappointment, how do fathers construct themselves as different from or similar to mothers?

Benjamin (1988) has argued that the oedipal metaphor differentiates between “a mother of attachment and a father of separation” (p. 134). If this is so, then what does the “father of separation” do when the son can’t identify with the father and follow the father towards the father’s world? How does the father exercise his power in this circumstance and what of his own (perhaps repressed) attachments to his son, who may evoke powerful unconscious material regarding the father’s own oedipal experiences? Trowell (2005) suggests that complex oedipal experiences may be re-elicited when men become fathers. As indicated below, Trowell (ibid.) proposes that fatherhood offers men the “opportunity” to re-experience identifications and connections, including those that may have been repressed:

As a boy, working through, coming to terms with the oedipal conflict, he had to let go of the special relationship with his mother and be left out, the third person. Now there is an opportunity for the man to identify with and make connection (which may occur

unconsciously), to see the repetition of the triangle in the present generation, his mother (now his baby's mother), his father (now himself), and himself as a small boy (now the baby). (p.3)

Trowell's observations give some sense of the complex identifications implicated in becoming and being the father. It is proposed that experiences of disappointment may provoke these identifications in particular ways. For example, if the father expects similarity in his son, but doesn't get it, the father could become 'the third person' once more, watching from a distance as the mother engages with his different son. How does the man position himself as the father in response to such a situation? Does he become like the mother and take up her ways of being with the son, or does he continue to distinguish himself as the father, perhaps identifying with the (perhaps his own) orthodox, authoritarian father in the process? If the father maintains the project of introducing his different son to masculinity, what kind of masculinity is this? What of the father's identifications with the vulnerabilities of his 'small boy', and the extent to which these vulnerabilities are acknowledged or repressed in the father's own masculinity project? Of course, the variety of possible permutations is limitless, but the above speculations perhaps illustrate how being the father of a different or disappointing son has the potential to elicit ambivalent and perhaps repressed identifications regarding fathering, mothering and masculinity.

Of course, if we take the resolution of the oedipal crisis as the basis for masculine subjectivity, then it is in any event an inherently ambivalent subjectivity, marked by anxiety and contradictions (Gough, 2009; Segal, 1990). Freud's theory holds that manifestations of masculinity are always undercut by repressed desires and unconscious identifications with the feminine. Consequently, the taking up of certain subjective masculine positions and the forgoing (repressing) of others coincides with experiences of sadness, anxiety and loss (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Seidler, 2006). Furthermore, a masculinity precipitated by castration anxiety is inherently defensive. As Richards (1990) puts it, in the process of resolving the oedipal complex, "the son takes on the father's punitive possessiveness, and joins in the fearful, competitive rites of masculinity in which he hopes to lose forever his fear of castration" (p.162). According to Whitehead (2005), the abiding threat of emasculation generates 'masculine anxiety', because of the instability of one's credentials as a masculine subject. Consequently, men live with an unconscious fear of being rendered inadequate by a more powerful and intimidating male. One is

left then, with a masculine subjectivity that must constantly counter the threat of inadequacy whilst managing tensions and contradictions regarding whom one ‘is’, and whom one is ‘not’ (Frosh, 1994). Power, anxiety, and ambivalence are made central to the experiences of masculine subjectivities, together with the implication that the task of maintaining acceptable versions of masculinity exacts its own toll (Langa, 2011).

If we accept that fathering and masculinity are linked (Morrell, 2006), then it is evident that anxieties regarding masculinity will be implicated in talk about the challenges of fathering a different or disappointing son. This study has a special interest in the emotional ambivalences, the conscious and unconscious tensions and anxieties involved in performing masculinity within the context of fathering a different or disappointing son.

2.1.2. Subsequent theoretical perspectives on the mother – father – son triangle

Following Freud, psychoanalytic theorists have revisited and reworked the oedipal framework in a variety of ways, although the notion that father and mother perform distinctive functions has been relatively enduring. Loewald (1951) for example, gives greater emphasis to the pre-oedipal relationship between father and child and suggests that the child forms both positive and defensive relationships towards either parent. Thus, in addition to a defensive relationship based on castration anxieties, Loewald (*ibid.*) argues that it is important for the son to form an early, pre-oedipal, positive identification with the father (the ‘ego ideal’), “which lends powerful support against the danger of the womb, and a defensive relationship concerning the paternal castration threat” (p. 16).

Notwithstanding Loewald’s (*ibid.*) reframing of the mother-son-father triangle, the notion persists that the father’s task is to intervene between the mother and son, in order to help the son establish his own sense of self and find his way into the world. This distinction between maternal and paternal functions is perhaps most clearly articulated in Mahler and colleagues’ separation-individuation theory (Mahler & Gosliner, 1955; Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975). According to this influential theory, mother and child share an almost symbiotic relationship, from which the child must separate in order to individuate. The father, who does not share a primary symbiotic relationship with the child, has the task of facilitating his child’s autonomy and exploratory ventures (Target & Fonagy, 2005). Elsewhere, Greenacre (as cited in Target & Fonagy, 2005)

has argued that the father supports the toddler's push towards self-determination. The father encourages exploration and muscular activity, so facilitating a sense of body self and the exploration of space. According to Target and Fonagy (2005), Greenacre contrasts the "powerful, mysterious and glamorous" role of the father with the more "quotidian" role of the mother (p.49). The nature of this contrast seems to illustrate Benjamin's (1988) observation that psychoanalytic formulations of the oedipal model are inclined to privilege the role of the father over that of the mother.

With specific reference to the gendered development of boys, Greenson (1968) and Stoller (1964; 1965; 1968) also propose a splitting of maternal and paternal functions. The authors argue that infant boys initially develop in a feminine direction due to what Greenson (1968) terms their "primitive symbiotic identification with a mothering person" (p. 372). Then, in order for boys to develop a masculine gender identity, they must undertake a process of disidentification from their mothers and counteridentification with their fathers. For Greenson (ibid.) these processes of disidentification and counteridentification were seen as crucial for the establishment of a secure sense of masculinity (Diamond, 2004).

The formulations briefly outlined above illustrate the historical tendency, within psychoanalytic thought, to split maternal and paternal functions. The mother, as early caregiver with a nearly symbiotic relationship to the child, is contrasted with the intervening father or, as Benjamin (1988) has it; the father of separation. The mother is positioned as passive and receptive, whereas the father is positioned as active and powerful with the task of orienting his son towards acceptable versions of masculinity. Again, if the father is positioned as a mentor of masculinity then fathering a son is structured in ways that are potentially dilemmatic for fathers of different sons. It may be said that the father's parenting is delimited by masculinity: he is the third to the mother-son dyad, a bridge to the outside world. However, where difference between father and son prevails, the father risks rupturing his relationship with his son if he insists that his son adhere to the father's requirements of acceptable masculinity.

2.1.2.1. Flexibility and flux in parental and maternal functions

More contemporary psychoanalytic and feminist theorists have revisited and, in some aspects, fundamentally revised the traditional paternal/maternal split described above. Included in these

revisions is a critique of the notion that masculine gender identity necessitates disidentifying with the mother and counteridentifying with the father; that femaleness must be overcome and left behind in order to establish male development (Benjamin, 1988; 1995; Diamond, 2004; Fast, 1999; Hollway, 2006; Samuels, 1995).

2.1.2.2. *The 'goodenough father of whatever sex'*

Samuels (1995) introduces the terms 'the good enough father' and 'the father of whatever sex'. For Samuels (ibid.) the notion of 'the good enough father' (which plays on Winnicott's concept of 'the good enough mother') counteracts what he describes as a "damaging and misleading idealization of fathers and the roles men play in families" (p. 512). The term 'the father of whatever sex' separates fathering and mothering from the biological sex of the parent and emphasizes instead that fathering and mothering are functions, cultural constructions that both men and women may perform. Samuels (ibid.) contests what he calls the "insertion metaphor" common to psychoanalysis, where the pre-oedipal father "is supposed to insert himself, like a giant depriving and separating penis, between mother and baby who would otherwise stay locked in a psychosis-inducing and phase-inappropriate symbiosis" (p. 524). In addressing what fathers (of whatever sex) can or should do, Samuels (ibid.) argues that, in addition to the traditional notions of discipline, order and morality, paternal warmth is a crucial dimension of the father-son relationship. For Samuels (ibid.) positive physical warmth between father and son fosters 'homosociality'; a progressive, non-hierarchical version of masculinity.

As indicated above, in Freud's oedipal metaphor, the father is made vital to the establishment of gender identity or gender consciousness. The son apprehends that 'the father and I are one', and takes up the gender characteristics of the father. Regarding the orthodox father function of establishing a child's gender identity, Samuels (1989) argues that it is important that there be a degree of flux between gender certainty and confusion. For Samuels (ibid.), too much gender certainty constricts a child's spontaneous range of experience, and therefore the challenge lies in the child "not being too gender certain or too gender confused" (p.75). Consequently, Samuels (ibid.) argues that it is important for the father be able to help the child establish an effective balance between gender certainty and gender confusion.

The current study is interested in exploring participants' capacity to take up paternal and maternal functions within the challenge of fathering a different or disappointing son. In addition, Samuels' (1989) notion of 'gender certainty' facilitates an analysis of the ways participants construct themselves as men and fathers; the degree to which participants demonstrate flexibility in their self-other positioning and identifications, which may depend on participants' ability to tolerate 'gender uncertainty'. Samuels (1995) also seems to suggest that the orthodox oedipal metaphor has given rise to a cultural tendency to idealize the role of the father, a point of view that is shared by other contemporary psychoanalytic theorists (e.g. Benjamin, 1988; 1995). This idealization comprises part of what appears to be a dilemmatic father position that is of interest to the current study. On the one hand, the oedipal father may enjoy the social dividends that come from fulfilling his orthodox functions. As the law-giver and provider, he may be gratified by the glamour and power implicit to his functions (as articulated by Greenacre, 1957). However, for Samuels (1995), these traditional father functions include emotional distance, which would obstruct the establishment of homo-social relations between father and son.

Samuels (1995) argues that, regarding the challenge of enacting new versions of fathering, it is the father's fear of being effeminate that "is perhaps the most difficult obstacle to overcome" (p. 519). Again then, masculinity is seen as implicit to fathering together with the notion that men must constantly negotiate notions of successful or shameful masculinity in their performances. It is anticipated that talk about fathering difference and disappointment provokes this discursive negotiation: that of positioning oneself as a man.

2.1.2.3. *Genital fathering*

Diamond (2004), who focuses specifically on constructions of male gender identities, suggests that, in order to establish themselves as boys, sons do indeed turn away from their mothers and towards their fathers. However, as opposed to the term disidentification, Diamond (ibid.) suggests the phrase "progressive differentiation" in order to describe the emerging identificatory processes between mother, son and father (p. 362). For Diamond (ibid.) a "sufficiently attuned mother", able to recognize her son's masculinity, together with a "watchful, protective father", assist the boy to take up healthy versions of masculinity (p. 362). Diamond (ibid.) argues for the importance of what he terms 'genital' fathering, which reflects a flexible sense of masculinity, containing both active and receptive functions. For Diamond (ibid.), the genital father embodies

a healthy “fluid masculinity gender identity” which facilitates an integration (as opposed to repudiation) of the son’s maternal/feminine identifications (p.362). If Diamond is correct, this implies that the father himself has *not* repudiated femininity which means that he is able to identify with the maternal/feminine both in himself and in his son.

For Diamond (ibid.), repudiation or dis-identification from the feminine is synonymous with what he terms ‘phallic’ masculinity; a rigid and defensively-based sense of maleness that requires that femininity be relinquished. Along with Benjamin (1988; 1999), Diamond (ibid.) argues that boys need to be allowed to form reciprocal identifications with both the mother and the father, which provides the foundation “for a more secure and often more varied gendered expression of the self” (p. 362). Interestingly, Diamond (ibid.) suggests that rigid expressions of gender are characteristic of families “wherein it is problematic for more than one subjectivity to exist since either one member’s subjectivity dominates or subjectivity itself is generally poorly recognized” (p.361).

Clearly, by focusing on the ways that fathers talk about different or disappointing sons, this study is interested in the ways that fathers approach the task of recognizing ‘more than one subjectivity’. Diamond (ibid.) suggests that this task is linked to the father’s masculinity: that his own conscious and unconscious gender identifications have important implications for his ability to recognize his son’s differences. Diamond’s (ibid.) observations suggest that the capacity to recognize otherness is central to a study of fathering difference and disappointment, and it is to this concept that I now turn.

2.1.3. Recognition and domination in the father-son relationship

Combining feminist and psychoanalytic intersubjectivity theory, Benjamin (1988; 1995; 1998; 2004) addresses the problem of how we encounter the other’s independent consciousness.

Benjamin proposes the term ‘recognition’ to denote the capacity for intersubjectivity, which is to perceive the other as an ‘equivalent center of being’ (1988; 1998). For Benjamin, processes of recognition are central to the emergence of a healthy attachment between parent and child.

Recognition foregrounds the notion of reciprocity or mutuality between subjects: where the other is recognized as a separate person, one who is like me, yet distinct. Consequently, this concept is

particularly relevant to the current study, where participants are asked to reflect on their sons as ‘other’. Benjamin (1988) defines recognition in the following way:

Recognition is that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self. It allows the self to realize its agency and authorship in a tangible way. (p. 12)

This study attends to fathers’ responses to the challenge of ‘making meaning’ out of their sons’ feelings, intentions and actions, thereby granting the son agency and authorship as an equal but different other.

2.1.3.1. The paradox of recognition

For Benjamin, recognition exists in tension with self assertion: two poles or coexisting modes of relating. Consequently recognition is an interpersonal accomplishment that is always threatening to break down and devolve towards dominating the other as object rather than equivalent subject. Here Benjamin draws on the work of Hegel to convey the abiding tension inherent in mutual recognition. Hegel argues that human consciousness is fundamentally social; that self-consciousness requires recognition from the other. Hegel also argues that conflict and paradox lie at the heart of relatedness in that the self’s wish for absolute independence clashes with a simultaneous need to be recognized by the other. Any assertion of independence is, in fact, dependent on recognition by the other. Recognition by the other confirms that one has made an impression: that one has made meaning (Benjamin, 1995).

Paradoxically then, in order to be recognized as an absolute, sovereign ‘I’, the self needs to be recognized by another that is in some way like the self. As Benjamin (1988) puts it, the subject “must be able to find himself in the other” (p. 32). The moment I assert my will, I am dependent on the other to recognize my assertion. I must also recognize that the other is like me, in that he has his own will, or his own mind. Each subject attempts to establish his reality, whilst also taking account of the other who is doing the same.

For the purposes of this study, the above insights foreground the notion that the father is dependent on his son’s recognition of him as the father. In addition, although the father is, in many senses, more powerful than his son, the father must still balance his own assertions with

the act of recognizing his son if he is to avoid losing his son as a recognizing other. In these ways the father remains vulnerable to his son's responses. Therefore the concept of recognition allows for an analysis of the interactions between power and vulnerability in participants' talk. Although the passage below is written from the perspective of the mother, Benjamin's (1988) depiction of intersubjective exchanges between mother and infant may be extrapolated to a father's experience of difference or disappointment in his son:

We can also observe how mutual regulation breaks down and attunement fails: when baby is tired and fussy, when mother is bored and depressed, or when baby is unresponsive and this makes mother anxious. Then we will see not just the absence of play, but a kind of anti-play in which the frustration of the search for recognition is painfully apparent.... With each effort of the baby to withdraw from the mother's stimulation, to avert his gaze, turn his head, pull his body away, the mother responds by "chasing" after the baby. It is as if the mother anticipates her baby's withdrawal with split-second accuracy and can only read his message to give space as a frustration of her own efforts to be recognized. Just as the baby's positive response can make the mother feel affirmed in her being, the baby's unresponsiveness can result to a terrible destruction of her self-confidence as a mother. The mother who jiggles, pokes, looms and shouts "look at me" to her unresponsive baby creates a negative cycle of recognition out of her own despair at not being recognized. Here in the earliest social interaction we can see how the search for recognition can become a power struggle: how assertion becomes aggression. (p. 27-28)

This excerpt gives some insights into the 'despair' experienced by the parent who is not recognized by her child. Remembering that recognition is based on mutuality, where both subjects have a need to be recognized, the father may assert himself expecting to be recognized by his son. But the father's assertions may over-stimulate, or be ill-suited to the son. Perhaps the son is too young, or perhaps the father's request jars with the son's proclivities. Consequently, the son may turn away from the father in an attempt to escape the discomfort he experiences when confronted by his father's request. What does the father do at this point? He may become anxious, angry, frustrated or disappointed and respond either by withdrawing from his son or by pursuing his son more aggressively. But the pursued son may turn away more vigorously,

leading to an impasse between father and son. At this point the father may fear losing connection with his son, and suspend his assertions, but where does this leave him *as the father*? If the father believes that fathering entails leading his son towards acceptable masculinity, the father may lose confidence in his self: he becomes something of a failed man as a result of his son's negations. Benjamin suggests that, when intersubjectivity breaks down in these ways, the other is related to more as a disappointing or hurtful object than subject, leading to non-recognising, omnipotent displays.

Alternatively, the son may be alarmed at the prospect of losing attunement with his insistent father, and so surrender himself to his father's assertions. The son may despair of ever holding the attention or winning the recognition of his father, of being securely held in his father's mind. Here Stern's (1985) concept of "selective attunement" seems relevant. For Stern (*ibid.*), selective attunement represents "one of the most potent ways that a parent can shape the development of a child's subjective and interpersonal life" (p. 207). Stern (*ibid.*) argues that through attunement the parent conveys to the child "which subjective experiences are within and which are beyond the pale of mutual consideration and acceptance.... It is in this way that the parents' desires, fears, prohibitions, and fantasies contour the psychic experiences of the child" (p. 208). By analysing the ways fathers speak about their sons, what fathers select as topics for discussion and how these topics are constructed, this study hopes to shed light on processes of selective attunement within the challenge of recognising difference.

2.1.3.2. The intersubjective and intrapsychic as co-occurring relational dimensions

For Benjamin (1988), recognition is an imperfectly accomplished intersubjective capacity that operates in tandem with intrapsychic processes. Recognition serves to highlight the reality of the other against the backcloth of intrapsychic functioning. Benjamin (1999) argues that mental life "is always located somewhere on that tension between relating to the object and recognizing the outside other, between contact with outer reality and omnipotence" (p.201). In this sense, relationships take place in a field that is a composite of intersubjective and intrapsychic processes, wherein the reality of the other is, in some or other admixture, illuminated via recognition and/or obscured via intrapsychic dynamics. The excerpt below is, again, written from the perspective of the mother. However, the complex blend of loss, joy and "deep wishes for

glory” does seem applicable to the father who must come to terms with the reality of his son as ‘other-than-me’:

To experience recognition in the fullest, most joyful way, entails the paradox that “you” who are “mine” are also different, new, outside of me. It thus includes the sense of loss that you are no longer inside me, no longer simply my fantasy of you, that we are no longer physically and psychically one....I may find it preferable to put this side of reality out of my consciousness – for example, by declaring you the most wonderful baby who ever lived, far superior to all other babies, so that you are my dream child, and taking care of you is as easy as taking care of myself and fulfills all my deepest wishes for glory.
(Benjamin, 1988, p. 15)

The above passage gives a sense of the potent, unconscious, and idealized fantasies that parents hold for their children. Benjamin (1995) notes that sons tend to carry particular narcissistic importance for fathers. Benjamin (ibid.) contends that a strong mutual attraction between father and son is often promoted by the father himself; that father and son enjoy a special erotic relationship based on recognition through reciprocal identifications. According to Benjamin (1988); “the father recognizes himself in his son, sees in him as the ideal boy he would have been” (p.109). Thus, not only does the son identify with the father as an ego ideal, but the father identifies with his son, both as the boy he was or could have been, and as being like himself as the man he has now become. Mutual identificatory love between father and son serves as the “vehicle” of the son’s masculinity and “its baseline is the father’s own narcissistic pride, when he identifies with his son and says, ‘You can be like me’” (Benjamin, 1995, p. 60).

Thus Benjamin proposes that fathers may be particularly invested in their relationships with their sons and that these relationships come with certain expectations of likeness. This obviously sets up the possibility of disappointment in the face of difference. This study is interested in exploring fathers’ accounts where enjoyment of the dividend of likeness may be frustrated through difference.

Schafer (1999) points out that idealization forms part of every strong desire, leading to unrealistic expectations of unambivalent pleasure. For Shafer (ibid.), idealizations entail a “denial of complexity and lead, inevitably, to the experience of disappointment” (p. 1094). It

may therefore be argued that, to the extent that idealizations inform men's expectations of their sons or for themselves as fathers of sons, disappointment becomes an inevitable experience. Schafer (ibid.) also argues that because idealizations and omnipotent fantasies are present, the experience of disappointment is usually intense which, he suggests, helps to explain our excessive reactions to disappointment. Schafer's (ibid.) observations help to convey a sense of how difficult it may be for fathers to manage disappointment without resorting to attempts to coerce their sons towards compliance, or simply to overlook and not recognize difference. This study is interested in exploring the ways fathers might balance assertion and recognition when idealized hopes and omnipotent fantasies are not met.

As indicated above, Benjamin (1995) suggests that the tension between omnipotence and recognition is an intractable and inherent psychic structure. In the passage below, Benjamin (2000) suggests that this structure "is defining for intersubjectivity":

The tension between recognizing the other and wanting the self to be absolute (omnipotence) is, to my mind, an internal conflict inherent in the psyche; it exists independent of any interaction – even in the most favorable of conditions. It is not interpersonally generated but is, rather, a psychic structure that conditions the interpersonal. The problem of whether or not we are able to recognize the other person as outside, not the sum of our projections or the mere object of need, and still feel recognized by her or him, is defining for intersubjectivity. (p. 294)

By foregrounding the enduring interplay between omnipotence and recognition, Benjamin makes negotiations of power central and routine to interpersonal functioning. Consequently, the concept of recognition seems well suited to a critical analysis of men's discourse and the ways power is negotiated within intimate relationships. Furthermore, maintaining the reciprocal perspective of recognition helps to shed light on the subjectivity of the father of a different or disappointing son. How might the father feel recognised by a son who does not comply with the father's projections and needs? In what ways is it possible for the father to remain invested in, or to enjoy such a relationship?

2.1.3.3. *Gender 'overidentifications' within the father-son relationship*

In line with contemporary gender theory, Benjamin (1995) views gender development as “a relational process involving identification and separation issues” (p.115). For Benjamin (ibid.) this process begins before the oedipal crisis, during the separation-individuation phase where conflicts regarding independence and dependence are central. Here Benjamin (1988) critiques orthodox oedipal theory for discriminating between a mother of attachment and a father of separation. She argues that this binary arrangement denies the subjectivity of the mother and the processes of self-other differentiation and recognition that occur within the mother-infant dyad.

In tandem with asserting the subjectivity of the mother, Benjamin (1995) positions the pre-oedipal father as the ‘second second’ to the child:

What I wish to underscore is the importance of a second adult, not necessarily a male or a father, with whom the child can form a second dyad. The key feature of this person, or position, is not yet that he or she loves the mother and seals the triangle, but that he or she creates the second vector, which points outward and on which the triangle can be formed. Identification with a second other as a “like subject” makes the child imaginatively able to represent the desire for the outside world. (p. 57).

Thus for Benjamin (ibid.), the father represents the “exciting outside” and she uses the term ‘identificatory love’ to denote the process whereby both sons and daughters may turn to the father as the embodiment of the child’s own agency and desire. Benjamin (ibid.) argues that it is important for the father to reciprocate his child’s identificatory love. This reciprocation involves affirming that the child can ‘be’ like the father as the embodiment of agency and assertion, as well as the father’s ability to identify with his child such that he can know how his child ‘feels’.

Benjamin (1988; 1995) argues that pre-oedipal children form ‘overinclusive’ identifications with both parents which need not be erased by oedipal process. Rather, in the context of loving, recognizing relationships, children are able to sustain multiple identifications with both parents. For Benjamin (1995), part of being a recognizing father of a son lies in the father’s ability to affirm his son’s maternal/feminine identifications. According to Benjamin (1995), if boys are not pressured to repudiate identifications with the mother, and if the father is also able to represent warmth and care, then the boy can preserve his identifications with his mother:

To the degree that the characteristics of the other have been lovingly incorporated through identification in the overinclusive phase, loss can be ameliorated by intimacy, and the sequelae of the oedipal phase can be informed more by other –love than by repudiation/idealization. (p. 69)

Thus Benjamin (1998) envisages how it is possible for children to sustain elaborate ‘post-oedipal’ identifications that enable more fluid expressions of gender. Hollway (2007) argues that fathers may play important part in helping their sons to assimilate maternal identifications (such as maternal caring), not only by recognizing these and affirming them as acceptable aspects of the son, but also by demonstrating these attributes themselves, perhaps by routinely performing the maternal role with the son or his siblings. Again, the implication here is that the father recognizes these ‘maternal’ identifications as aspects of an acceptable masculinity.

At this point it is necessary to clarify Benjamin’s (1998) usage of the concept of identification. For Benjamin (ibid.), identification includes a simultaneous awareness of the independent subjectivity of the other – it represents “a form of relationship, not just a way in which one person acts upon another” (Frosh, 2010, p 111). Here Benjamin (1998) distinguishes identification from incorporation, where incorporation refers to an intrapsychic absorbing of the other and a simultaneous loss of intersubjective awareness of what is self and what is other. In contrast, Benjamin (1998) argues that identification “is not merely a matter of incorporating the other as an ideal, but of loving and having a relationship with the person who embodies the ideal” (p. 61). Thus identification sustains a tension between sameness and difference, and provides a “basis for understanding the position of the other” (ibid. p.28). Through identification, aspects of the other are accepted and used without destroying the other in the process. The other is allowed “to survive as a living and appreciated aspect of the self” (Frosh, 2010, p. 111).

Viewed in this way, identification allows for multiple maternal/paternal identifications and for more flexible and variegated expressions of gender. This is of relevance to this study because it proposes that father and different son can identify with each other as both similar and different and so contribute to a recognizing of different but equivalent masculinities.

2.1.3.4. *The ethics of recognition: transcending complementary relating*

For Benjamin (1998), a complementary relationship, based on binary differences, results in the objectification of the other and is the basis for domination: ‘a doer and a done to’ (p. 48). In contrast, Benjamin (ibid.) proposes that a core dimension of intersubjective relatedness is a mutuality based on the co-existence of difference and similarity. As Benjamin (ibid.) puts it: in “the intersubjective conception of recognition, two active subjects may exchange, may alternate in expressing and receiving, co-creating a mutuality that allows for and presumes separateness” (p.29). Thus the concept of recognition provides a way for fathers to solve the dilemma posed by the different and disappointing son: that of remaining connected to a son who won’t follow the father’s ways. From a position of recognition, the father retracts omnipotent efforts to make the son ‘same’ and instead affirms his son’s uniqueness. The father recognizes that his son is ‘not me’ and that the son is an independent source of subjectivity. However, this acceptance of difference coincides with an appreciation of similarity: that ‘my son is like me, with desires of his own’.

Returning to the notion of identification, it could be argued that fathering difference requires the capacity to form identifications that cross “the line that demarks what we are supposedly like, the boundary that encloses the identical” (Benjamin, 1995, p. 53). Stated differently, the challenge of recognizing a different son perhaps involves affirming difference when one had expected sameness and discovering sameness when one had assumed difference. On the one hand, as Frosh (2010) argues, recognition is “a process of *sanctification*, in which what is to be found in the other is also cherished specifically for its capacity to be different, and its otherness” (p.131, italics in the original). On the other, difference is bridged via an appreciation of the similarities in human experience (Frosh, 2010).

For Benjamin (2004), the two-way directionality of relationships can only be grasped from the place of the third; “a vantage point outside the two” (p. 7). In order to move beyond complementary relating, Benjamin (2004) proposes a post-oedipal version of thirdness which she calls ‘the third in the one’. For Benjamin (ibid.), this phrase refers to the “ability to maintain internal awareness, to sustain the tension of difference between my needs and yours while being attuned to you” (p. 13). Benjamin (ibid.) cites the distinction Ghent (1990) draws between surrendering to a principle and submitting to a person in order to articulate the ethical orientation

of this position. From Benjamin's (ibid.) perspective, surrender "refers to a certain letting go of the self... being able to sustain connectedness to the other's mind while accepting his separateness or difference. Surrender implies freedom from any intent to control or coerce" (p.8).

Hollway (2007) argues that the maternal-infant relationship contains psyche-soma features that set this relationship apart from others in ways that can't simply be effaced by sociological changes. Hollway (ibid.) invokes Kristeva's notion of "forgetting oneself" to describe the maternal capacity to tolerate the overwhelming demands of caring for an infant (p. 13).

According to Hollway (ibid.), a woman's subjectivity is "likely to be transformed by becoming a mother; faced with her dependent infant's unmodifiable demands for her availability" (p. 81).

There is the sense then, that mothering involves allowing oneself to be changed by one's child. A question addressed in this study is whether fathers, through recognizing their different sons, might allow themselves to be changed as men. Hollway (ibid. p. 85) suggests that, to the extent that "narcissism and omnipotence continue to be dominant strands in an adult's personality, their capacity to care will be compromised" (p. 85). Hollway (ibid.) goes on to ask "under what ... conditions will a father, faced with responsibility for the uncompromising dependency and vulnerability of the infant, be precipitated out of his remaining narcissism?" (pp. 84-85). Perhaps it can be argued that the father of a different son confronts the difficult opportunity of learning to love in the absence of customary father-son gratifications. To this extent, fathering difference may entail yielding to principles of care that transcend orthodox notions of fathering, moving closer towards the difficult territory of "forgetting oneself".

2.1.4. Summary

As is evident from the above perspectives, psychoanalytic theory tends to propose that there are maternal and paternal functions and that these structural positions or "orders" are present even in non-traditional family forms (Hollway, 2007). Being a father (of whatever sex) is not exactly the same as being a mother (of whatever sex). Psychoanalytic theory proposes that father functions have to do with introducing difference, separation, and the adventures of the outside world.

Importantly, psychoanalytic theory, particularly from an orthodox perspective, suggests that the father is a key figure in the establishment of the son's gendered identity. However, more current psychoanalytic theory argues that paternal and maternal functions should be understood as fluid

and interchangeable and that healthy father functioning exhibits this identificatory fluidity from the very early stages of parenting.

Psychoanalytic theory also proposes that fathers may be particularly emotionally invested in their relationships with their sons, which adds complexity regardless of the function being performed. For example, Benjamin (1988) argues that:

paternal authority...is a far more complex web than its defenders admit: it is not merely rooted in the rational law that forbids incest and patricide, but also the erotics of ideal love, the guilty identification with power that undermines the son's desire for freedom.
(p. 143)

This study is interested in the interstices between constructions of father functions – what the good father should do – and the complex web of hopes and investments that fathers experience and express towards their sons.

2.2. Masculinities, Hegemonic Masculinities, and Fathering

This study adopts a social constructionist perspective on masculinity which, as Lindegger and Quayle (2009, p.41) point out, is the “dominant theoretical framework for understanding gender in general, and masculinity in particular”. Social constructionist theory takes gender to be a socially constructed phenomenon that is associated with, but not simply reducible to, biological sex. According to Morrell (2006) masculinity “is neither biologically determined nor automatic. It is socially constructed, can take many different forms and can change over time” (p. 14). Similarly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point to the substantial body of research that has conceptualizes a multiplicity of social constructions of masculinity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (ibid.), masculinity:

is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals,
Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and,
therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular setting (p. 836)

The notion that masculinity is best conceptualized in the plural form: *masculinities*, has been widely endorsed by current gender theorists (e.g. Edley, 2001; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002; Morrell, 2001). For the purposes of the current project, adopting an anti-essentialist and plural

perspective on masculinities facilitates an analysis of the multiple and contradictory ways men position themselves as good fathers as well as the ways fathers position themselves (and their sons) as acceptably masculine within the problematic of fathering difference.

2.2.1. Discursive psychology and the discursive production of masculinities

Discursive psychology lies within the social constructionist paradigm. As the term implies, discursive psychology conflates psychology and discourse, where subjectivity and identity “are best understood as the personal enactment of communal methods of self-accounting, vocabularies of motive, culturally recognizable emotional performances and available stories for making sense” (Wetherell and Edley, 1999, p. 338). Consequently, phenomena such as identity, emotions, desires, goals and ambitions are taken to be discursive actions that serve particular social functions (Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Willig, 2008). Language is understood as both constructive and functional (Willig, 2008). Edley and Wetherell (1999) point to the paradox inherent to a discursive psychological perspective of the subject, in that the subject is simultaneously a product and a producer of discourse. Therefore emphasis is given to the rhetorical work that takes place in accomplishing subject positions in, but also through available masculine discourses (Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

From this perspective, masculinity is understood to be a discursive production, constructed in and through discourse. Edley (2001) argues that, because masculinity is accomplished in the course of social interaction, it is best understood as relatively fluid, capable of adapting to the particular social settings in which people find themselves. Discursive psychology attends to the ways masculine identities are instantiated, constructed and reconstructed within ordinary talk. For Lindegger and Quayle (2009), conceptualising masculinities as occasioned, flexible discursive practices opens up possibilities for change in ways that essentialist or biological models of masculinity aren't able to do.

Nonetheless, as Edley (2001) points out, challenging and changing masculinity discourses is no easy exercise as not all practices are socially recognised or permitted. For discursive psychologists, the process of ‘being a man’ is inextricably linked to exercises of negotiation and power. As Edley (2001) puts it, establishing one’s identity as a man “is a messy and complicated

coproduction. It is fashioned through social interaction, subject to negotiation...inextricably bound up with the exercise of **power**.” (p. 194, emphasis in the original)

For discursive psychologists, gender hierarchies are maintained through routine masculinity practices that typically involve differentiation and distancing from whatever is constructed as ‘feminine’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1999). In similar vein, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) argue that gender “is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some other model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity”.

Notions of difference and differentiation obviously represent an important focus area for this research project. It has already been argued that the issue of difference in the mother-father-son triangle is a seminal and enduring psychoanalytic principle, with distinct implications for accomplishments of gender identity. From a discursive psychology perspective, claims of difference (or similarity) are viewed as psycho-discursive practices; instantiations of identity work and meaning-making. Analyses of these claims focus on the discursive effects and consequences of positioning self and other as either different or similar. This research project is interested in the ways men position themselves as fathers and men through claims of difference and/or similarity with their sons and their wives/ the mother, and the kinds of masculinity and fathering discourses that are accessed or contested in this process. As indicated above, these discursive claims index both gender and power; the ways men may account for, or warrant intersubjective dominance.

Issues of similarity and difference are also linked to the concept of identification. As the preceding paragraph implies, discursive psychology provides a theoretical framework for analysing identity work that is quite distinct from the psychoanalytic principle of identification. For Wetherell and Edley (1999), identification “is a matter of the *procedures in action* through which men live/talk/do masculinity” (p. 353, italics in the original). According to Hall (1996), subject and discourse are linked through the concept of identification, which “draws meaning from both discursive and psychoanalytic repertoires, without being limited to either” (p. 2). From the perspective of Wetherell and Edley (ibid.), identification is a psycho-discursive practice; a form of self-presentation used to accomplish certain aims within a particular discursive setting. Speakers construct their selves and others by ‘taking up’ available and recognizable discourses. This process of subject positioning demonstrates how the social (discourse) is indivisible from

the psychological (self-positioning, character or identity). As a psychosocial project, this research project is interested in exploring “how participants use discursive resources and with what effects” (Willig, 2008, p.97) as well as the individual and perhaps unconscious ‘reasons’ for these discursive investments.

In summary, Edley (2001) delineates the following discursive psychology principles regarding gender and masculinity:

- Masculinity is a discursive accomplishment as opposed to a natural fact.
- It is something that is done collectively, or in interaction with others.
- Gender identities are typically negotiated and involve operations of power.
- Constructions of masculinity are constrained, to some extent, by the cultural history men find themselves in.
- Masculinity may be a performance, but it is one that often becomes habitual or routinized. (p. 196)

Applying the above principles means that the research interview becomes a viable context for analysing the ways that a sample of men ‘takes up’ and reproduces masculinities through talk about fathering the different or disappointing son. It may be anticipated that taking on the social identity of ‘being the father of a son’ in a research interview will invoke gendered discourses. If this is so, then discursive psychology provides an effective theoretical lens through which to analyse the ways fathers speak about ‘being a man/boy’. Wetherell and Edley (1999) adopt the notion of imaginary positioning to refer to the ways speakers construct a particular version of ‘self’ from an array of available discourses. Their approach illustrates how discursive psychology is able to attend to the vacillating, conflicting, and context-dependent ways that men perform masculinity and/or fatherhood.

2.2.2. Connell’s notion of hegemonic masculinity

The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is widely applied in South African gender research (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). Developed by influential gender theorist Connell (1987; 1995), the concept represents an organizing principle for valued forms of masculinity that are generated, sustained and legitimated through ideas, activities and social institutions (Lindegger

& Quayle, 2009). Hegemonic masculinity has been variously defined (Blackbeard, 2011) and it has been given different emphases by different disciplines (Morrell, et al. 2012).

According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the term hegemonic masculinity refers to the “currently most honored way of being a man” requiring “all other men to position themselves in relation to it” (p.832). Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that Connell’s formulation of hegemonic masculinity is of value because it is “deeply attentive to the problematic of gender power” (p. 336). Furthermore, Connell’s framework recognizes the plurality of masculinities and the relevance of the relations between men (and boys) in the formation of gendered identities. These factors are relevant to the current project, which focuses on the ways men construct gendered identities within the context of the father-son relationship. It seems clear that the father-son relationship is a distinctive male context for the ‘doing’ of masculinity, where fathering and masculinity conflate, giving rise to particular self and other investments that may not be evident in other social contexts.

Morrell et al. (2012) argue that applications of the concept of hegemonic masculinity also need to include relations between men and women and this research project is interested in the ways that fathers may take up, contest or subordinate the perspectives and contributions of the mother. Maternal perspectives may be incorporated into positions of complicity or resistance. For example, because of its taken-for-granted status, complicity may be indexed by constructions of cooperation or ‘like-mindedness’ between father and mother. However, in accordance with a discursive psychological perspective, it is anticipated that any such discursive maneuvers are likely to be varying and context-sensitive.

As indicated above, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been defined in somewhat different ways. This study uses the description cited in Morrell et al. (2012), where:

In addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy. In turn, it presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative ‘real men’ do behave, as the cultural ideal. The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular

version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own. (p. 10)

Elsewhere, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used to refer to dominant “acceptability norms” of gendered behavior for boys and men (Blackbeard and Lindegger, 2007) or ideal standards of masculinity (Joseph and Lindegger, 2007). From these theoretical perspectives, the concept of hegemonic masculinity seems to have distinct relevance to the current study. The concept proposes that, in particular social settings, certain types of masculinity have currency or legitimacy whilst others do not. Although it may be acknowledged that different versions of masculinity may coexist, they are not of equal value and there is an implicit sense of how boys and men ‘should behave’. For Connell, hegemonic masculinity functions as an “aspirational goal” (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 337). Therefore, the concept of hegemonic masculinity highlights the presence of potent implicit expectations regarding gendered behavior and this study is especially interested in the ways fathers manage the disruption of their expectations by different or disappointing sons.

Hearn (2004) argues that, by coupling the concepts ‘hegemonic’ and ‘masculinity’, Connell’s theory leads to overly narrow analyses of hegemonic gender relations. Instead, Hearn (*ibid.*) argues for analyses of the hegemony of men, the “ordinary, taken-for-granted accepted dominant constructions, powers and authorities of men – in relation to women, children, and other men” (p. 54). Whilst the current study is interested in such ‘ordinary’ dominant constructions, the concept of hegemonic masculinity does seem useful to the current research project because the notion of a hierarchy of masculinities emphasises the stakes involved in fathering a son towards acceptable masculinity. On the one hand sons and fathers risk shame if they take up subordinate versions of masculinity (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009), whilst on the other men may be galvanised to father their sons towards ‘culturally honourable’ versions of masculinity. Nonetheless, as indicated below, this research project acknowledges Hearn’s (*ibid.*) foregrounding of the hegemonic practices of men. The approach taken in this study is to adopt a fine-grained discursive analysis of the ways men construct their sons’ differences, supplementing this with psychoanalytic theory that highlights the issue of intersubjective power and domination.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has sometimes been used to refer to a set of attributes or traits, most often depicting ‘bad men’ (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jefferson, 2002; Morrell

et al., 2012). Morrell et al. (2012) argue that such usage diminishes the concept. The authors return to the principles of hegemony by proposing that hegemonic masculinity is best conceived as “a set of cultural ideals that are constructed, contested, and defended” (p. 12). This distinction lends fluidity and even optimism to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that “it is possible to define a hegemonic masculinity that is thoroughly ‘positive’ and that a “positive hegemony remains...a key strategy for contemporary efforts at reform” (p. 853).

Connell’s (2005) social framework emphasizes that gender is fundamentally relational and argues that, as opposed to being a set of predetermined characteristics, hegemonic masculinity exists only in relation to subordinate, complicit, marginalised masculinity, and femininity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), hegemony refers to “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (p. 832). Maintaining a focus on the functions of hegemony is relevant because this research project is interested in exploring the ways fathers respond when confronted by difference and disappointment in their sons. This research project will analyse how fathers deploy taken-for-granted cultural ideals in order to account for their responses to difference and disappointment. In addition, the research project pursues a psycho-discursive analysis of what ‘persuasion’ might look like within the context of fathering a different or disappointing son. Demetriou (2001) points out that hegemonic masculinity may reproduce itself by evolving into what might be seen as ‘new’ forms of masculinity, whilst still maintaining dominance over other versions of masculinity. In the current project it may be anticipated that hegemonic practices may involve vacillating between different varying versions of masculinity and/or fathering.

As indicated above, Connell (2005) argues that different masculinities are ranked hierarchically, according to the ways they are oriented by hegemonic masculinity. In addition to hegemonic masculinity, Connell (ibid.) identifies two categories of masculinity: *subordinate* and *complicity*, which are constituted by their relationship to hegemonic masculinity. Connell (ibid.) argues that hegemony, subordination and complicity “are relations internal to the gender order” (p. 80). Connell (ibid.) goes on to argue that interactions between gender and social structures such as class and race create further relationships between masculinities. Connell (ibid.) uses the term *marginalization* to refer to “the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated

classes or ethnic groups”. For Connell (ibid.), hegemonic masculinity enjoys social authority and it is this social authority that marginalized masculinities lack. Thus Connell’s (ibid.) conceptual framework proposes two types of relationships which may be used to analyse masculinities: hegemony, domination and subordination on the one hand, and marginalization and social authority on the other.

2.2.2.1. Subordinated masculinities

According to Connell (2005), specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men exist within social frameworks of hegemonic cultural dominance. In particular, Connell (ibid.) identifies homosexual masculinities as being positioned “at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity” (p. 78). From the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is equivalent to femininity. However, as Connell (ibid.) points out, subordination via ‘feminizing’ is also a strategy commonly deployed to position heterosexual boys and men outside the “hegemonic circle of legitimacy” (p. 79).

According to Lindegger and Quayle (2009) “the pressures on men to attempt to live up to the demands of hegemonic forms are ubiquitous and powerful” (p. 42) and Seidler (2006) argues that these pressures render men vulnerable to the shame of being exposed as ‘a failed man’. Being the father of a different son seems to expose men to the risk of subordination and shame in two primary ways. First, fathers may fear that, because the son is different, the father is unable to adopt acceptable normative ways of fathering. Second, if we accept that sons are in some ways extensions of their fathers, the father’s own masculine status would be threatened should his son appear to deviate towards subordinated norms. How then, does the good father respond when his son seems to deviate from the way ‘real men’ should behave?

2.2.2.2. Complicity

According to Connell (2005), although many men do not rigorously practice hegemonic masculinity, they remain ‘complicit’ in the sense that they benefit from the ‘patriarchal dividend’, which refers to the advantage men gain from the overall subordination of women. Thus, although men may respect their female partners, are not violent and are involved in housework and childcare, they remain complicit because they do little to challenge patriarchy in

general. Connell (2005) points out that “marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women rather than naked domination or an uncontested display of authority” (p. 79). This has relevance to the current project because, over the past several decades, middle-class constructions of ‘good fathering’ have been informed by what is termed the ‘new father’ discourse (Finn & Henwood, 2009). New fathering emerges as a reaction against traditional constructions of fathering, and foregrounds a gender neutral ‘parenting’ that prioritizes emotional warmth, care, equality, and domestic involvement (Dermott, 2008; Gottzen, 2011). However, previous research has found that men vacillate between new father and traditional father discourses (Finn & Henwood, 2009). Consequently, Connell’s (ibid.) notion of complicity seems pertinent because it enables an analysis of the ways participants might sustain hegemonic masculinity even as they draw on ‘new man’ or ‘new father’ discourses in order to account for themselves as fathers of different sons.

2.2.2.3. *Marginalization*

As indicated above, Connell (2005) argues that masculinity is complicated by factors such as race, class, and socio-economic status. Morrell et al. (2012) argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is best applied when “the realms (in relation to race, class and age) and levels (i.e. global, national or local) of its use” are specified and observed (p. 15). Morrell (2001) has proposed that three hegemonic masculinities prevail in South Africa, one of these being a “white” masculinity that is represented in the economic and political dominance of the white ruling class. Because masculinity practices intersect with other social factors, the current study focuses on the discursive negotiations and investments of a sample of men with high homogeneity in terms of socio-economic status, age and race.

However, race and socio-economic factors have not been an overt focus of this study. Instead, the focus has been on the internal gender order proposed by Connell (ibid.), this being the dynamic between hegemonic masculinity, domination, subordination and complicity within the father-son relationship. It is acknowledged that issues of race and socio-politics are integral to the ways this sample of men has performed masculinity. However, an analysis of these factors would require the posing of different albeit equally important research questions.

2.2.3. Psycho-discursive applications of the concept of hegemonic masculinity

Connell's theory focuses primarily on macro-social issues as opposed to micro-psychological processes, and his theory has been criticized for a lack of specificity regarding the ways men actually negotiate masculine identities (Seidler, 2006; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2002). Connell's categories may be appropriate for conceptualizing the broad social context of gender relations, but they may be too broad and generic to capture the complexities of the lived experiences of men (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Langa, 2011; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Whitehead (2002) argues that the concept of hegemonic masculinity omits agency, and is therefore structurally reductive to an intractable male dominance. Elsewhere, Wetherell (2008) argues for analytic accounts of the ways gendered subjectivities are accomplished in everyday interactions. For Seidler (2006), Connell's structural theory of masculinity "makes an implicit identification between men and masculinities" which makes it difficult to "explore how men have grown in relation to particular masculinities, and also the tension and unease which men often feel in relation to prevailing models" (p. 12).

The above observations are pertinent to the current research project, which is interested in analyzing the subjective experiences of this sample of men as well as the identity strategies employed in the negotiation of various masculine/father discourses. As indicated above, this research project approaches the concept of hegemonic masculinity from a psycho-discursive perspective, which focuses on the discursive strategies involved in negotiating membership of gender categories (Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Edley & Wetherell, 1999). According to Whitehead (2002) poststructuralist techniques may "provide means by which to interpret, understand and locate the subject in the social network, in the process providing insights into (non-grounded) identity, the self, power/resistance and subjectivity" (p. 103). A psycho-discursive perspective helps to expose how men's lives link into the macro-structures that Connell outlines (Jefferson, 2002).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) ask "how is hegemonic masculinity conveyed interactionally and practically in mundane life?" (p. 337). This question is especially relevant to this research since, as will be argued in greater detail below, it seems to provide a theoretical link to Benjamin's (1988; 1995) concept of intersubjective recognition, thus contributing to the overall psychosocial project. A psycho-discursive approach investigates how men negotiate conventional

understandings of masculinity in their everyday interactions; how they simultaneously account for their actions and produce or manage their identities and those of others (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This study is interested in applying the theoretical insights of recognition to discursive instances where fathers produce and manage their sons' identities.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) demonstrate how a sample of men orientates themselves to the discursive demand of constructing themselves as masculine. It is evident that participants take up multiple masculine identity positions, frequently with ambiguous and contradictory reference to conventional or 'macho' masculinity. The authors conclude that complicity and resistance are best understood as discursive strategies that may be mixed together in discursive constructions of selfhood, and that it is necessary to consider "the multiple and inconsistent discursive resources available for constructing hegemonic gender identities" (p.352). As is evident in the following section, an appreciation for the ways men take up, contest and vacillate between different available versions of self has been especially productive in research into fathering.

2.2.4. Discourses of fathering

The topic of fathering has been approached from a wide range of theoretical perspectives (Morman & Floyd, 2006). A significant body of research approaches fathering from a historical perspective, identifying different 'epochs' of fathering (Lamb, 1987; 2000; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb 2000; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). According to this theoretical position, expectations of 'the good father' have changed across different socio-historical and economic periods. Lamb (1987; 2000) has proposed that American fathering has moved through four discernible periods: the moral teacher, breadwinner, sex-role model, and the nurturing father. According to this perspective, prior to the industrial revolution, fathers were expected to take responsibility for their children's moral and educational progress. Then, following the industrial revolution, the breadwinner ideal came to the fore, with parenting roles divided between the mother (nurturing) and the father (providing). In the next period, 'good fathering' had to do with guiding boys towards acceptable male behavior. According to Lamb (ibid.) in recent times fathers are expected to be involved with their children and also to meet the requirements that were prominent in previous epochs. Similarly, Pleck and Pleck (1997) have argued that from the early 19th century, fathering in white American society has shifted from father as distant breadwinner, to sex-role model, to the 'involved' father. Thus, the argument is that the meaning of fatherhood

is a “historically varying social construction” (Marsiglio et al. 2000, p. 1175) such that as culture changes, so do standards for what it means to be a ‘good father’ (Morman & Floyd, 2002).

Research into fathering has also been approached by examining the various contexts in which fathering takes place; what Marsiglio et al. (2000) have called “the shifting demography of fatherhood” (p. 1181). From this perspective, fathering in different population groups has been examined in diverse cultural and socio-economic, and family contexts (Braver, & O’Connell, 1998; Lamb, 2004; Marsiglio, 2004).

However, as Williams (2008) points out, a disadvantage of the above approaches is that, by proposing the predominance of one broad type of fathering, these perspectives may overlook the complexities of fathering, particularly during the current period of rapid social changes. This research project is interested in what Wetherell and Edley (1999, p. 336) refer to as “the nitty gritty” of men’s identity strategies and negotiation of fatherhood identities. In their analysis of the ways young men imagine the project of fatherhood, Edley and Wetherell (1999) show how participants negotiate between different father ideals in order to account for their self-positioning as ‘good fathers’ of the future. Accordingly, in the current research project, analytic attention is given to how men take up, and position themselves within available fatherhood discourses in order to account for themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons. According to Morrell (2006), fatherhood is interpreted in different ways and it is intrinsic to constructions of masculinity. Thus, consistent with a discursive psychological perspective, analytic attention is given to how men take up, and position themselves within available fatherhood discourses in order to account for themselves as men and as fathers of different or disappointing sons.

According to social theorists, since the 1970’s, ‘new’ (or ‘involved’) fathering has become a prevalent and constitutive discourse, particularly amongst white middle class men (Edley & Wetherell, 1999; Finn & Henwood, 2009; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Plantin, 2007; Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003). This emergence is seen to coincide with wider socio-cultural changes, such as women’s increased involvement in the workplace and a concomitant decline of traditional patriarchal and masculine authority (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; McMahan, 1999). According to Coltrane (2007) the new father ideal conflates men’s and women’s traditional parenting spheres, and men are expected to assume more of the parenting and domestic duties. The notion of ‘new fatherhood’ implies a reaction against traditional father discourses and

hegemonic masculinity, wherein the father is positioned as authoritarian, disinterested, absent and emotionally distant. 'New' father discourses rework what it means to be a 'good father' by advocating egalitarian co-parenting, involvement, caring, and emotional warmth (Craig, 2006; Dermott, 2008). As Hollway (2007) points out, "the adoption of the word 'parent', in the position where until recently 'mother' was...claims, in its gender neutrality, that the sex (and gender) of this carer is unimportant, even irrelevant" (p. 83). Distinctions between mother and father are subsumed under the gender neutral notion of parenting.

However, several commentators see 'new fatherhood' as a cultural fallacy (e.g. Larossa, 1988). Lewis (2000) argues that fathers still occupy and, indeed, are expected to occupy the breadwinner role in families, and research shows that fathers continue to align themselves with the 'breadwinner' ideal type (O'Brien & Shemlit, 2003; Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999). Morrell (2006) argues that a dominant form of masculinity among white South African men continues to include values such as "a preference for physically demanding homosocial contexts", "unquestioning self-belief" and "unequal and careless relationships" with women and children (p. 19). Morrell (ibid.) points out that, although other versions of masculinity may exist, "it is the values and behaviours of these men that are accepted as 'normal' and, indeed, even lauded" (p. 19).

Analysing how men negotiate these two broad discourses (new fathering and traditional models of fathering) is relevant to this research project because the negotiation evokes the topics of gender, similarity and difference. Orthodox fatherhood discourses (e.g. 'breadwinner'; 'disciplinarian') have the dual effect of differentiating the father from the mother and shoring up traditional versions of masculinity (Williams, 2008). It is also anticipated that orthodox father discourses will influence the ways men account for themselves in their relationships with their sons because of the ways they may naturalize men's access to power and 'persuasion' as the father. Additionally, if father discourses are founded on being different from the mother/feminine, then it is anticipated that the son's differences will be rendered problematic because of being too close to the feminine.

In their study of first-time fathers, Finn and Henwood (2009) find that men take up discourses that are consistent with orthodox psychoanalytic perspectives on the father, "as symbolically representative of the outside world, order and morality and as uniquely responsible for instilling

in children autonomy, emotional maturity and a ...differentiated selfhood by separating them from a fused relationship with the mother” (p. 557). As already argued, this orthodox father discourse seems to imply clear expectations for self and other, perhaps most especially within the father-son relationship.

Thus it may be argued that ‘new father’ and ‘traditional father’ ideals do not easily co-exist in men’s lives: indeed Catlett & McKenry (2004) suggest that the two ideals are inherently conflicting. This research project attends to the ways participants negotiate between these conflicting discourses of fathering. How do men account for themselves and their responses to a different or disappointing son? In what ways do men account for deployments of power in response to difference? On the other hand, how might participants take up ‘new father’ discourses, becoming more like the mother, approximating Kristeva’s notion of ‘forgetting oneself’ as cited in Hollway (2007) and forgoing paternal power?

Of course, in accordance with the principles of hegemony, the ‘new father’ discourse may be deployed as a way of maintaining the gender hierarchy. In this vein, some feminist theorists argue that the construct of the new father is deployed in order to justify current focuses on fathers’ rights, thereby serving to reassert patriarchal power and control (Segal, 1990). However, some critical social constructionist and psychoanalytic theorists argue that current changes in fathering have the potential to inaugurate more egalitarian and caring versions of masculinity and fathering (e.g. Henwood & Procter, 2003; Frosh, 1997; Williams, 2008).

Social constructionist analyses of men’s descriptions of fathering reveal what Finn and Henwood (2009) describe as “a hybridized mix of hegemonic masculinity, on the one hand, and a letting go of the hegemonic position on the other” (p. 549). As with Edley and Wetherell’s (1999) psycho-discursive analysis of young men’s father talk, Finn and Henwood (ibid.) find that some participants take up new father discourses in ways that shore up hegemonic values such as independence, autonomy and assertive courage. In addition, along with White (1994), Finn and Henwood (ibid.) find that, for some of their participants, being the new father continues to bring men social status and power as ‘responsible adults’. What these research findings indicate is that fathers are required to negotiate between conflicting discourses of fathering, at times merging discourses in ways that prop up traditional versions of masculinity, naturalise intersubjective dominance and gender hierarchies. As part of a psychosocial approach, this research project uses

psycho-discursive analysis to understand how men may deploy mixtures of traditional and the more contemporary ‘new father’ discourses in order to account for themselves as good fathers of different or disappointing sons.

It has been argued that the discourse of ‘new fatherhood’ is in fact not new, and that cultural expectations of emotional closeness were evident in the early twentieth century (Griswold, 1993). However, according to Gottzen (2011), what is ‘new’ is the expectation that fathers should be actively involved in household work and the raising of children. By focusing on accounts of disappointment, this research project offers a perspective on ‘what matters’ to men as fathers; what they expect of (or for) themselves and their sons. As indicated by Edley (2001) above, negotiations of gender involve operations of power, and this research project attends to the ways men either reproduce or rework established gender hierarchies in their responses to difference and disappointment.

However, Seidler (2006) argues that masculinity research needs to take account of men’s emotional lives, and this study is interested in the ambivalences and vulnerabilities described by participants in their negotiations of fathering. Seidler (*ibid.*) argues that traditional fathering has seen fathers maintain a certain distance from their children in order to exercise authority. According to Seidler (*ibid.*), historically this distance has prevented fathers from relating emotionally to their children, creating “its own form of melancholia, as fathers felt trapped in a distant relationship they could not change” (p. 5). Henwood and Procter’s (2003) study of first time fathers found that, whilst participants welcomed their new roles as fathers, participants struggled to negotiate between traditional father ideals (such as autonomy) and new father ideals (such as care and equity). The authors also found that participants tended to divest their emotional vulnerabilities into mothers. Again, as argued by Segal (1990) above, masculine subjectivity presents as ambivalent, marked by anxiety and contradictions. This research project is interested in these subjective ambivalences and contradictions as indications of the potential that fathering holds to open up new channels of emotional expression and more equitable ways of being men.

2.2.5. Fatherhood in South Africa

It is important to acknowledge that in a country as culturally and economically diverse as South Africa, the fathers represented in this study constitute a version of fathering that is set in a particular socio-historical context. Fathering is significantly influenced by socio-economic factors (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999), and according to Morrell (2006), “poverty is the most important factor undermining the role of fatherhood and the involvement of fathers” (p. 20). In South Africa, unemployment and poverty are demarcated along racial lines (Morrell et al. 2012). According to Ramphele and Richter (2006), due to poverty, many Black fathers are left feeling helpless in their inability to provide for their families which results in fathers withdrawing from their families, either physically or emotionally. Morrell et al. (2012) note that many South African fathers have little or no role in the raising of their children, and in Langa’s (2011) study of Black adolescent boys living in Alexandria Township, several of the participants indicated that they had little or no contact with their fathers. According to statistics SA (2011), South African has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world.

Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes (2012) emphasize the importance of ‘social fathers’ in Black communities— significant male role models who, often in the absence of biological fathers, contribute to children’s lives in meaningful ways. The authors point out that the nuclear family has not been the norm for many African communities and argue that normative notions of the family have nourished generalizations regarding the absent ‘bad father’.

The above factors indicate that the current study focuses on men who approach fathering from a particular socio-cultural perspective and from a position of privilege that has been established and maintained by decades of economic and political inequality (Morrell et al. 2012). Thus, tensions between ‘new father’ and traditional father discourses as outlined above, may have limited application in South Africa, with poverty perhaps being the key discriminating variable. Fatherhood in South Africa is most often equated with being the provider (Richter & Morrell, 2006). However, Rabe (2007) found that working class men with secure jobs and enabling working conditions took up engaged versions of fathering. Furthermore, Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes (ibid.) found that Black men in their sample identified the value of a father ‘being there’ for his son, and subscribed to nurturing, non-violent and caring versions of fathering. This was identified as ‘talking’ fathering, and appears to approximate the ‘new father’ ideal.

2.2.6. Bringing recognition and hegemonic masculinity together

Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity proposes that certain versions of masculinity are given legitimacy and made ascendant over other (subordinated) versions of masculinity. This suggests that fathers interactions with their sons are, to some or other extent, contoured by implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions regarding how their sons 'should' be. As has already been indicated, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is weakened when it is seen to denote a fixed and usually stereotypical version of masculinity. The concept may be more creatively applied when the principles of hegemony are borne in mind, such that one is referring to a set of ideals that are changeable, and always in need of defending. According to Wetherell and Edley (1999):

Hegemony is a version of the world which is reality defining. Such versions are plural, inconsistent, achieved through discursive work, constantly needing to be brought into being over and over. That is the chief character of hegemony rather than its definition as an already known and fixed set of ruling ideas. It is a relative position in a struggle for taken-for-grantedness. (p. 352).

Connell's theory has been criticized for neglecting the subjective aspects of men's experiences (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003; Redman, 2001) and the current research project employs psychoanalytic concepts, and in particular Benjamin's (1988; 1995) concept of recognition, to provide a psychosocial analysis of the ways men negotiate the context of fathering a different or disappointing son. As indicated, recognizing the other requires confronting illusions of omnipotence (everything is an extension of me and my power) in the face of difference. Consequently, it may be argued that intersubjective recognition must always agitate against hegemonic assumptions, leading either to their revision or to renewed attempts to assert dominance.

According to Chu, Porche, & Tolman, (2005), the ideal that men are entitled to control in intimate relationships is a feature of hegemonic forms of masculinity in various contexts. Hearn (1999) argues that it is difficult for men to know how to care for and love others in the family without asserting the power and authority of the father. If recognition constitutes caring and loving, then it may be argued that recognition is especially difficult when men are invested in

traditional hegemonic versions of fathering. Whereas the ‘new father’ discourse promotes a version of fathering that stresses emotional closeness and attunement with the child, traditional father discourses position the father as ‘law-giver’, with the task of introducing the son to the outside world of work and of men. Perhaps then, instantiations of traditional fathering may be premised on an inequality of realities; where the father has knowledge that he needs to impart to his son. Traditional fathering implies that the father knows what his son needs to know, and one of his primary tasks is to instill this knowledge in his son. Bearing in mind the power differential between father and son, and the fact that the orthodox father has knowledge to impart, it may be especially difficult for fathers to find a balance between ‘omnipotence’ and a recognition of his son as a sovereign other. Benjamin (1988; 1995) argues that recognition is inherent to the establishment of healthy attachment. If new fatherhood argues for relationship over power/authoritarianism then acceptance of otherness may be seen as crucial to the uptake of ‘new fatherhood’ discourse. This research project attends to the ways fathers negotiate this intersubjective challenge of recognizing their sons’ ‘version of the world’.

Clearly the challenge of recognizing a different son implies that the father is required to reappraise his expectations and assumptions. However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity would suggest that this is no easy task. Hegemonic masculinity refers to “widespread ideals, fantasies and desires” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.838) and, according to Frosh (1994), the potency of hegemonic masculinity is derived from its ‘impossibility’ or ‘fantastical nature’. From a psychoanalytic perspective, idealization is integral to every strong desire, generating expectations of “some bliss that is fully uninhibited, unambivalent and untouched by elements of displeasure” (Schafer, 1999, p. 1094). Research cited below indicates that fathers hold particular expectations of their sons and it may be argued that the idealized expectations and hopes contribute to the ‘fantastical nature’ of hegemonic masculinity. From a psychosocial perspective, this research project attends to discursive identifications as comprising cultural discourses as well as idealizations, identifications, and projections that are grounded in fantasy and the unconscious. Thus, hegemonic masculinity may function as a promise of unalloyed glory, powerfully shaping the hopes and expectations fathers hold for themselves and for their sons.

As already indicated, Benjamin (1988) argues that orthodox formulations of the oedipal model, where the father of separation rescues the child from the mother of dependency, effectively

negate maternal subjectivity. Here Benjamin (ibid.) articulates an irony inherent to the orthodox model, where what is supposed to depict a process of gender differentiation (the turn to the father) actually ends up obscuring difference (maternal/feminine subjectivity) within the mother-father-son triangle. Thus the maternal is devalued and the paternal is elevated. This research project leans on Benjamin's (ibid.) insights by arguing that: where fathering is founded on traditional discourses that naturalise paternal power along with the belief that the good father must orient his son towards masculinity, then the father's subjectivity will also enjoy hegemonic status. In turn, the difference of the different son is likely to be subordinated, feminized and therefore obscured. The subjectivity of the hegemonic father is elevated at the expense of the subjectivity of the different son. To use a psychoanalytic register, the different son is related to as an object within the father's omnipotent project of molding the son after the father's ways. According to Benjamin (1988) the "polarity of subject and object is the enduring skeletal frame of domination, ready to be fleshed out with manifest gender content when the situation demands" (p. 216). It is argued that a hegemonic masculinity that is too 'certain' of itself (Samuels, 1989) is disposed to denigrate difference and deny its equivalent subjectivity which, for Benjamin, establishes the conditions for intersubjective dominance.

2.3. Disappointment

Disappointment has been described as an experience that arises when expectations of gratification from an object are not met (Jacobson, 1946) or as stemming from disconfirmed expectancies (Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, & van der Pligt, 2000). Schafer (1999, p.1093) argues that disappointment is "inevitable" and "pervasive" and the current study adopts Schafer's view by taking disappointment as part and parcel of relational life.

Certainly, from a psychoanalytic perspective, disappointment may be understood as inevitable and difficult, but not necessarily destructive to relational health. Craib (1994) proposes psychoanalysis as the theory of disappointment where, "to ensure that society is a going concern...always requires some sacrifice, a surrender of pleasure, and although there are compensations, they are bought at the price of misery" (p. 35). As indicated above, the resolution of the oedipal crisis requires acceptance of constraint, and Schafer (1999) argues that disappointment is a central feature of the Oedipus complex. According to Fakhry Davids (2005), the psychological work of the oedipal complex "involves inner struggle and pain, and involves

mourning for the lost world of childhood and innocence when we believed anything was possible provided we really loved and were loved by our parents” (p. 71). Then, from Benjamin’s relational psychoanalytic perspective, disappointment may be seen as a precondition to moving beyond omnipotence towards recognising the other as an equivalent subject, with “real agency and separate selfhood” (Benjamin, 1995, p. 38).

In addition, Klein’s (1955; 1957) theorising of the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ and ‘depressive’ positions seems well-suited to an analysis of fathers’ negotiation of difference and disappointment in their sons. For Klein (*ibid.*), the two positions develop in infancy as ways of organising experience. Although the depressive position is understood to emerge after the paranoid-schizoid position, and to represent healthier and more mature functioning, it is argued that people oscillate between the two organising principles throughout life (Hollway, 2007). Klein (*ibid.*) employs the metaphor of the breast to explain the emergence of the paranoid-schizoid position. Via the inevitable frustrations of feeding, the infant splits the ‘good’, satisfying breast from the ‘bad’ frustrating (or disappointing) breast. The term ‘schizoid’ refers to this splitting of good and bad, where the good breast is loved and the bad breast is hated. Because it is intolerable, the ‘bad’ is projected out of the feeling state of the infant and into the available (m)other. Consequently, the object ‘out there’ is felt to be bad and persecuting, hence the paranoid dimension of this organizing position. The destructive phantasy directed at this hated object is an expression of the omnipotence characteristic of the early infantile state: the wish to control sources of satisfaction. However, this omnipotent urge to destroy exists in conflict with the infant’s need to preserve the object on whom it depends.

The depressive position is theorised as a relational accomplishment that entails accepting that good and bad exist in the same object, and that reality is frustrating (Frosh, 2012). Depressive knowledge emerges out of a sense of the constancy of the object to whom both hate and love has been directed. Furthermore, depressive knowledge includes the guilt that one’s aggressive impulses may have damaged the loved object. This guilt gives rise to reparative urges, with the hope of renewing or restoring the valued other.

It is argued that Klein’s (*ibid.*) theorising of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions is useful for analysing father’s responses to disappointing sons. The paranoid-schizoid position helps to account for the hostilities fathers may feel towards ‘unsatisfying’ or disappointing sons,

with fathers entertaining destructive phantasies involving their sons being rejected or destroyed as the unacceptable and hated 'other'. According to Hollway (2007), omnipotence is characteristic of paranoid schizoid dynamics, where unethical attempts are made to control the other, who is related to as an extension of the self's narcissism.

On the other hand, fathers love their sons and may feel guilty about their aggressive sentiments and actions. The concept of the depressive position helps to explain how fathers may transition towards more ethical ways of relating to their sons, as they undertake the process of reparation. Moving into the depressive position requires the acceptance of ambivalence, bringing fathers into closer contact with the reality of their sons "and the reality of themselves" (Craib, 1994, p.54). For Schafer (1999) healthy functioning does not imply the end of conflict, but rather a flexible and resilient integration of good and bad. One is able to make allowances for imperfections without diminishing one's capacity to love.

2.3.1. A psychosocial analysis of disappointment and difference

The current study takes a psychosocial perspective on the notions of expectations, disappointment and difference. As is more fully discussed in chapter four, the psychosocial approach adopted in this research project combines a discursive analysis of the ways participants account for themselves together with a psychoanalytic analysis of the "personal dynamics that make these discourses so salient for the individuals concerned" (Emerson & Frosh, 2004, p. 7). Consequently, attention is given to the "choices that sustain, challenge and potentially reformulate discourses constitutive of available subject positions" (ibid. p. 133).

Expectations, disappointment, and difference are seen as constructed through talk, as part of the interviewee's performance of 'good' fathering. By laying claims to particular expectations, and responses to disappointment, participants are understood to be positioning themselves and others within available discursive repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1994). As regards 'being disappointed', Billig (1999) argues that "talk about emotions typically involves talk about morality and social expectations", and that "patterns of culture and ideology determine what is to be desired and what is to be an object of shame" (p. 212).

The psychoanalytic element in this psychosocial project is used to shed light on possible unconscious, emotionally-inflected and therefore personal investments in these 'patterns of

culture and ideology'. According to Frosh (1994), a distinctive feature of psychoanalysis has to do with "its focus on subjectivity, on the articulation of what, for want of a better term, can be called the 'inner world'" (p. 13). It is held that the psychoanalytic concepts discussed above help to appropriately articulate the irrationality and intensity of affect which seem applicable to the experience of disappointment in intimate relationships (Saville Young, 2009).

2.3.2. Locating disappointment in discourse

Zeelenberg et al. (2000) summarise a range of research findings and conceptual perspectives on the topic of disappointment, primarily from the perspective of what the authors term 'decision research'. Although their theoretical perspectives fall outside the purview of this research project, their observations indicate a range of ways that disappointment may manifest in discourse, therefore enabling sensitised readings of the research data.

According to Zeelenberg et al. (ibid.), the phenomenology of disappointment includes feelings of powerlessness, a tendency to turn away from the situation, or to do nothing. Disappointment also comes with particular appraisal patterns: it is associated with unexpectedness, with the prospect of something pleasurable, the notion of legitimacy (that one was morally right) and that the disappointing event was caused by circumstances beyond one's control. Interestingly, Zeelenberg et al. (ibid.) point out that 'person-related disappointment' (where another person is seen as responsible for the disappointment) typically results in anger, and increased efforts to achieve the desired or expected outcome. Other reactions to the prospect of disappointment include lowering expectations, underestimating the likelihood that a desired outcome will take place, convincing oneself that an outcome is not really desirable, and making one's expectations vague or less specific, such that they are harder to disconfirm.

As indicated above, this research project is interested in analysing the ways men speak about being disappointed. Consistent with a psycho-discursive and psychosocial approach, analysis focuses on the ways men position themselves and others within this talk, as opposed to conceptualizing 'disappointment' as an essential and interiorized entity. Nonetheless, it is argued that the insights of Zeelenberg et al. (2000) assist in 'tracking' the ways disappointment is accounted for in discourse, bearing in mind that 'being disappointed' may be a shameful position for the 'good' father.

2.3.3. Disappointment and difference

As is evident from the title of this research project, disappointment and difference are seen as linked. In the preceding sections the importance of identification (of what is me and what is not me) has been highlighted, from both a psychoanalytic perspective and a discursive psychological perspective. To the extent that the father expects similarity in his son as masculine subject, the implication is that difference will be linked to disappointment.

This linkage (between difference and disappointment) was confirmed in the two pilot studies conducted at the beginning of the research project, where it became evident that constructions of disappointment invariably straddled the two. It is necessary to clarify just what is meant by the term ‘difference’ as this elucidates the experience of disappointment that is the focus of this study. Perhaps obviously, many fathers would be pleased rather than disappointed if their sons’ differences meant that they were more academically capable, or kind, or self-assured than their fathers. Not all difference is disappointing. However, in the pilot studies a pattern emerged where, in describing their sons, participants invariably drew comparisons with themselves. This meant that issues of similarity and difference were inherent in participants’ constructions of themselves and their sons, and that masculinity was implicated in these constructions. Within these patterns of self-son comparison, disappointment and difference were linked in that disappointment was expressed at differences that were beyond the father’s ken regarding acceptable masculinity. This difference (from the hegemonic white South African norm) is given particular attention in the study, as the pilot interviews illustrated how it set up the accounts of disappointment.

Within these patterns of self and son comparison, even an apparently prosocial feature such as ‘generosity’ could elicit conflict in the father, and be linked to the father’s disappointment, because the son is constructed as ‘too generous’ and not competitive (or masculine) enough. In similar vein, an apparently anti-social feature, such as aggression, may not be linked to disappointment because it falls within the ambit of acceptable masculinity. This means that constructions of disappointment insinuate issues of identification, as discussed above. If the father expects recognisable masculinity in the son, but is confronted instead by the disappointment of difference, how does the father respond?

Importantly, pilot interviews also showed that similarity between father and son also facilitated engagement, primarily through shared activity, whereas difference was associated with disappointment, perplexity, and the threat of relational disengagement.

In the light of the above patterns in the pilot interviews, constructions of ‘difference’ were routinely taken as cues for paternal disappointment, the latter being a more awkward and thus often more implicit topic for conversation.

2.4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to review the theoretical perspectives that have been used both to contextualize and to respond to the primary research question: how do fathers describe their experiences, actions and resolutions in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons? In addition, consideration has been given to the ways the different theoretical perspectives can be integrated to facilitate a psychosocial reading of the research data.

Traditional perspectives on fathering maintain that fathers represent the law, the outside world, and masculinity to their sons. However many argue that, due to socio-cultural changes, these traditional functions have become increasingly redundant. In concert with these changes, ‘new’ versions of fatherhood have emerged, which conflate the maternal and paternal functions and which promote more involved and caring versions of fathering. However, research finds that men vacillate between orthodox and ‘new’ versions of fathering, often constructing hybridized versions that shore up traditional versions of masculinity and fathering.

This research project focuses on the father-son relationship as a particular forum for productions of fathering and masculinity. If fathers are responsible for initiating their sons into masculinity and the outside world, then how does the father respond when his son differs from the father’s expectations or won’t follow the father’s ways? Does the father take up a hegemonic masculinity that insists on acceptable ways of gendered being or does the father, as a caring ‘new’ father, adjust to his son’s ways? If the father does adjust, how does he do this? Perhaps, in accordance with the findings of previous studies, the father may vacillate between hegemonic and new, accepting versions of fathering.

It has been argued that Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity provides theoretical and conceptual tools to approach the above questions. In particular, Benjamin's concept of recognition seems well-suited to a detailed analysis of the ways fathers may vacillate between positions of hegemonic dominance and recognition of the son as a different but equivalent source of subjectivity. Intersubjective recognition of the different son seems to imply an awareness and acceptance of different versions of masculinity.

To date, disappointment has not been a common focus of theory and research but it has been argued that disappointment is a routine feature of intimate relationships. In addition, it is proposed that the disappointing other could also be termed the negating other, such that disappointment may be seen as integral to recognizing the other as 'not me'. It could then be said that, for fathers, disappointment 'sets up' an opportunity to recognize their sons as other which, for Benjamin, promotes attachment between father and son. Consequently, analyzing the ways that fathers vacillate between domination and recognition of the disappointing son can add to existing theory and research on the ambivalent potential fathering holds for men and their children.

CHAPTER THREE: CONSIDERING EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Over the past few decades increased research attention has been given to fathers and fathering, both in South Africa and abroad (Lamb, 2010; Richter and Morrell, 2006). It is now widely recognised that fatherhood is a diverse and complex concept, sensitive to socio-historical context, cultural, political and highly localized and family-specific factors (Hakoama and Ready, 2011; Lewis and Lamb 2007). Fathering is a significant aspect of men's lives, with the potential of either reaffirming or changing gender relations (Bjornholt, 2010; Finn and Henwood, 2009)

3.1. Father Involvement: The Centrality of the Relationship

An enduring area of research interest has been the notion of father 'involvement' (Morman & Floyd, 2006; Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004). Debates continue regarding quite what it is that involved fathers bring to children, and whether their contributions differ in any substantial ways from those made by mothers (Pleck, 2010; Richter, 2006). Some commentators point to the indirect benefits a family accrues by having an involved father, such as increased financial and physical security, maternal support and enriched community ties (Guma & Henda, 2004; Jarrett, 1994; Marsiglio and Day, 1997; Townsend, 2002). Other researchers have explored the direct benefits of father presence, and research has found positive correlations between father presence and school achievement (Amato, 1998; Johnson, 1997) and emotional well-being (Johnson, 1997). Some researchers have found that father presence is particularly beneficial to male children, contributing to enhanced social competence, behavioural control and school achievement in boys (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; Jones, 2004; Mandara & Murray, 2006; Mboya & Nesengani, 1999; Mott, 1994; Singer & Weinstein, 2000).

More recently, research has moved away from a presence/absence frame and towards a focus on the quality of relationship between father and child. Indeed, as Richter (2006) and Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) point out, whether or not father presence is beneficial to a child seems to hinge on the nature of the relationship between father and child. In this sense recent research has moved away from the idea that fathers, by dint of being men, bring something unique to their children. Instead, research suggests that fathers contribute to their children's welfare because

they are warm, nurturing and positive parents (Lamb, 2010), thus dissolving any particular distinctions between the contributions of fathers and mothers.

More generally, extensive research supports Baumrind's (1991) notion that parent-child relationships which are characterised by both warmth and limit-setting, contribute to positive child features. These include social competence, self-esteem, school achievement and fewer emotional and behavioural problems (Richter, 2006). In a meta-analysis of the literature on attachment in adolescence, Rice (1990) concluded that a healthy parent-child attachment is positively associated with measures of social competence, identity, interpersonal functioning, self-esteem, and emotional adjustment. Veneziano (2000) found that paternal acceptance was significantly and positively related to youth's self-reported psychological adjustment and Culp, Schadle, Robinson and Culp (2000) found that paternal acceptance contributed to children's development of self-concept and esteem. By contrast, Marcus and Betzer (1996) found that adolescent boys' antisocial behaviour was related to poor father-son attachment quality. Other research suggests that paternal rejection is associated with emotional instability, hostility, high levels of anxiety and poor mood in children (Coley and Chase-Landsdale, 2000; Veneziano and Rohner, 1998).

In summary, regarding the centrality of the father-child relationship, Lamb (2010) makes the following observation:

As research has unfolded, psychologists have been forced to conclude that the characteristics of individual fathers – such as their masculinity, intellect, and even their warmth – are much less important, formatively speaking, than are the characteristics of the relationships that they have established with their children. Children who have secure, supportive, reciprocal and sensitive relationships with their parents are much more likely to be well adjusted psychologically than individuals whose relationships with their parents – mothers or fathers – are less satisfying. (p.10)

3.2. Disappointment as a Challenge to the Father-Son Relationship

If it is quality of relationship that matters, then the focus of this study has particular relevance because it analyses the ways fathers construct their relationships with different and disappointing sons. Research on parent-child relationships tends to associate parental disappointment with

harmful relational features, such as coercion, the withdrawal of love, and shaming (Barber, 1996; Miller, 1995). However, although frequently implicated, the notion of paternal disappointment has not commonly been a focus of existing research.

Inferences about paternal disappointment can be drawn from Miller-Day and Lee's (2001) study, which examined perceptions of parental disappointment from the perspectives of sons and daughters. Interviewees reported that fathers were more abrupt with sons than with daughters, and sons believed disappointed fathers were more critical than disappointed mothers. On the basis of their findings, Miller-Day and Lee (*ibid.*) argued that children may be particularly affected by what the authors term 'personal disappointment' – disappointment attributed to personal qualities of the child. Whilst the current study does not make overt use of Miller-Day and Lee's (*ibid.*) distinctions, particular attention is given to the ways fathers construct their sons' differences and wrestle over varying constructions regarding who their sons 'are'.

An area of parenting research that does bring disappointment to the forefront is that of parenting a child with a disability. In their seminal article 'Mourning and the birth of the defective child' Solnit and Stark (1961) hypothesised that parents of children with disabilities must mourn the loss of their expected, 'perfect' child. Subsequent research suggests that coping with disappointment and adjusting prior expectations forms part of the challenge of fathering children with developmental difficulties. For instance, in a large qualitative study of fathers living with chronically ill children, Peck and Lillibridge (2005) found that 'accepting the child's condition' and 'changing expectations' were common ways of coping, whilst fathers in McNeill's (2004) qualitative study described their children's condition as a "catalyst" (p. 537) leading to a relinquishing of traditional father roles and a move towards more meaningful involvement with their children.

The above studies indicate that diagnoses may significantly affect what fathers expect from their children and from themselves. However, in the current study, adjustments to diagnoses of 'disability' are not the focus. Instead, participants are asked to speak about the challenge of fathering a different or disappointing son where acceptance of the son's differences is not channelled by the various implications of a diagnosis. Nonetheless, the above studies do hint at the notion that parenting a 'different' son at least has the potential to initiate new expressions of masculinity and fatherhood. However, this is clearly a complex matter, dependent on the ways

fathers interpret their sons' differences. Using a grounded theory approach, Singh (2003) analysed fathers' responses to their sons being diagnosed with ADHD. The author found that fathers commonly reported difficulty accepting the diagnosis, with most respondents falling in either a 'tolerant non-believer' group or a 'reluctant believer' group. Participants identified closely with their sons, with several using a 'boys will be boys' narrative to explain their sons' behaviours. Some participants expressed disappointment in their sons' lack of control on the sports field, and fathers in the 'reluctant believer' group were more open to the use of medication when their sons' social and athletic success was at stake.

3.3. Father Expectations

A pertinent aspect of the above research is the finding that fathers enter into parenting with strong expectations. Disappointment has to do with unmet expectations (Gottman, 1994; Zeelenberg et al., 2000), and research shows that men enter fatherhood with complex and often contradictory expectations for themselves, their children and the kinds of relationships they hope to have with their children (Finn and Henwood, 2009; White, 1994). Snarey (1993) found that, depending on their own experiences of being fathered, men either model themselves on their own fathers or men revise their fathering based on perceived deficits in their own fathers' practices. This parallels the work of Byng-Hall (1995), who argues that men and women parent according to 'scripts' that are derived from their own experiences as children. Byng-Hall (ibid.) proposes that, in parenting, scenarios from childhood may be consciously and unconsciously repeated ('replicative scripts') or avoided ('corrective scripts'). Additionally, parents may 'improvise', or initiate new ways of doing things that transcend the patterns of past experiences. The work of Byng-Hall (ibid.) and Snarey (ibid.) imply that men's experiences of being fathered contribute to conscious and unconsciously held expectations regarding the ways that the father-son relationship 'should be'.

Goodman (2005) conducted a metasynthesis of seven qualitative studies that focused on the experiences of fatherhood in the early months after the birth of an infant. Goodman (ibid.) identified four overarching phases of becoming a father: entering with expectations and intentions, confronting reality, working to develop a role as an involved father, and reaping the benefits. This framework has the effect of 'flattening' out the subjective tensions that individual fathers may experience in their relationships with their sons, and it does not include fathers'

experiences as their children grow older. Nydegger and Mittenen (1991) found that fathers assumed responsibility for their sons' progress, even as their sons reached adulthood, which suggests the durability of fathers' expectations of and for their sons. The current study aims to focus on the subjective experiences of fathers at the interface between expectations and intentions, and the 'reality' that their sons differ from and perhaps disappoint these expectations and intentions.

Schafer (1999) suggests that "people feel disappointed when experience fails to be in line with strong wishes or confident expectations" (p. 1094), and research suggests that men carry particularly strong expectations into their relationship with sons. Cross sectional research has consistently shown that fathers in two parent families are more likely to be involved in the care of boys than of girls (Aldous, Mulligan and Barnason, 1998; Larson, Richards, Moneta & Holmbeck, 1996). In their three-year longitudinal study, Wood and Repetti (2004) found that fathers generally became more involved with their children over time, but that having a higher proportion of sons in the family appeared to accelerate fathers' involvement. The authors suggested that the emergence or consolidation of shared gender-type interests between fathers and sons may help to explain these findings. Fathers spend more time with sons than daughters (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 1999; Lundberg & Rose, 2004). Donaldson (1987) described the desire of fathers to live through their male children, to create in them what the father would like to be. In her qualitative study of a sample of fathers in New Zealand, White (1994) found that almost all of the interviewees felt that the son "was the province of the father" (p. 122) and they expressed the expectation that they would teach their sons and enjoy shared activities with them. Nydegger and Mittenen (1991) found that fathers felt able to share themselves with their sons and Silverberg (1996) has shown how parents turn to the shared experience of being of like gender in order to understand their adolescent children. In contrast, research cited by Miedzian (1992) indicated that many fathers are disturbed when their sons behave in ways that don't conform to acceptable standards of masculinity, and Pease (2000) suggested that many fathers "become disillusioned when sons fail to become the men that they envisage" (p.13). In Saltzburg's (2004) phenomenological study of the experiences of parents of gay and lesbian adolescents, "all of the participants spoke of their deep sadness and disappointment that their son or daughter would not live out the life that they had imagined for them, or for themselves" (p. 115).

3.3.1. Expectations of ‘good’ fathering

The current study has drawn its sample from white, middle-class men, living in South Africa. Lareau (2003) and Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, and Fatigante (2010) argue that there is a prevailing belief amongst middle-class parents that they must help their children to obtain new skills and perform so that they will be prepared for adult life. In a recent large-scale ethnographic study of middle-class parents in California, Kremer-Sadlik and Gutierrez (2013) noted that “activities such as assisting with homework, driving children to dance or tennis class, or coaching one’s child’s soccer team, gain their meaning for participants as they map them onto goals, expectations and values” (p.147). In particular, the forum of sport has been viewed as a site for performances of ‘good’ fathering amongst middle class men (Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik, 2012). Research into the links between fathering and sport has shown that sport provides a means for men to develop close relationships with their children (Jenkins, 2009) and that sport offers fathers and children a common interest to talk about and do together (Harrington, 2006). Fathers use sports activities to bond with their children and develop friendships that will last into the future (Kay, 2007). However, Langford, Lewis, Solomon, and Warin (2001) identified the presence of distinct tensions regarding parental control, even though parents and children tended to describe their relationships as akin to being ‘best mates’.

Research finds that sport is an arena for the socialization of normative male behaviours in boys (Kimmel, 1990; Messner, 1992) and Coakley (2006) suggests that youth sports serves as a window for viewing and studying current meanings of ‘good’ fatherhood. In their ethnographic study of fathering in middle-class families in the United States, Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik (2012) found that, in the context of youth sports, fathers struggled to find a balance between being supportive, caring and nurturing parents, and the expectation that their children should compete and excel. Coakley (ibid.) found that, in many instances, involved fathers judged and criticized their children’s sporting performances, and that children were pressurised to adopt acceptable attitudes and to improve.

It appears then, that the father -son relationship is replete with expectations for camaraderie, mentoring and enactments of acceptable masculinity and is thus fertile territory for paternal disappointment, should these expectations not be met.

3.4. A Psychosocial Study of Fathering, Difference and Disappointment

This study takes a psychosocial perspective on fathering, difference and disappointment. The term ‘psychosocial’ has been conceptualized in somewhat different ways by different researchers and theorists. The perspective adopted by the present study is one where discursive psychological elements are deployed alongside psychoanalytic concepts. Thus the study looks at the ways men position themselves within discourses of masculinity and fatherhood whilst ‘doing’ difference and disappointment talk. The term ‘doing’ indexes the discursive perspective where the focus is on language as action. Masculinity, fatherhood, expectations, difference and disappointment are attended to as socially constructed phenomena. Then, in tandem with a discursive analysis of participants’ talk, this study adopts a psychoanalytic perspective on participants’ biographical material, instances of emotionality and particular linguistic turns. Psychoanalysis is turned to both as a conceptual tool that enables an analysis of how participants invest in particular positions and with what effects, both at a social and deeply personal/unconscious level.

In their psychosocial study of first-time fathers, Finn and Henwood (2009) attended to the identificatory positions available to first-time fathers and suggested that these positions are constituted by a “complex assemblage” (p. 548) of personal biographies, discursive repertoires of good fathering, and social forces such as changed economic conditions. The authors found that in accounting for themselves as ‘good fathers’, participants took up a hybridized mix of ‘new’ father discourses and gender differentiated, traditional ‘virtuous’ father discourses. More specifically, participants expected that they will be emotionally close parents, but these expectations are offset by concurrent expectations that they would take up more orthodox father functions as representatives of the outside world, order and morality. The authors showed how participants’ subject positioning is simultaneously constituted from ‘within’ (by inter-subjective intergenerational transmissions and personal biographies) and from ‘without’ (by extant social stereotypes, gendered discourses of parenthood and social constructions of masculinity).

Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2005) and Gough (2009) used a psychosocial approach to examine the father-son relationship, in both instances from the perspective of the son. Both papers focused on the analysis of only one interviewee in order to illustrate their approach. Frosh et al. (ibid.) used psychoanalysis’s explanatory structures to suggest that their interviewee’s counter-

hegemonic investments were linked to an unconscious appreciation that his bullying father is “gay, soft and insecure... a hurt man” (p. 51). Thus the father is unable to be a good masculine object with whom the interviewee can identify. Similarly (although he distinguishes his approach as ‘psycho-discursive’), Gough (2009) interpreted his data by drawing on established discursive and psychoanalytic concepts. In his single-case exemplar, Gough argued that the absence of legitimate emotional language in the interviewee’s talk may be interpreted as both a normative performance of masculinity and a defence against the interviewee’s melancholia and longing for paternal recognition.

Interestingly, in both the above papers the authors suggested that the sons’ discursive positions were interpolated by profound but unconscious disappointment in their unavailable fathers. In their study of South African children’s views of fathers, Richter and Smith (2006) found that many children express a longing for a secure, reliable and loving father-figure. Taken together, these studies endorse the notion that fathers matter to children. Furthermore, studying ‘disappointment’ from a psychosocial perspective has the potential to generate an amplified account of what sons and (in this case) fathers actually want from each other.

3.5. Conclusion: Contributions of the Current Study

Richter (2006) has called for research that advances our understanding of men’s perspectives on fathering in South Africa. More recently, in their review of empirical data on fathers and father involvement in South Africa, Hosegood and Madhavan (2012) note the lack of detailed data available. By analysing the ways a small sample of fathers speaks about their experiences of difference and disappointment in their sons, this study makes some response to this lack.

As indicated above, research shows that children benefit from warm, supporting and accepting relationships with their fathers. Research also shows that men benefit from having close relationships with their children (Eggebean & Knoester, 2001; Heath, 1994; Pleck, 1997; Snarey, 1993). However, research also suggests that disappointment represents a challenge to father-son relationships. If we concede that disappointment is a common facet of relational life (Schafer, 1999), then it is important to know how fathers respond to the challenge, particularly since it is recognised that the benefits of involved fathering depends on the quality of relationship between father and child. Although disappointment is often implicated in research into parent-child

relationships, father-son disappointment remains a topic that has not received much research attention.

As a psychosocial study, this research project attends to the complexities and personal specifics of fathers' responses to their disappointing sons. It is proposed that complexity and personal specifics are part-and-parcel of intimate relationships, particularly when 'ordinary' disappointment is added to the mix. By focusing on these details, this study adds to existing research on the ways men 'do' intimacy within the context of the father-son relationship. Fine-grain analyses of fathers' experiences can contribute to existing knowledge regarding the ways family relationships are implicated in broader social issues (Bjornholt, 2010), and this study attends to participants' responses as sites of gender (re)production within the intricacies of the father-son relationship.

CHAPTER FOUR: ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS TO THE STUDY

Following recent social psychological thinking, emerging mostly from within the UK, this study adopts a psychosocial ontology, epistemology and methodology. Although it has been conceptualized in somewhat varying ways, a psychosocial approach to research commonly involves a holding together of discursive and psychoanalytic sensibilities to provide what Frosh & Saville Young (2008) have termed a ‘binocular’ account of the subject. The broad aim of psychosocial research is to recognize the ways subjectivity is both constituted and constrained by social discourse, whilst retaining a focus on the ways a person’s particular investments in discourse are mediated by personal histories and contexts, and subjective experiences (Frosh & Saville Young, *ibid.*). Willig (2008) points out that discursive psychology lacks a theoretical framework to account for an individual’s particular discursive investments. Psychosocial research turns to psychoanalytic theory, with its rich vocabulary of desire and motivation, in order to posit possible reasons underlying an individual’s specific discursive investments (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2005).

4.1. Theorising the Unconscious

There are enduring tensions to this epistemological and ontological position. Edley (2006) maintains that psychoanalytic notions of interiority make it epistemologically incompatible with discursive psychology. Similarly, Wetherell, (2003) cautions that approaching data with a psychoanalytic register reintroduces a problematic psychological-social divide, due to notions of ‘uncovering’ internal, static structures that are assumed to exist separate from social relations. A core issue in these debates is the notion of the ‘unconscious’; a central tenet of psychoanalytic thought. As Frosh (2012, p.7) points out, “psychoanalytic theory takes as axiomatic the existence of ideas that are ‘in’ the mind yet not available to introspection and hence are hidden away from conscious knowledge”. Elsewhere Frosh (1999) has argued that the psychoanalytic notion of the ‘split subject’ (conscious and unconscious) means that psychoanalysis offers a methodological and conceptual framework for exploring subject positions without necessarily having recourse to assumptions concerning the stability of selfhood. Seen in this light, the concept of the unconscious does not necessarily jar with discursive sensibilities.

Proponents of the psychosocial position point out that both psychoanalysis and discursive psychology view language as the medium through which people compose themselves – “both schools of thought assume constructionist theories of meaning” (Frosh and Saville Young, 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, both approaches perceive the subject as fragmented, “whether torn between desire and reason... or distributed along a range of subject positions” (Gough, 2004, p. 246). However, for psychoanalysts, language is mediated by relational dynamics and unconscious processes, and talk is typically analysed for the ways it reveals and expresses unconscious anxieties, defenses and particular ways of relating (Frosh, 2010). These features are understood to be dynamic, recurring, and in some ways attributable to a person’s unique biography. Discursive psychology, on the other hand, analyses the ways people construct identity positions out of available discursive repertoires. There is no sense of an inner experience that exists beyond language. Rather, people are both the products and producers of language (Billig, 1991; Edley, 2001) and discursive psychology examines how identities are performed on particular occasions and how history and culture constrains and is transformed by these performances.

Billig (1997) has proposed reframing the unconscious as a domain of prohibited speech which, he argues, makes psychoanalysis and discursive psychology more compatible and better able to inform each other. For Billig (*ibid.*), everyday talk produces moral norms such that what is deemed shameful or immoral is repressed through the indexical effects of talk; how the speaker prefers to be understood as a moral being. Thus, Billig (*ibid.*) argues, discursive psychology needs to give attention to the absences in dialogue; material that is being discursively repressed, whilst psychoanalytic insights need to assimilate the notion that apparently individual acts (such as repression) are socially produced by overt interpersonal activity.

In the present study, Billig’s concept of a discursive unconscious has been heuristically useful, because participants are asked to enter into a potentially shameful discourse; that of the disappointed father. This disappointment discourse requires participants to position themselves as good, caring fathers even as they make admissions of unfulfilled wishes and hopes. For some participants, these admissions mean that antipathies and conflicts with the son need to be managed through talk. A discursive analysis of this material shows how participants position themselves within discursive repertoires and ideological dilemmas (e.g. to push or not to push) as they go about being morally good fathers.

However, this study retains a notion of the unconscious that goes beyond Billig's suggested reframing. This centers on the understanding that, as Finn and Henwood (2009) put it, the subject is "a unique biography of self-accountings, emotionally charged (unconscious) investments and defenses, and life histories that are all actively shaped by ideology, discourse and the wider social context" (p. 550). Frosh (2010) points out, psychoanalysis "offers the most developed vocabulary for theorizing 'subjectivity'" (p. 194) and, where applicable, this study looks to participants' biographical constructions in order to suggest conscious and unconscious 'reasons' for the particular positions taken up by participants in their discourses of disappointment. Psychoanalysis offers particularly rich accounts of the ways emotional investments and fantasies intertwine with personal biography, all of which seems especially apposite to a study of fathers' expectations, hopes and disappointment in their sons.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) foreground the importance of unconscious dynamics in research interviews and propose the concept of the 'defended subject'. The authors argue that research participants come with their own biographically-informed meaning frames and are "invested in particular positions in discourses to protect vulnerable aspects of the self" (p.26). As 'defended subjects', participants "may not know why they experience or feel things the way that they do" and "are motivated, largely unconsciously, to disguise the meaning of at least some of their feelings and actions" (ibid. p.26). As with Billig's (1997) notion of a discursive unconscious, the concept of the defended subject has been useful for an analysis of disappointment talk, in which participants strive to manage anxiety-provoking experiences through words. However, in contrast to Billig (ibid.), Hollway and Jefferson (ibid.) maintain a focus on the ways unique biographical factors inform participants' discursive positions. Elsewhere, Hollway (1984) has distinguished psycho-social from discursive research by pointing to the 'relative' independence of participants' discursive investments:

What makes this analysis different from one that sees a mechanical circulation of discourses through practices is that there is an investment which, for reasons of an individual's history of positioning in discourses and consequent production of subjectivity, is relatively independent of contemporary positions available. (p. 251)

Nonetheless, whilst this study attends to the ways participants may be unconsciously invested in particular discursive positions, there is no claiming that there is a personal unconscious that

exists separate from the social. Instead, it is understood that the social permeates the apparently personal as captured by the Lacanian image of the Mobius strip described by Frosh (2010) below:

In theorizing what is meant by the ‘unhyphenated’ psychosocial, a potent image, with or without its Lacanian gloss... is the Moebius strip: underside and topside, inside and outside flow together as one, and the choice of how to see them is purely tactical, just like the decision as to whether to look at the subject from a ‘social’ or a ‘psychological’ perspective. (p. 197).

If psychoanalytic readings attend to unconscious material then it becomes crucial to delineate what kind of unconscious is being sought out. To date, psychosocial researchers have tended to adopt either a Kleinian/object relations or Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective on the unconscious, in order to ‘thicken’ their accounts of interview material. Adopting the Kleinian view, Hollway (2006) argues that:

We are *psycho*-social because we are products of a unique life history of anxiety-and desire-provoking life events and the manner in which they have been transformed in internal reality. We are *psycho-social* because such defensive activities affect and are affected by material conditions and discourses (systems of meaning which pre-exist any given individual), because unconscious defenses are intersubjective processes (i.e. they affect and are affected by others with whom we are in communication), and because of the real events in the external, social world which are discursively, desirously and defensively appropriated. (p. 467- 468, italics in the original).

The Kleinian model offers compelling theories (e.g. projection, internalization and identification) of the ways the personal and the social inform and act on each other (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). However, Frosh (2010) critiques Hollway’s position for giving preeminence to the ‘psycho’ over the ‘social’, such that “social practices act as a kind of fodder for the psychodynamic processes of the subject” (p. 201). Perhaps linked to this bias towards the ‘psycho’ is the Kleinian assumption that a real and permanent unconscious exists; that there is something abiding behind a subject’s discursive performances. Consequently, the task of the Kleinian-inspired psychosocial researcher may be to apply psychoanalytic concepts and methods to ‘uncover’

deeper truths that underlie language: the (real) reasons why participants invest in particular discursive positions. This can lead to a 'top down' approach where the researcher applies expert technologies in order to know more about participants than they know themselves (Frosh & Emerson, 2005). Furthermore, insisting on the materiality of an ever-present unconscious does seem to distinguish between the 'psycho' and the 'social' in ways that are difficult to erase.

Frosh and Baraitser (2008) offer a more direct critique of Hollway's (2006) psycho-social approach. The authors invoke the term 'psychic reality' as a more precisely psychoanalytic concept than the notion of an 'inner reality'. The authors point out that "(p)sychoic reality is what the subject *lives in*" (p.9, italics in the original). Countering Hollway's (ibid.) position, the authors argue that:

Psychic reality is already hybrid and in that way cannot be considered as either "in" or "out", and deterministic renderings of psychoanalysis that differentiate between the two by claiming that "defensive activities affect and are affected by material conditions and discourses" and by postulating "real events in the external social world" may miss the psychoanalytic point. (p. 9)

For these reasons, some psychosocial researchers (Gough, 2009; Saville Young, 2009) advocate a Lacanian perspective on the psychosocial subject, the unconscious, and on what it is that psychoanalysis has to offer the psychosocial project. In many ways, Lacan's approach seems particularly compatible with discursive psychology since, in Lacan's view, the subject both uses and is regulated by language, and it is not possible "to understand more than what there is in the discourse of the subject" (as cited in Frosh, 2012, p.176). Importantly, there is no sense of uncovering the unconscious as evidence of a 'defended subject'. Instead, following Lacan's theorizing of the 'mirror phase', the subject is constituted by (in fact 'leaps towards') an apparent psychological integrity that is offered from without (parental desires, language and culture). The ego is thus taken up as a defense against dissolution. Notions of wholeness and integrity are but reassuring illusions, since the self is constituted by external sources. There is no inner self underlying speech and hence no correct interpretation of speech: "there is no analytic knowledge that stands outside the symbolic, hence no true interpretation that can tie the fragments together to create an integrative meaning" (Frosh, 2010, p. 207).

4.2. Understanding Research Participants

The Lacanian approach is thus predicated on ‘not knowing’ (Saville Young, 2009). Interpretation is recast as interruption, a discursive event that surprises and goes beyond the intentions of the analysand. According to Nasio (as cited in Frosh, 2010), “this act produces the unconscious and causes it to exist” (p. 206). For some psychosocial theorists and researchers (Frosh, 2010; Parker, 2005a; Saville Young, 2009), tolerating the Lacanian injunction of ‘not knowing’ has an important ethical imperative: that of arresting the desire to understand the other. On this basis, Saville Young (2009) has described her transition from a Kleinian to a Lacanian perspective. Saville Young (ibid.) argues that a Kleinian-based methodology that reads participants’ biographical material in order to propose reasons for particular discursive investments, has the effect of pinning participants down, or packaging them, thus generating questionable notions of certainty and narrative closure.

For Saville Young (ibid.), a Lacanian perspective preserves an appreciation for the imaginary nature of understanding, as “any interpretation is always and already within a set of assumptions that can be deconstructed to unravel the position from which the analyst is speaking” (p. 19). Language is always ‘Other’ and cannot be used to express what we ‘really mean’. Returning to the metaphor of the mirror, Saville Young (ibid.) along with Frosh (2008) argues that the kinds of coherent analytic narratives identified via a Kleinian lens must be understood as illusory. Recognizing the illusory nature of interpretations makes for more ethical psychosocial research because it is less likely that the other will be colonized by apparent understanding.

The ethics of knowing or not knowing the other are both methodologically and theoretically pertinent to the present study. Not only must attention be given to the ways psychoanalysis ‘makes meaning’ out of participants’ utterances, but issues of ‘knowing’ and ‘otherness’ are also central to the study of fathering different and disappointing sons. Remaining cognizant of the concerns raised by Saville Young and Frosh above, the present study maintains that a relational psychoanalytic lens, focused primarily by the work of Benjamin (1988; 1995), remains distinctly sensitive to the ethics of ‘knowing’ or ‘not knowing’ the other. Referencing the work of Frosh and Baraitser (2008), Saville Young (2009) asserts the following:

A Butlerian view of ethics is more appropriate to psychosocial studies than a relational view of ethics, as the former maintains the otherness of the other whereas the latter colonizes the other or acts on the other through ‘understanding’. (p. 21).

I would argue that Benjamin’s concept of recognition – recognizing the other as an equivalent center of experience – does not simply render the other ‘same-as’ and that the concept of recognition does not exclude ‘not knowing’ the other. In her essay ‘Recognition and Destruction’ Benjamin (1999) describes the ‘paradox’ of recognition where “at the moment when we understand that separate minds can share similar feelings, we begin to learn that these minds can also disagree” (p. 37). Recognition emerges at the juncture between self and other, rather than dissolving otherness into sameness. In her formulation of the rapprochement crisis, Benjamin (1995, p. 39) argues that it is when the child crashes against the “implacable reality of the other”, that the limits of mental omnipotence are realized, and the other is discovered.

Thus Benjamin seems to be proposing understanding as a form of negotiated encounter between subjects rather than the subject-object differential implied by terms such as ‘colonize’ and ‘act upon’. Colonizing, or knowing the other in some complete and final way seems synonymous with intrapsychic illusions of omnipotence, and this is precisely what is punctured by attempts to recognize the other as an equivalent center of consciousness, who in fact won’t be colonized. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) have already made this point, and they turn to Benjamin’s concept of recognition in order to promote the ethical use of psychoanalysis in research. Citing Benjamin (1988; 1995), the authors argue that it is only possible to recognize the other as a subject when the centrality of negation is incorporated and that recognition transmutes into domination when knowledge is used to gain mastery over the other.

If, for the purposes of this study, recognition is taken to be a form of knowledge about the other, then what does it mean if attempts are made to recognize research participants? What kind of knowledge is produced? Saville Young (2009) critiques Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) approach primarily because it does not sufficiently guard against the expert stance, where psychoanalytic concepts and methods are used to know research participants better than they know themselves. Included in this stance is the risk that, by importing clinical language and procedures to the research context, research participants are ineluctably pathologised. This seems

to be at the heart of Saville Young's ethical disquiet and her repudiation of Kleinian/object relations inspired psychosocial research.

However, it seems that adopting a presumptuous stance may be as much due to attitude of the researcher as to the theoretical orientation employed, whether psychoanalytic or other. In her work on old age, masculinity and sexuality, Sandberg (2011) states that she is "critical of the kinds of feminist work that disregard the possibilities of change and disruption, and where everything incessantly boils down to a reinforcement of male power and dominance" (p. 110). Sandberg (ibid.) cites Sedgwick's (2003) distinction between 'paranoid' and 'reparative' readings of texts. For Sedgwick, paranoid readings are static in that, whilst they reveal the workings of oppressive power, we are left with what we already know. Reparative readings, on the other hand, remain alert to the possibility of change and maintain a focus on what things can become. Following Sandberg (ibid.) this study applies both 'paranoid' and 'reparative' readings, in that attention is given to the ways men maintain power and dominance as well as to the ways fathering 'difference' might generate possible reformulations and reorientations that disrupt and destabilize hegemonic masculinity.

Sedgwick's approach (as cited in Sandberg) may be linked to Benjamin's (2004; 2009) more recent work on 'thirdness'. Here Benjamin proposes intersubjective orientations that delineate ways of reaching towards and recognizing the alien other. One such orientation - the 'third in the one' - refers to "a reparative ability to believe that it is possible to comprehend the other even when the other is destructive and alien". Then, the term 'one in the third' refers to "a pattern of being that links subject and other and produces something new, a space... for meeting reflection and creativity, owned by neither party but an aspect of them both" (Frosh, 2010, p. 134). In this sense, recognizing research participants, coming to an understanding of them, seems to go towards creating something new rather than packaging them in fixed and pathologizing psychoanalytic formulations.

Saville Young (2009) and Frosh (2010) argue that reflexivity is an important element of ethical psychosocial research. Elsewhere, Frosh and Baraitser (2008) have argued that there are likely "to be complex unconscious processes interacting with the research work, encouraging some ways of going about things, inhibiting others" (p. 15). In line with this thinking, my argument for the ontology and epistemology of relational psychoanalysis is partly based on a significant

reflexive experience in the research process. This experience occurred during a meeting with my supervisor. Although I had already begun to interview fathers, I was still struggling to make epistemological decisions within the psychosocial frame, primarily because I was not settled regarding the contribution psychoanalysis would make to the project. My issues with psychoanalysis were not to do with whether it was warrantable or not. Rather, and perhaps like Saville Young (2009), I have recoiled from psychoanalysis' propensity to pathologise or, perhaps more specifically, its ability to articulate the unseemly. I came into the supervision session resolved to do away with psychoanalysis and to plant both feet on what felt like the surer (less scandalous) ground of discursive psychology.

Reflexive note

Mid-way through my supervision session, Graham summarizes the gist of my findings. He says something like the following:

“You are describing the experience and challenge of fathering – the difficulties that all of us face in allowing our child to be other. It’s about the struggle; in some ways this father wants his son to be a clone of self. These are the issues of fathering – not of Douglas. We all walk around with a theory of fathering, and where there’s a deviation, we have a problem. Douglas is holding a tension between traditional fathering and the fact that his son doesn’t fit in. You can see the struggle in Douglas – that it’s hard for him, that it’s challenging his own history, and how this impacts the process of fathering. Douglas is struggling with the imposition of a particular idea – the idea that his son needs to be a success. We try to free ourselves of that in order to invent or improvise a version of what it means to be a father. This interview shows us the struggles of fathering.

Douglas reveals the constraints of what it means to be a successful father. On the one hand, he wants to get his son to conform. On the other hand, he loves his son and he is feeling and grappling with the disjuncture between the two.”

As I listen to Graham, a deep sense of sadness wells up inside me. I am surprised and I say as much, but the feeling stays even as I make my way back to my car. On reflection, it appears that Graham’s sympathetic account has revealed two contrasting and unconscious sentiments that I have held towards my participants. I realize that I have entered this research angry with fathers

and that I have wanted to generate an understanding that exposes their careless and abusive ways. But it's Graham's observation that Douglas loves his son that evokes my sadness. These men actually love their sons. This feels true. Despite their expressed frustrations, I have seen the love that these fathers have for their different and disappointing sons and I have felt tenderness towards them. I find myself reflecting on my own experiences as the different and disappointing son and the fact that I have held both destructive and reparative unconscious impulses towards my own father. I mourn my own losses and disappointments as I carry out this research, and am alternately irritated, scornful, scared and saddened as I listen to the participants' struggles.

I also realise that I have projected destructive capacity onto psychoanalysis and, in particular, psychoanalysts themselves. They are detached and cynical; primed to identify dark motives beneath a father's protestations of care. It is not that I doubt the insights of psychoanalysis, but rather that I am afraid that my analysis of these men will go too far, and that I will damage them in the process. At one level, I don't want to disrespect the people who have let me into their lives; to pursue an understanding that reduces their claims to rubble. At another level, I have my own hopes as the disappointed and disappointing son, and these are hopes that I don't wish to have disillusioned by psychoanalysis. I am resisting despair.

In their talk, these fathers demonstrate the difficulty of understanding difference. For many of the participants, there is the impulse to conclude that the son is lacking, that he is too close to the feminine and that he is fundamentally different from the father. However, at the moment these hostile and contemptuous conclusions are made, fathers recoil from damaging their sons whom they love. As the researcher, I find myself experiencing a similar crisis: that I may actually damage these fathers through trying to understand them. Returning to the above reflexive moment, Graham, an older man and my supervisor, says that these men love their sons. As an intersubjective moment, Graham is partly the tender father with whom it is permissible to express sorrow, and partly the professional authority who does not rubbish these fathers, and who in fact recognizes their love. This moment evokes strong emotions and biographical reflections and, in hindsight, unconscious investments in the research process are revealed.

What is to be done with this sorrow? As researcher, it has been important to appreciate that I have been unconsciously invested in reading the data in particular ways; on the one hand perhaps looking to pin men down as abusers of power, and on the other looking to preserve unrealized

hopes that are distinctly linked to my own biography. Thus it has been important for me to remain cognizant of the ways this renders me motivated towards specious conclusions and, perhaps, sentimentality. But it may also be argued that this reflexive moment signifies something of the validity of an intersubjective phenomenon that is central to this study: the attachment between father and son. I experience the potency of this attachment during the meeting described above, and my participants articulate it and demonstrate its affective materiality during their interviews. Ironically, because of its attention to the unconscious, affect and biography, a psychoanalytic sensibility has given me a revived sense of my own attachments, rather than destroying them.

However, it is primarily to relational/intersubjective psychoanalysis that I turn, because its conceptual frameworks seem best able to respect the density of the affective material that is the focus of this research and because it is relatively compatible with social constructionist paradigms (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). Additionally, Benjamin's (1988; 1995; 1998) theorizing of intersubjectivity and the concept of recognition foreground issues of similarity and difference (Frosh & Baraitser, 2003) which makes this work well-suited to the thesis topic. Relational psychoanalysis bases its ontology on the centrality of relationships in the formation of self and is thus less individualizing than more traditional versions of psychoanalysis. As St. Clair (2004) puts it: "the relational stance finds all meaning to be generated in relation...nothing is innate in the way held by the classic drive model" (p. 172). Because it focuses on the ways meaning is generated within relationships, it may be argued that a relational psychoanalytic lens can sustain the ethic of 'not knowing' in the sense that understanding is intersubjectively constructed. Mitchell (1998), a leading proponent of the relational approach, has proposed the following:

Mind is understood only through a process of interpretive construction. This is equally true for the first person, who *is* the mind in question, and for someone in the third-person position who is trying to understand the mind of another. Further, this is true for both conscious and unconscious mental processes. (p. 16)

Thus minds, and any understanding of minds, are intersubjectively constructed as opposed to uncovered. For Mitchell (*ibid.*) "mind is understood only through a process of interpretive construction" (p. 16). There can be no singular, authoritative version of what is 'in' the other's

mind, rather, such ‘knowledge’ is conceived as that which is created between analyst and other through an active process of construction and arrangement. As Mitchell (ibid.) asserts, “many arrangements are possible; although some are better and some are worse, there are no *best* guesses” (p. 17, italics in the original). Elsewhere, Ogden (1999) has drawn parallels between psychoanalytic analyses and poetic readings, where the task of the analyst is to “find ways of listening that bring feelings and ideas to life in words that will advance the analytic process” (p.66). Thus, like Mitchell above, Ogden frames psychoanalysis as an intersubjective process of creative responsiveness rather than a process where truths about the other are unearthed. This has been the attitude of the current study, where psychoanalytic readings are conceptualized as analytic proposals grounded in the intersubjective specifics of the interview situation. To some extent, this may be contrasted with the psycho-social methodology of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) which generates ‘pen portraits’ of research participants in order to identify biographical details that have an existence outside of the interview talk. In this study, participants’ biographical accounts are taken as constructions themselves and no attempts are made to verify a ‘true’ biography that exists separate from the interview performance. Implicit in this approach is a conceptualization of the unconscious that renders it a more contextual phenomenon than is perhaps the case from a Kleinian perspective.

Thus what is argued for is a psychosocial approach which makes provisional, tentative claims regarding the ways participants may be consciously and unconsciously motivated to adopt particular discursive positions within the specific context of the research interview. In this endeavor, attention is given to the ways participants take up socially acceptable and coherent ways of being a man and being a father, and also to the ways they may be uniquely invested in discourses in different ways as evidenced by biographical claims, moments of incoherence, emotionality and the particular associations made by participants in their talk.

In addition, talk is conceptualized as both socially constructed and psychically embedded. Elsewhere Mitchell (2000) has proposed an understanding of language that emphasizes its psychosocial nature, but with particular emphasis on the ways relationship is foundational to this psychosocial perspective. Inasmuch as we speak for ourselves, we are also spoken through by our unconscious receptivity to the other. In developing his argument for the ways language is

fundamentally implicated in and through relationship, Mitchell refers to the following passage from the work of Loewald:

She [the mother] speaks with or to the infant, not with the expectation that he will grasp the words, but as if speaking to herself with the infant included...he is immersed, embedded in a flow of speech that is part and parcel of a global experience within the mother-child field. (Loewald, 1977, cited in Mitchell, 2000, p. 8)

Perhaps it is the above understanding, where language and relationality comprise a moebius strip, which distinguishes the psychosocial approach taken in this study from those studies that have adopted a Lacanian perspective. From a Lacanian perspective, language inserts the impersonal, or Other, at the very core of selfhood (Frosh, 2010) whereas from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, it is relationship, in and through language, which constitutes the self.

4.3. Conclusion: A Reparative Reading?

A relational psychoanalytic approach, particularly as framed by Benjamin (1988; 1995), renders a humanist and perhaps optimistic reading of the data, with emphasis being placed on bridging difference through relationship. Frosh (2010) cautions against what he terms the “therapeutic zeal” implicit in Benjamin’s concept of the third, which may have the effect of fostering attempts to make “full therapeutic contact” (ibid.) with the other (p.144). For Frosh, this zeal invariably leads to forms of understanding that colonize the other. However, as I have argued above, striving to recognize research participants as both like and unlike me does seem to generate an approach that can sustain a version of not knowing the other. Furthermore, this ‘not knowing’ is undergirded by an acknowledgement that my interpretations are my best guesses, based on contextual intersubjective phenomena, as opposed to fixed truths about participants.

With reference to my reflexive experiences identified earlier in the chapter, it may also be said that my approach to the data, and to the research participants themselves, has been inflected with something of the ethics engendered through the Kleinian depressive position. According to Hollway (2007), the challenge of the depressive position lies in the fact that “it is hard to face knowledge – and continue to do so – where good and bad, love and hate are realistically recognized as belonging to the same person” (p. 47). On the one hand, the experience of mourning has seen me step back from destroying participants/fathers through paranoid

understandings. In fact, consistent with the reparative tendency, I have found myself wanting to protect participants from harm and to represent them in careful ways. On the other hand, it has also been necessary for me to face reality, to accept notions of ‘good enough fathering’ in the midst of instances of carelessness and the abuse of power. For Alford (1989), the depressive position comes with the moral ability to identify deeply with others and to feel connected to their fates. During the course of this research I have found myself more aware of myself as a man and as a father and of the ways I have struggled to cope with the experience of disappointment. I have often found myself identifying with fathers in ways that I had not expected prior to undertaking this research. They have left me more aware of my own destructive tendencies in the face of disappointment and of just how difficult it is to relinquish hope. Perhaps this may be taken as evidence of a counterpoint to the ethic of allowing research participants to remain other: identifying with what has previously been deemed other. In theorizing the constitution of gender, Benjamin (1995) argues that:

The implicit assumption in differentiation theory is that acknowledging difference has a higher value...is more difficult than recognizing likeness. The neglected point is that the difficulty lies in assimilating difference without repudiating likeness – that is, in straddling the space between opposites. It is easy enough to give up one side of a polarity in order to oscillate toward the other side. What is difficult to attain (is) a notion of difference, being unlike, without giving up a sense of commonality, of being a “like” human being’. (p.49)

Here Benjamin seems to be arguing for identification as a process of realizing new and perhaps uncomfortable similarities, as opposed to rendering the other the same as a self that is already known. What Klein’s depressive position seems to add to this creative project is the element of mourning. This seems to offset bold optimisms regarding ‘full therapeutic contact’ with the other, replacing in its stead an iterative acceptance of limitations in the self-other field.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.1. Rationale

There is substantial evidence to support the notion that, when evaluating the benefits that fathers may bring to their children, the quality of relationship between father and child represents a crucial mediating variable (Baumrind, 1991; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Lamb, 2010; Richter, 2006). With this finding in mind, it becomes important to know how fathers might respond to challenges or difficulties in their relationships with their children. This research project focuses on disappointment as one such challenge, bearing in mind that theory proposes that disappointment is a common feature of relationships (Schafer, 1999) and that the ability to recover from disappointment contributes to mature and effective relational functioning (Craib, 1994; Fakhry Davids, 2002; Hollway, 2007). Research has shown that parental disappointment is associated with negative relational features (Barber, 1996; Miller, 1995) and Miller-Day and Lee (2001) argue that children may be particularly affected when their parents seem disappointed in who their children 'are'. In the light of these theoretical insights and research findings, this project investigates how a sample of fathers responds to experiences of disappointment in their sons. Not much is known about this topic. In the face of disappointment, do fathers make attempts to repair their relationships with their sons, and if they do, then how do fathers go about this repair work? By focusing on disappointment as a common relational challenge, and by exploring fathers' responses to this challenge, this research project could contribute important knowledge to existing theory and research on father-child relationships.

This research project focuses on fathers' experiences of their sons, which foregrounds issues of masculinities and gender hierarchies within fathering. Psychoanalytic theory proposes that notions of similarity and difference are fundamental to formations of gender within the father-son relationship, whilst social constructionist theory proposes that constructions of masculinity typically involve a distancing from whatever is constructed as 'feminine' (Benjamin, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Thus, if fathers expect their sons to be similar to them, the disappointment of this expectation would pose challenges and difficulties that involve issues of gender (or acceptable masculinity). Under the pressure of a hegemonic masculinity that expects similarity and that subordinates and feminizes difference, how does the

father relate to a son who is constructed as different from the father? Clearly, this study focuses on a point of tension, or perhaps even crisis for fathers. If hegemonic masculinity is founded on the constant threat of shame (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009), then how does the disappointed father negotiate this threat in his responses to his son's differences? What does the 'good father' do? By attending to the ways men speak about this crisis site, this study focuses on the ways men might compose themselves as fathers and as men, and the kinds of intersubjective resolutions that are made, within talk of difference and disappointment.

For fathers, the disappointment of a different son throws into relief the orthodox father function of introducing the son to masculinity. In chapter two, various psychoanalytic perspectives have been reviewed to explore how complex issues of gender difference and sameness might be negotiated within the mother-father-son triad. These theories show that the process of becoming 'like' the father necessarily implicates the mother. For example, Samuels (1989) argues that the maternal/feminine may be repudiated in the taking up of a masculinity that is 'gender certain' and rigid, while Benjamin (1988; 1995) and Hollway (2007) have argued that the father's capacity to sustain cross gender identifications in himself and his son can contribute to a masculinity that is flexible and constructive. Therefore, if fathers retain the function of introducing their different sons to masculinity, how is the mother positioned in this process? These insights are combined with a social constructionist perspective that traces the emergence of 'new fatherhood' which is seen as a reaction against traditional father discourses and a hegemonic masculinity that propagates emotional distance, absence and authoritarian practices (Finn & Henwood, 2009). As indicated, a 'new father' discourse conflates maternal and paternal functions, with both mother and father subsumed under the banner of parent. In the face of difference then, is the mother positioned as subordinate in the process of initiating the son into hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), or does the father solve the dilemma of difference by taking up new father functions that incorporate 'maternal' positions?

Research has found that men vacillate between orthodox and 'new' versions of fathering (Finn & Henwood, 2009) and that, despite their intentions to be involved and egalitarian, new fathers tend to maintain orthodox father functions that continue to differentiate them from the mother (Henwood Procter, 2003). By analyzing how a sample of men responds to the challenge of a different and disappointing son, it is hoped that this research project can contribute to existing

literature on the ways men negotiate different discourses of fathering and the potential of fathering to either entrench or rework gender hierarchies.

5.2. Research Aim

The overall aim of this research project is to identify the various ways a sample of men account for themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons.

5.3. Research Questions

The above broad aim has been translated into the following primary research question:

How do fathers describe their experiences and responses in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons?

Underpinning this primary research question are particular assumptions derived both from theory and the findings of previous research. In order to more directly address these assumptions, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

- *What kinds of fathering discourses are employed or taken up within participants' accounts?*
- *Do fathers attempt to repair their relationships with disappointing or different sons and how do they account for this process of repair?*
- *How do fathers position the mother in the process of dealing with difference and disappointment?*

5.4. Research Design

Matching of research design with research questions has been crucial to the overall credibility of this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The above questions are informed by a psychosocial ontology and epistemology, such that participants' responses are understood as constructions that are informed by both available discursive repertoires as well as the relational dynamics of the interview context. The research questions have informed each level of the project, including the theoretical framework, the sampling procedures, the interview style (Mason, 2002), the method of analysis and the final write-up.

Because this study is interested in the ways men account for themselves as fathers of different and disappointing sons, a qualitative research framework has been employed. According to Smith (2003) qualitative methods address issues of interpretation - how participants make sense of their experiences through language - and it is this kind of nuanced and detailed data that is required in order to respond to the above research questions. Qualitative designs have been effective in previous studies that have explored men's subjectivities within discourses of fathering (e.g. White, 1999; Williams, 2008; Finn & Henwood, 2009; Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012) which also means that the findings of this study may be compared against an established body of previous research.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "no specific method of practice can be privileged over any other" (p. 5), instead, the paradigm, method of data collection and analysis should be informed by the research questions as well as by the conceptual framework underpinning the research. In order to attend to the ways men speak about fathering different and disappointing sons, this study has predominantly been framed by two conceptual frameworks: relational psychoanalysis and the notion of recognition particularly as formulated by Benjamin (1988; 1995; 1998), and discursive psychology. Jointly, these two frameworks enable a 'binocular' analysis of self and other positioning within participants' talk, with a focus on "how participants use discursive resources and with what effects" (Willig, 2008, p. 97) as well as the individual and perhaps unconscious 'reasons' for particular discursive investments. From a relational psychoanalytic perspective these unconscious 'reasons' are understood as rooted in the researcher-participant relationship. Consequently, a qualitative methodology that focuses on the co-construction of subjectivities through language is well-suited to the ontologies and epistemologies of these two theories (relational psychoanalysis/ intersubjectivity and discursive psychology).

5.5. Participant Recruitment and Sampling Procedure

It is now widely acknowledged that masculinity and fathering are social constructions (Morrell, 2006) and that there are many different, culturally sanctioned ways of being a father (Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Bearing in mind this diversity, I decided to select a homogenous sample of fathers. All of the participants were white, English-speaking fathers in two-parent families. Purposive sampling, or non-probability sampling, was used to select participants, as I was

looking for men with similar socio-economic status, family structure and with sons who were still of school-going age. All of the participants were economically privileged; either established professionals or businessmen. I decided to focus on this group because, as indicated earlier, research has identified a prevailing belief amongst middle-class parents that good parenting involves helping children acquire new skills and to achieve so that they will be prepared for adult life (Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010; Kremer-Sadlik & Gutierrez, 2013). In addition, Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik (2012) have identified engagement through sports activity as a common version of middle class fathering. These findings suggest that middle-class and relatively affluent fathers share particular investments in their school-going children that may not be replicated by other socio-economic groups. I was interested in the versions of fathering and masculinity performed by a sample of men from this population group, with a particular focus on the kinds of expectations identified by these men, as well as their responses when these expectations weren't met. I was not looking for particular or unusual features within this population group as this study focuses on what may be termed 'ordinary' paternal disappointment. Consequently, I adopted what may be termed 'typical case sampling' (Given, 2008) by selecting men who I felt were able to reflect on the research questions as representatives of a certain socio-economic and cultural perspective. Regarding school level of the sons, one of the sons under discussion had just begun high school, whilst the others were between Grades 3 and 7 at the times of the interview. This promoted the homogeneity of the sample because the sons were engaged in similar school and extra-curricular programmes.

As indicated in chapter two, financial security enables this sample of men to invest themselves in the lives of their children in ways that are not easy or perhaps even possible within circumstances of poverty (Morrell, 2006). The participants in this study can afford to send their sons to expensive private schools where most of the children are white. These schools are modeled on traditional English public schools: they are achievement focused, heavy emphasis is placed on sports participation, and parental involvement is high. A key function of the schools is to prepare the children for the various prestigious private high schools that are located in this area. Many of the participants attended these high schools and, as old boys, they are invested in having their sons attend the same schools. Thus, although factors such as race and socio-economic status were not an overt focus of the study, it is clear that these factors inform this sample's fathering

practices, underpinning, shaping, and galvanizing the hopes and expectations that fathers hold regarding their school-going sons.

Homogenous sampling meant that fewer participants are needed to achieve a 'saturation threshold', since common patterns emerge more quickly in homogenous samples (Kelly, 2004; Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg, & Jackson, 2003). Kelly (2004) suggests that a sample of six to eight may be optimal for a qualitative research design where the sample is homogenous and there is sufficient depth to the data produced.

The decision to focus on fathering within the context of the nuclear family may be considered somewhat problematic in that this version of family may no longer be viewed as the norm (Clare, 2001; Ngobeni, 2006). According to Morrell et al. (2012), forty percent of South African households are female headed. However, one of the research questions focuses on the ways fathers construct the maternal contribution to issues of difference and disappointment, and focusing on two-parent families was one way of excluding potentially confounding variables (e.g. paternal rights of access).

Because of my involvement in local schools (both as a parent and a professional), participants may best be described as members of my everyday community. I decided to draw my sample from fathers from two similar school communities. I first made contact with potential participants by email. At this initial point, I indicated that I was interested in interviewing fathers about the challenges they may have experienced as fathers of their sons and I invited the individual to participate in the research. As discussed in greater detail below, the decision to describe the focus of the research as having to do with 'challenges' was made following the pilot studies, because it was found that this term helped participants to move towards disappointment talk. In addition, this research project is interested in disappointment as a routine parenting experience that is part-and-parcel of ordinary father-son challenges. If individuals indicated that they were interested in being interviewed, they were emailed formal letters of invitation, which again described the focus of the project, issues regarding confidentiality as well as the assurance that they were free to withdraw from the research project at any stage. Thus, following Allan's (2008) recommendation, participants were given time between the first point of contact and the second (via the emailed information letter) in order to freely decide whether or not to participate in the project. A copy of this information letter has been attached as appendix two.

In total, thirteen fathers were interviewed, although only eleven of these were selected for the final analysis, because of their richness of data pertinent to the research questions. The above sampling procedure held both advantages and disadvantages. Being known as a member of their community seemed to promote a sense of shared understanding in many of the interviews as I was in many respects ‘one of them’. This is well illustrated in my interview with Douglas, where I was left with the distinct impression that he and I had co-performed a certain version of masculinity, signified perhaps especially by our shared laughter. I enjoyed being with these men and virtually all of them reported that they enjoyed the opportunity to speak as fathers. It seemed then, that the ‘acquaintance’ relationship facilitated performances of fathering and masculinity which were important data for this research. However it was also evident, at times, that participants positioned me as a parenting expert, which gave rise to certain kinds of justifications and the accessing of available good parenting repertoires. Thus it may be argued that participants’ performances were shaped by the fact that they knew me as a psychologist who works with children and families. However, assumptions of interviewer expertise and interview performances are common to and in fact anticipated by qualitative research (Aldred and Gilles, 2002). From a social constructionist position, interview material is understood as a co-construction, with researcher participation and influence comprising an inevitable but important aspect of the findings (Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill, 2002).

Of perhaps greater concern to me has been the issue of confidentiality, particularly the notion of ‘internal confidentiality’ as described by Guenther (2009). Internal confidentiality addresses the ability of participants in a research project to identify each other and this issue has been important to this research project for two primary reasons. Firstly, I was concerned that participants be protected from being identified within their communities and secondly I wanted to ensure that it would be difficult for family members to identify themselves if they ever read extracts from the participants’ interviews. Perhaps obviously, speaking of difference and disappointment raises potentially harmful observations and I have been eager to minimize this risk. Guenther (ibid.) makes the point that attempts to “balance confidentiality with ... research goals raises a dilemma of how to achieve both confidentiality and analytic rigor” (p. 418). In striving to maintain analytic rigor, I have included fairly long extracts in the data analysis as these demonstrate how the various themes are worked up by participants and it is also possible to point to the data when drawing certain conclusions. However, in addition to changing details

such as names and places, I also decided to exclude or ‘crop’ certain extracts, despite their relevance to the research topic, because including them in the write-up would threaten internal confidentiality. I have consoled myself that enough data has been available for analysis and that the excluded sections do not contain data that refutes the overall findings.

5.6. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used as they have been found to be an effective way of gathering rich and detailed information on research questions (Williams, 2008). The interviews generally lasted for an hour and were recorded on a tape-recorder. I made efforts to transcribe the interviews promptly, while the interview was still a fresh experience, and each interview was transcribed in full, including non-linguistic features (e.g. pauses, emphases, false starts and laughter). Because I have been interested in the ways participants account for themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons, as well as their particular discursive investments, it has been important to attend to “*the way in which* things are said as well as to *what* is being said” (Willig, 2008, p. 98, italics in the original). Consequently, based on Edley and Wetherell (1999), Parker (1992), Potter and Wetherell (1987; 1994) and Willig (2001), the following transcription conventions were applied:

1. When material was omitted from the transcript, this was indicated by three dots (...).
2. One or more colons indicate the extension of the previous sound, e.g. U::m::
3. Laughter is marked by hh. The number of hh is an approximate marker of the duration of laughter.
4. A ? is used to indicate a rise in intonation, as with the posing of a question.
5. Underlining indicates emphasis or stress placed on a word or part of a word.
6. Numbers in parentheses, for example (1), indicate pauses in seconds.
7. The notation (.) indicates a pause of less than one second.
8. The equals sign = indicates the absence of a discernible gap between the end of one speaker’s utterance and the beginning of another speaker’s utterance
9. A forward slash / is used to indicate a correction or stumbling speech (e.g. Ja/well/I dunno hey).
10. A sharp cut-off of a prior word or sound is designated by -
11. A pair of parentheses () is used to indicate researcher comments, e.g. (inaudible).

Following Riessman's (1993) recommendation, I included my interactions in the transcriptions since, according to Riessman (ibid.), this allows for an analysis of "power relations in the production of personal narratives" and also helps to show "how meaning is interactionally accomplished" (p. 20). Attending to my contributions to the interviews is also consistent with discursive and relational psychoanalytic analyses, both of which understand meaning as negotiated through interaction.

In terms of conducting the interviews, I have been influenced by the approaches of Emerson and Frosh (2004), Riessman (1993) and Bell (2002), all of which advocate an interviewee-centered style that "enables participants to speak for themselves" (Bell, 2002, p. 16). Although I developed an interview guide to ensure that all aspects of the research questions were covered, this guide was used in a flexible manner as I wanted to stay responsive to the agenda of the interviewee. Most of the participants opted to be interviewed at their place of work, but some preferred to meet with me at my offices. Questions were kept open-ended and I allowed participants to speak with minimal interruptions, which gave rise to extended reflections on the topics under discussion. This process facilitated the research because I wanted to give participants the conversational space to position themselves within the complexities of disappointment talk.

Although I stayed in the interviewer role in the sense that my goal was to enable participants to talk, I did allow myself to be a father with these fathers, empathizing with their challenges and often feeling moved by their moments of sadness, frustration or regret. In this sense I emulated Stopford's (2002) relational analytic approach to interviewing, which sees the interview as a dialogue which the interviewer approaches with empathy as well as scrutiny and curiosity.

One of the issues that I needed to bear in mind was the fact that, whilst participants were informed about the nature of the research, and the fact that they could become emotional during the interview, neither I nor the participants could foresee quite how the interviews would unfold. For this reason, I retained a list of suitable professionals to whom participants could be referred, if it seemed warranted. However, whilst the distinct majority of participants were invested in their talk, and many became emotional at times, none presented as distressed and no-one indicated the desire or need to consult further as a result of the interview.

5.6.1. Pilot interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted so that the interview protocol could be tested and refined towards the goal of generating talk of difference and disappointment. Perhaps primarily, the pilot interviews gave me the reassurance that the kind of material I was interested in – talk of expectations, difference and disappointment – did emerge, and that in fact these features were part and parcel of ordinary fathering talk. As is perhaps to be expected, many of the participants balked at being positioned as ‘disappointed’ and so I used the two pilot studies to test out ways of enabling ‘disappointment talk’. I turned to literature on disappointment (e.g. Zeelenberg, et al., 2000) to find ways of approaching the topic through the use of synonyms or experiences that are associated with disappointment. After the first pilot interview, I realized that to talk of ‘challenges’ or ‘frustrations’ was effective, whereas questions like “have you ever felt let down by your son?” or “have you ever felt like withdrawing from your son?” were not. It quickly became evident that the latter two questions were ineffective, not only because they are closed questions but also because both carry the risk of social shame: of being a bad father. Because of these early interview experiences I decided to introduce the research topic as having to do with the ‘challenges’ of fathering a son and, where fathers had more than one son they were asked to focus on the son they found ‘most challenging’. As Willig (2008) points out, the words researchers use to frame experiences contribute to participants’ construction of meanings attributed to such experiences. Because participants were primed to talk about ‘challenges’, asking them to ‘simply’ tell me about their sons led naturally to topics such as expectations and their experiences of either satisfaction or disappointment.

Although I included a question that specifically asked participants about their experiences of disappointment, I found that it was best to introduce this question only after participants had established fairly well-developed positions on their sons. Being ‘disappointed’ was not an easy position for any of the fathers to occupy and, where it was taken up, participants wanted to be able to qualify and contest just what was to be understood by the claim.

In a sense then, approaching or managing disappointment needed to be addressed in the interview protocol as much as by the interviewees themselves. As indicated, the two pilot studies helped me to see the utility of beginning the interview by giving participants the simple prompt to tell me about their sons. This opening question routinely elicited rich and relevant responses

that ended up serving as a basis for the remainder of the interview. However, when needed, further questions were used from the interview schedule in order to funnel the conversation towards the research questions. As I listened to participants, I tended to return to earlier comments with more specific prompts (e.g. ‘could you tell me more about ...’), because I wanted participants to amplify their reflections on material that was particularly relevant to the research questions.

A copy of the interview questions is included in appendix 3.

5.6.2. Single interviews

As Emanuel, Wendler, Killen, & Grady (2004, p. 933) assert, “valid science is an ethical requirement” and I have been aware of the perspective that follow-up interviews increase the validity of the data gathered. For example, Rosenwald (1988) has argued that re-interviews mean that ambiguous answers can be clarified by “asking further questions and by seeking out implicit coherence” (p. 255) whilst for Kvale (1996), re-interviews give subjects “an opportunity to comment on the interviewer’s interpretations as well as to elaborate on their own original statements” (p. 190). Saville-Young (2009) has proposed that the issue of validity carries particular significance for research that employs psychoanalysis and one could argue that a second interview enables participants to comment on and perhaps rebut the ways that they were understood in their first interview. In this vein, Stopford (2002) has proposed a post-interview follow-up with participants where the researcher shares initial psychoanalytic interpretations with participants, so enabling participants to comment on and contest these interpretations.

Mindful of these arguments, I initially considered interviewing participants twice and I also considered the option of establishing a focus group, as a means of triangulating the data (Willig, 2008). However, during the course of the pilot studies I decided to interview participants only once. In part, this decision was epistemologically based in that, from a social constructionist perspective, each interview is understood to be a particular construction that has emerged out of a particular context and time. As Kvale (1996) puts it; from a social constructionist perspective, “interview texts do not merely refer to some reality beyond the texts, but the participants’ discourse is of interest in its own right” (p. 43). As stated above, Rosenwald’s argument perhaps particularly applies if one holds to a representational view of language, where participants’ talk

is seen to represent essential and enduring features of the father-son relationship. In this sense, second and third interviews would be seen as taking one closer to a truth that exists behind the discourse. However, from a social constructionist perspective, second and third interviews would generate further constructions, but would not necessarily take one closer to more valid data (Gough & Madill, 2012). As Fielding and Fielding (cited in Silverman, 2001) put it:

there is no reason to assume that members have privileged status as commentators on their actions ... such feedback cannot be taken as direct validation or refutation of the observer's inferences. Rather, such processes of so-called validation' should be treated as yet another source of data and insight. (p. 177)

As regards the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations based on a single interview, my preference has been to understand the unconscious aspects of the interview as co-constructed features of the interview itself, rather than truths about participants that exist separate from the interview context. As already indicated, this viewpoint is consistent with a relational psychoanalytic approach where neither “the self nor the object are meaningful dynamic concepts without presupposing some sense of the psychic space in which they interact, in which they do things with or to each other” (Mitchell, 1998, p.33). In line with Mitchell's perspective, I have looked to embed psychoanalytic readings in the texts themselves, with the understanding that it is in the intersubjective field that these features are to be found, rather than some extra-contextual component of the person being interviewed. Such a viewpoint means that a single interview may be warranted as a valid unit of relational psychoanalysis because the interview is understood as a particular intersubjective space within which self and other (object) are co-constructed.

Finally, the decision to interview participants only once was based on the fact that the interviews were very rich and provided sufficient data for the purposes of the study.

5.6.3. Biographical information

Previous research has found that, during ‘father talk’, it is common for men to refer to their own experiences of being fathered (White, 1993; Finn & Henwood, 2009). This was also the case in the current study, where many of the participants compared themselves with their fathers in order to account for their positions. Although these comparisons tended to be spontaneous, I

sometimes included the question “how did your experiences as a son affect the way you father your own son?” in order to amplify the ways participants referred to their unique life histories as a means of accounting for their investments. This was because, from a psychosocial perspective, I wanted to be able to attend to both discursive and, using a psychoanalytic register, defensive patterns in the data. Attending to biographical material enables one to posit particular ways that participants may unconsciously invest in discursive positions.

In addition to their experiences of being fathered, participants commonly referred to various aspects of their childhoods. In some instances, these references were made in order to make sense of their sons as similar or different, whilst in other instances these references formed part of participants self-accounting regarding their experiences, actions and resolutions. Consequently many of the participants volunteered rich biographical material that could be used to generate a psychosocial understanding of personal investments in the talk. Attending to the ways participants employed biographical material within the context of the interview was consistent with the epistemological position developed in the previous chapter, where, as St. Clair (2004, p. 172) puts it, meaning is “generated in relation”.

5.6.4. Reflexivity and the use of field notes

A psychosocial epistemology incorporates the now widely accepted notion that, for the social scientist, traditional positions of neutrality or objectivity are no longer tenable. Instead, attention is given to the conditions under which knowledge is generated, including the various ways data is co-constructed by researcher and research participants (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008).

Reflexivity, or the awareness of the researcher’s contributions to the construction of meaning, is thus recognised as an important dimension of the research. As Ulin et al. (2002) have noted; “self-examination, documented with other observations in the field notes, is part of the iterative process of interpretation and revision that moves the data collection toward its goal” (p. 27).

In line with this thinking, after each interview I recorded field notes, where I attended to my own experiences before, during and after the interview as well as my reflections on the interviewee’s performance – what it had been like to interact with him and how I felt he wanted to be understood. More broadly, throughout the research process I have looked to capture particular experiences that have been formative of my theoretical and personal orientations to the project.

Seidler (2006) argues that it is important for researchers to remain reflexive regarding personal investments in the topic when undertaking critical studies of men and masculinities. Seidler (ibid.) goes on to suggest that researchers need to have asked themselves the questions that they pose to participants. As a father of two sons, and as a researcher who lives in the same community as the participants, I have ‘watched’ myself at my children’s various school and sports events and I have reflected on my own experiences of frustration and disappointment. During interviews, I have resonated with many of the participants’ experiences, and these resonances have informed each stage of the research process.

Research that incorporates psychoanalysis has particular implications for practices of reflexivity (Saville Young, 2009; Frosh and Baraitser; 2008). Parker (2005b) points out that, consistent with reflexivity in qualitative research, psychoanalysis views subjectivity as a resource rather than a drawback. However, what distinguishes psychoanalysis is the concept of countertransference, which carries the assumption that reflexivity takes one closer to the truth about the subject. As Parker (ibid.) puts it, from a psychoanalytic perspective, to “draw upon one’s own subjectivity in the research process does not mean that one is not being ‘objective’, but that one actually comes closer to a truer account” (p. 117).

Frosh and Baraitser (2008) critique the ways countertransference has been employed by psychosocial researchers to identify ‘truths’ about participants. The authors argue that, when it comes to employing psychoanalytic techniques such as countertransference, distinctions must be made between clinical and research contexts. The authors point out that countertransference has particular applications in psychotherapeutic settings that are not replicable in a research project. For instance, in therapeutic settings it is the analysand who approaches the analyst with his or her needs, whereas the reverse applies in the transaction between researcher and researched. Also, the therapeutic relationship is structured and contained by established practices that allow unconscious elements to be explored and tested out over time, within a deepening analyst-analysand relationship. These elements are not present in the research context, leading Frosh and Baraitser (ibid.) to caution against research methodologies that look to the emotional reactions of the researcher as signifiers of the “actual *unconscious* state of mind of the participants” (p. 363, italics in the original). The authors attribute such attempts to the Kleinian version of psychoanalysis “in which the truth of the subject can be known through mediation by (or through

the unconscious of) an interlocutor who has more knowledge and understanding than does the subject” (p. 363). Instead, the authors propose a reflexivity that attends to the performative and disruptive aspects of psychoanalysis and the ways psychosocial phenomena are “produced *through the actions of ...researcher and researched*” (p. 363, italics in the original).

The current study has been influenced by Frosh and Baraitser’s (ibid.) critique of the ways countertransference has been employed in previous psychosocial research although, as already indicated, my response has been to maintain a relational psychoanalytic perspective on these intersubjective features. In attempting to move beyond complementary ‘doer and done to’ relations Benjamin (2004) cites Pizer’s (1998) analysis of transference “not in terms of static projective contents, but as an intersubjective process” (p. 7). In line with this approach, I have used reflexive practices to maintain awareness of the ways that I am implicated in whatever knowledge has been produced and that those claims I have made about myself and the participants remain provisional and in important respects, context-bound. Furthermore, I have attempted to remain reflexive about the ways a turn to psychoanalysis produces knowledge. For instance, Gough (2009) describes how psychoanalytic theory “explicitly directs us to the past, to the terrain of early experience, memory, emotion-laden interactions and relationships” (p. 533).

As indicated earlier, I have shared Saville Young’s (2009) ethical concerns regarding the pathologising effects that may follow from using a psychoanalytic register to read research participants. However, I take some resolve from Benjamin’s (2004) argument for the ameliorating effects of foregrounding our own participation in the intersubjective matrix:

An important relational idea for resolving impasses is that the recovery of subjectivity requires the recognition of our own participation. Crucially, this usually involves surrendering our resistance to responsibility, a resistance arising from reactivity to blame. (p.11)

If the “recovery of subjectivity”, or reflexivity, requires an acceptance of responsibility, then it is important to concede that applications of theoretical concepts and terminology may be inherently antagonistic to the ways participants want to be understood. However, Hollway (2011) makes the point that, “just because psychoanalysis – like any other influential discourse and set of practices – is implicated in power relations does not mean that its view of the world is ‘wrong’ as opposed

to ‘right’” (p. 210). Hollway (2012) agrees that the term ‘countertransference’ is inappropriate for research contexts and advocates a ‘psychoanalytically informed’ approach to research involving ‘free-floating attention’, containing desires for certainty, and opening oneself to be changed via interactions with research participants.

My own reflexive practices have involved ongoing reflections on my experiences of research participants, what Hollway (2011) terms the “affective traffic between researcher and researched” (p. 212). A central interest of this study involves negotiations of otherness within discourses of fathering. Consequently, as part of my reflexive practice, I have attended to the ways I felt ‘caught up’ by participants’ self-other positioning, at times colluding with hegemonic practices and at others experiencing anxiety and shame regarding my ‘otherness’. In addition, through the extended period of data collection, transcription and analysis, I also found that I have continued to reflect on the research participants, who by now are fantasies in my mind. I find that I have ‘softened’ towards the participants and I attribute this to the notion that I have come to a fuller appreciation of the complexities of their experience of fathering. It may be said that I have gone through a process of recognizing similarities with research participants and that this has coincided with increased ‘understanding’ and acceptance. Of course, as indicated in the reflexive notes in the previous chapter, this process exposes some of the prejudices and antipathies that I have brought to this research.

The field note below provides an example of the way reflexivity practices have been an abiding aspect of the research process. The extract describes an instance where I find myself resonating with my research participants, experiencing similarities with them that I might have disavowed at the beginning of the project. These experiences have had the effect of deepening my reflections on the research topic and making me more aware of the complexities involved in fathering a disappointing son. In this sense, my own experiences have been used to approach research participants with enhanced ethical awareness of similarities and differences, and my own unconscious investments, prejudices and defenses:

Reflexive note:

My son’s school has organized a bike ride, and he’s asked me to do the 10km fun ride with him. As we line up alongside other parents and their children, a dormant competitiveness springs to

life, too vigorous to extinguish. I find myself thinking of the fathers I have interviewed. I am no different. As we get into the ride I 'encourage' my son to ride for longer than he wants to, to go further up the hill before he gets off the bike and walks. And when we do walk together, I push him, literally and figuratively, to walk faster than he wants to. I get angry with other parents who seem to push past us with their children. I hate them. I'm sure they are smug. They are enjoying the thrill of beating us. I hate my son. I feel he is dragging me down, that without him as a hindrance, I'd show these other parents just who is boss.

5.7. Analysis of Data

As Ulin et al. (2002) have noted, “analysis does not wait until all the data are collected: it begins in the field” (p. 27). With the research questions in mind, my analysis of what participants were saying began at the outset of the data collection. As indicated in the above section on pilot studies, these early impressions influenced the research in terms of interview questions and technique such that there was a “constant interplay between design and discovery” (ibid.).

Nonetheless, two primary and interweaving approaches have framed the analytic process: a thematic analysis which involved searching across the data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and fine-grained, psycho-discursive analyses of extracts within each of the themes. This analytic approach is consistent with a psychosocial epistemology, in that it was possible to attend to the discursive repertoires and identity positions that were commonly taken up by this sample of men as well as to the unique, biographically inflected and perhaps unconscious ways that participants invested in these discourses. Furthermore, combining a thematic analysis with psycho-discursive analyses was crucial to providing textual evidence for psychoanalytically informed readings of the texts.

5.7.1. Thematic analysis

The initial stage of the data analysis involved repeatedly listening to the interview recordings and reading the transcripts in order to identify the prevailing themes relevant to the ways men constructed self and other within contexts of fathering difference and disappointment. For the purposes of the thematic analysis I referred to the guidelines and procedures described by Braun and Clarke (2006), Gough, 2009, and Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly (2006). Although the

process was recursive, in that (re)reading, (re)listening, and refinement took place throughout, the following broad sequence was followed:

5.7.1.2. *Familiarization with the data*

As Braun and Clarke (2006) have noted, conducting and, in particular, carefully transcribing the interviews facilitated and informed the analysis, in that I became familiar with the data and began to notice common themes (and deviations) from the start of the data collection process. Although it is not possible to look for themes in an “epistemological vacuum” (ibid., p. 89), I attempted to begin with an inductive or ‘bottom up’ approach to the data as I wanted to ensure that the categories were true to the interviewee’s words and meanings. During this preliminary stage, I began to identify possible patterns in the data and to record early thoughts regarding ways that the data could be coded.

5.7.1.3. *Generating initial codes*

As the interview and transcription phase unfolded, I began, more formally, to generate codes which helped me to organize the data into meaningful groups. During this phase I followed Braun and Clarke’s (ibid.) advice by coding all of the potential themes and patterns that were evident and I also looked to include the text surrounding each extract in order to preserve a sense of context. I used highlighters to demarcate and code portions of text and I wrote provisional comments in the margins alongside these highlighted extracts, noting early interpretations of the extract and the ways it seemed to contribute to other emerging themes. I also gave attention to the inconsistencies and contradictions within the various instantiations as I was also interested in the unique investments that participants made. The above processes were conducted manually, without the aid of coding software.

5.7.1.4. *Searching for themes*

In this phase I sorted through the various codes in order to determine how they might combine to form themes. In order to facilitate this process, I first drew up a rough mind map, which helped me to arrange my data into themes and sub-themes, and to consider the ways these might be connected. From this, I drew up a thematic analysis index (Spencer, Ritchie, & O’Connor, 2003) on which I could capture provisional theme and sub-theme headings. I then gave each of the

transcripts line numbers so that the line numbers of the various coded extracts of data could be assigned to particular themes, together with the participant's pseudonym. This process was repeated with all of the transcripts. A copy of the final thematic analysis index has been included as appendix one.

I was also mindful of the distinction Braun and Clarke (2006) make between semantic and latent themes. Whilst on the one hand I attempted to stay close to the words used by interviewees, as the thematic interpretation progressed, I began to give more attention to the latent level, which has to do with the “*underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (ibid., p. 90). Thus, following the approach of Gough (2009), I began to think more theoretically about the data, as I considered how both discursive and psychoanalytic frameworks could be used to analyse the data for latent themes. According to Braun and Clarke (ibid.), latent thematic analysis is compatible with both discourse analysis and psychoanalytic frameworks, where “broader assumptions, structures and/or meanings are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data” (p. 90).

5.7.1.5. *Reviewing themes*

During this phase I looked to refine the themes. In order to guard against anecdotalism (Bryman, 1988), I looked to ensure that there was enough data in the overall sample to support the thematic framework I had identified. I also found that, by this stage of the analysis and with the research questions in mind, I tended to discern more subtle patterns or sub-themes. This meant going back to previously coded data and identifying new connections and sub-themes. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), I looked to review the themes at two levels. Firstly, I attended to all of the extracts that I had assigned to a particular theme in order to ensure that that the coded extracts fit well together – that there was evidence of coherence. Secondly, I re-read all of the interview transcripts to ensure that the overall thematic structure reflected the data set.

5.7.1.6. *Defining and naming themes*

Throughout the above process I used the theme list to capture and refine the overarching themes and sub-themes. As I went about naming the various themes, I looked to convey the key meanings of the themes, and the ways they contributed to the research questions. Thus, with the

research questions in mind, a master thematic index of major and sub-themes was produced (see appendix 1). This final index was used as the basis for further interpretation, including fine-grained discursive and psychoanalytic analyses of selected excerpts. These excerpts were selected because they served as rich representations of the diverse ways the various themes were worked up by research participants. During this focused analysis of the extracts, I found that continued to review and refine the relationships between the major and sub-themes.

5.7.2. Psycho-discursive analysis

In order to conduct a more fine-grained discursive analysis of the data, a psycho-discursive approach was adopted. For Wetherell (2008), psycho-discursive analyses attend to practices that “are recognizable, conventional, collective and social procedures through which character, self, identity, the psychological, the emotional, motives, intentions and beliefs are performed, formulated and constituted” (p. 79). According to Wetherell (1998) and Edley and Wetherell (1999) a psycho-discursive approach combines an analysis of the action orientation of language (what it is that speech accomplishes in a given context) together with an analysis of “broader or more global patterns in collective sense-making and understanding” (Wetherell and Edley, 1999, p. 338). A discursive analysis of psycho-social practices has been particularly useful for this research project, because I have been interested in exploring the ways men account for themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons. I have wanted to analyse the ways participants vacillate between various subject positions as well as the types of discourses invoked. Particular attention has been given to psychological activities such as “justification, rationalization, categorization, attribution, naming and blaming” and the ways these discursive practices were used by participants to achieve particular social or interpersonal objectives (Willig, 2008, p. 96).

As regards available discourses, the above approach also recognizes that, due to their social currency, some discourses are more available than others. Particular discourses are culturally dominant or hegemonic (Gramsci, as cited in Wetherell & Edley, 1999) in that, as ways of understanding the world, these discourses enjoy a taken-for granted status. By attending to the ways participants invoke taken-for-granted (or hegemonic) discourses in their self-other positioning, this study maintains an awareness of issues of power. Edley (2001) has argued that a central goal of discursive psychology is to analyse processes of “normalization/ naturalization

and to inquire whose interests are best served by different discursive formulations” (p. 190). Discourses make possible particular ways of seeing and being and are thus intimately implicated in exercises of power (Willig, 2008). Analysing the ways participants position self and other within the “local interactional context” of the research interview reveals the ways this sample of men does “identity politics with their talk” (Speer, 2001, p. 127).

Edley (2001) identifies three concepts that typically underpin a psycho-discursive analysis: interpretative repertoires, subject positions, and ideological dilemmas. Previously, Edley and Wetherell (1996; 1997) and Wetherell and Edley (1999) have demonstrated how these concepts can render effective critical analyses of men and masculinity, and Edley and Wetherell (1999) have shown how a sample of young men draw on interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas in order to position themselves as future fathers and husbands. These three concepts are more fully described below.

5.7.2.1. Interpretative repertoires

Wetherell and Potter (1988) draw on the concept of interpretative repertoires in order to analyse broad patterns of collective sense making within a particular data set. The authors argue that a range of accounts of the same phenomenon will contain the same “relatively internally consistent, bounded language units” which the authors have termed interpretative repertoires (p. 171). Wetherell and Potter (ibid.) go on to define interpretative repertoires as:

(the) building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes, and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire is constructed out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion. Commonly these terms are derived from one or more key metaphors and the presence of a repertoire will often be signaled by certain tropes or figures of speech (p.172).

For Edley (2001) interpretative repertoires are “part and parcel of any community’s common sense, providing a basis for shared understanding” (p. 198). Attending to interpretative repertoires gives a sense of the range of rhetorical opportunities available to a particular sample of men. Furthermore, as Edley (2001) indicates, some repertoires are more available than others; they are culturally dominant or hegemonic. Consequently, the concept has been useful to this study in that one of the research aims has been to identify the kinds of masculinity and fathering

discourses accessed by this sample of men within the context of fathering a different or disappointing son.

As mentioned above, as the thematic analysis progressed, I began to think more theoretically about the data. Edley (ibid.) argues that analyzing for interpretative repertoires involves identifying common lines of argument, patterns or distinctive tropes or figures of speech across interviews. Therefore, the concept of interpretative repertoires was used at the thematic level in order to identify the shared discourses that individual narratives are subject to. However, during the second stage of the analysis, a more fine-grained discursive analysis attended to the unique ways that participants invested in these discursive resources.

5.7.2.2. *Ideological dilemmas*

Billig et al. (1988) have proposed the notion of lived ideology or common sense, which have to do with the “beliefs, values and practices of a given society or culture” (Edley, 2001, p. 203). Billig et al. (1988) point to the contradictory or dilemmatic nature of lived ideologies, whereby what is good or wise can be argued from contrasting points of view. These contradictory wisdoms are seminal discursive resources, used for routine sense making and daily interactions. For Billig et al. (1988), every day ideological positions are rhetorical in nature in that speakers typically incorporate defenses against alternate points even as they argue for a certain position. Consequently, ideological dilemmas tend to move conversations forward as speakers propose, defend, contest and adjust their points of view. As indicated previously, the focus of this study is clearly dilemmatic: how does the good father respond to a disappointing son? Applying the concept of ideological dilemmas has enabled a discursive analysis of the ways participants take up, defend or vacillate between competing discourses of good fathering in the face of difference and disappointment.

5.7.2.3. *Subject positions*

As an analytic concept, the notion of subject positions emphasizes the psychosocial nature of the person, who both uses and is ‘used by’ language. In other words, the language a person uses is provided by history (Edley, 2001), but a person also uses this same language to make claims, to position the self and others. Subject positions may be seen as “locations within a conversation” (ibid. p.210) and, as a concept, they enable an analysis of the interview as an intersubjective

context, wherein self and other are positioned through talk. Discursive psychology views language as performative (Emerson & Frosh, 2004) and analyses of subject positions attend to what it is that is accomplished by the taking up of a particular position. Employing the concept makes it possible to analyse how participants shift between different discursive positions in order to accomplish particular social outcomes. The range of subject positions also shows how speakers are constrained by available interpretative repertoires that enable available identities or subject positions and prevent or marginalize others (Emerson & Frosh, 2004).

Performances of masculinity and fathering are inextricably linked to issues of power (Edley, 2001; Lindegger and Quayle, 2009; Seidler; 2006). Analysing self and other positioning enables one to attend to matters of empowerment or discreditation within participants' talk, which lends to a critical analysis of the ways these men perform masculinity and fathering. In addition, analysing self and other positioning has made it possible to point to the data in the application of relational psychoanalytic and intersubjective theories regarding processes of dominance or recognition.

5.7.3. Combining psycho-discursive analyses with psychoanalytically informed readings

According to Wetherell and Edley (1999), a psycho-discursive approach explores the social order as intersubjectively constituted, "wherein participants display to each other their understanding of what is going on" (p. 338). As indicated I have looked to extend this focus by incorporating relational psychoanalytic concepts into the intersubjective analyses. Hollway (2011) argues that psychoanalysis and discourse analysis are complementary and previously Gough (2009) has argued for the appropriateness of including psychoanalysis when family relations and gendered identities are the areas of research interest.

Psychoanalytically informed psycho-discursive research combines fine-grained discursive analyses with psychoanalytic interpretations rendered with what Gough (2009) terms "a discursive sensibility" (p. 529). Adopting this bifocal approach has meant that the data is analysed for the ways participants construct and negotiate identity positions, as well using psychoanalytic theory and practice to go beyond mere re-descriptions of participants' constructions, giving particular attention to notions of emotional investment. The intention is to

render an amplified focus on the ways the social and the personal interpenetrate each other, so constituting the psychosocial subject.

As indicated above, relational psychoanalytic theory and in particular, Benjamin's (1988; 1995; 1998) theorizing on the concept of recognition, has been used to provide an enriched analysis of self and other positioning within the data. However, an enduring tension implicit to psychosocial research lies in its attempt to combine a 'ground-up' discursive analysis with a theoretically-driven, 'top-down' reading of the ways individuals uniquely invest in discourses (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). Where applicable, biographical material and reflexive field notes are combined with textual analyses in order to posit possible personal and unconscious reasons for the particular discursive investments participants make. I have looked for instances of triangulation between these three sources of data in order to identify, analyse and posit unique and unconscious ways that participants have positioned themselves and structured their accounts.

In addition to utilising psychoanalytic ideas to inform my analysis of the data (Hollway, 2011), I have focused on what Emerson and Frosh (2004) term 'breaches' in the text, which are seen to index instances of active meaning-making work by speakers. According to Frosh and Saville Young (2010), from a psychoanalytic perspective, breaches may be viewed as indicators of a breakdown of regular 'egoic' speech as a consequence of pressing unconscious material. In order to identify breaches, I have followed the recommendations of Saville Young (personal communication), who advocates focusing on significant moments of incoherence in the text, where a defensiveness against disorganization is temporarily broken down as the participant struggles to construct an account that fits into the social norm. For Saville Young (*ibid.*), this may include particular moments of emotionality, as indicated by tone or extra-linguistic material. Saville Young (*ibid.*) also attends to the associations made between content and asks, using a psychoanalytic frame, what (unconscious) associations a speaker is making by moving from one particular story to another. Applying these principles has meant that, in similar vein to Gough (2009), both defensive and discursive patterns are identified in the data.

As indicated above, an important aspect of this research project has been the ongoing practice of reflecting on the ways that I am implicated in the production, analysis, interpretation and presentation of the data. In this vein I have become increasingly aware of a propensity to approach the data with something of a moralistic attitude as well as the possibility that concepts

such as ‘recognition’ can nourish moralistic readings of the texts. Antaki, Edwards, Billig and Potter (2003) argue that this propensity can diminish the quality of discourse analyses because, rather than doing discourse analysis, the analyst is engaged in enlisting the reader’s support for a particular moral view. As researcher, my approach has been to accept that concepts such as recognition, attunement and intersubjective domination do pave the way for assessments of good or bad parenting and I am sure that some of my own viewpoints are evident in the analytic chapters that follow. However, despite the abiding presence of my own value judgments, I have looked to do discourse analysis, and this discipline has, I hope, rendered readings that display the contingency and complexity of the participants’ talk. This discipline has, I believe, had the effect of suspending and even dissolving any simple moralizing on my part.

5.8. Standards of the Research Enquiry

Issues of validity and reliability have been pertinent throughout this methodological section. On the one hand, the purpose of this chapter has been to document the research procedure which, according to Silverman (2001) is a requirement for reliable research. On the other hand, I have been aware of the particular challenges regarding the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations of research interviews (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008; Saville Young 2009). In line with Frosh and Saville Young (ibid.) I have looked to promote the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations by grounding these in textual moves within the data and in the research relationship itself, as documented in the reflexive notes. The intention here has been to promote the validity of analytic claims by triangulating the data and grounding analytic claims in fine-grained analyses of how the narratives were told. Thus the focus of the analysis was rooted in the relational dynamics of the interviews themselves. According to Saville Young (2009), focusing analytic interest on *how* narratives are told promotes a stronger textual basis for interpretive claims. Saville Young (2009) argues that the combination of a ‘top down’ strategy, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, with a ‘bottom up’ strategy of fine-grained discursive analyses, “is an important way of validating interpretations” (p. 35).

I now turn to more general considerations regarding the standards of this research project. It is well-documented that qualitative research differs from quantitative research when it comes to the ways notions of reliability and validity are conceptualized and evaluated (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2001; Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill, 2002). However, this is not to say that

qualitative research can neglect rigorous and recognized standards of research without diminishing its quality. In order to maintain what Ulin et al. (2002) call the ‘trustworthiness’ of the findings, efforts have been made to meet the following research standards:

5.8.1. Credibility

For Ulin et al. (2002), credibility is analogous to the concept of validity in quantitative research. Meeting standards of credibility promotes confidence in the validity of the findings which, from a qualitative stance, means that there is a logic and consistency underpinning the findings and their implications. In this study, efforts have been made to keep each of the analytical procedures (thematic analysis, psycho-discursive analysis and psychoanalytically-informed analysis) close to the data before applying theoretical overlays. As regards the thematic analysis, remaining within participant’s meaning frames has meant that the final collation of main and sub-themes is linked by the implicit logic inherent to the discursive repertoires and dilemmas constructed by this sample of fathers. It is argued that the fine-grain psycho-discursive and psychoanalytically-informed analyses have strengthened the validity of the findings and that they have facilitated comparisons with existing research. As indicated above, because of the homogeneity of the sample, redundancy or saturation levels were reached with respect to the main findings.

It may also be argued that the iterative process of the thematic analysis, as described above, enhanced the validity of the findings because this process emulates Silverman’s (2001) depiction of the ‘constant comparative method’. As a means of strengthening validity, this method involves an initial analysis of a small part of the data, generating a set of categories and then testing out “emerging hypotheses by steadily expanding your data corpus” (p. 179). In this way, commonalities and deviations were identified as each interview was completed, transcribed and analysed. In fact, the analytic process involved repeatedly going back to previous interviews and then on to new interviews, steadily expanding on general themes as well as case-by-case particularities along the way.

5.8.2. Dependability

For Ulin et al. (2002), the criterion of dependability serves as a qualitative analogue to standards of reliability in quantitative studies. The current study adheres to standards of dependability as formulated by Ulin et al. (ibid.) since care has been taken to situate this research process within

the established rules and conventions of qualitative methodology. In addition, the research questions have been clearly stated and I have looked to ensure that they are logically connected to for the research purpose and design.

Silverman (2001, p. 188) addresses the notion of reliability in more specific terms, arguing that, for qualitative research, reliability “refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions”. Again, the iterative nature of the overall analysis meant that the data was revisited on several different occasions. Reliability of the findings has also been enhanced through regular meetings with the research supervisor. The research supervisor also reviewed samples of the data which meant that we were able to compare and discuss our findings. I routinely took notes during these meetings, and inevitably returned to the research process with new insights on the data as well as the limits of my current assumptions. Different perspectives on the data were also garnered by presenting emerging findings at student seminars.

As indicated, an important aspect of this psychosocial research has been to capture the extra-linguistic features of the interviews, such as pauses, emphases, overlaps and corrections, as these details have enabled an analysis of breaches in the text. More generally, Silverman (2001) argues that capturing subtle features in the talk enhances both the validity and reliability of interview findings as these details provide additional information on the ways participants organize their talk. By capturing subtleties in emphasis, pauses and overlaps, more evidence is available for the validity of analytic claims. In turn, this increased evidence makes it more likely that subsequent readings will endorse the researchers’ claims.

5.8.3. Confirmability

As a research standard, confirmability involves ensuring that the data accurately reflects the perspectives and experiences of the research participants and that “the researcher has maintained the distinction between personal values and those of the study participants” (Ulin et al., 2002). According to Ulin et al. (ibid.) confirmability is enhanced through researcher reflexivity, where personal biases and assumptions are scrutinized for the ways that they may influence the research process. As indicated above, researcher reflexivity has been a central element of this research process. Furthermore, in line with Silverman’s (2001) recommendations, extended excerpts of

data have been included in the analyses, so allowing prospective readers to “entertain alternative interpretations of the same materials” (p. 176).

5.8.4. Transferability

Following the recommendations of Ulin et al. (*ibid.*), the goal of this research has been to produce data that is conceptually representative of fathers within a specific context. However, although its context and focus are distinct, the findings of this study share some conceptual similarities with previous research that identifies the tensions and dilemmas men negotiate in their performances of fathering (e.g. Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012; Finn & Henwood, 2009). Thus it is argued that the findings of this study may be transferable, in a circumscribed sense, to different contexts of fathering.

CHAPTER SIX: CONSTRUCTIONS OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FATHER AND SON

As indicated in chapter four, the notion of identification has been approached from both a psycho-discursive and psychoanalytic perspective. Psycho-discursive theory views identification as ‘identity work’ where the focus is on the discursive strategies involved in negotiating subject positions, signifying membership of various social identities, including gender. Here, identity is viewed as a construction, always in process, never completed (Hall, 1996). Additionally, in accordance with poststructuralist thought, identity incorporates difference, where claims to membership come with implications regarding who or what one is *not* (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). As Hall (1996) puts it, “Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render outside, abjected” (p. 5, italics in the original).

Consequently, fathers’ claims of similarity and/or difference between themselves and their sons were attended to as significant sites of identity work, where participants laid claim to particular subject positions within discourses of masculinity and fatherhood. In addition, because identification has to do with establishing similarity and difference, it is simultaneously a means for participants to make various claims regarding their relationships with their sons. Here, attention is paid to the kinds of similarities and differences selected by this sample of fathers, and their implied consequences for the father-son relationship. It has already been argued that new father and orthodox father discourses hold contrasting imperatives regarding how the good father responds to his son’s differences and this research project is interested in exploring how this sample of men negotiates these contrasting imperatives.

Traditional psychoanalytic theory points to identification with the father as central to the establishment of the son’s gender identity and, according to Diamond (2007), this hinges on the father “making obvious the similarities inherent in being a male” (p. 71). This process of father-son identification is linked to orthodox expectations that fathers act as ‘role models’ for their sons: that there will be some agreement between fathers and sons, even if this is only gradually realized (Townsend, 2003; Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Yang, 2000). Thus it may be inferred that differences from the father may be associated with relational tension; that fathers carry

implicit expectations that their sons should be like, or think like them in personally and culturally valued ways.

Psychoanalytic theory also places ambivalence at the heart of masculine subjectivity, including conscious and unconscious identifications with the feminine or, more broadly, with the 'not me'. Contemporary psychoanalytic theorists propose that rigid repudiations of the 'not me' coincide with defensive versions of masculinity, together with diminished ability to relate ethically to the other (Benjamin, 1988; 2005; Hollway, 2006; Samuels, 2006; Diamond, 2007). Benjamin (1995) argues that deconstructing the binary of similarity and difference is crucial to intersubjectivity theory and the concept of recognition, where the other is recognized as both similar to the self (an equivalent center of consciousness), and different (with a distinct subjectivity and agency). Maintaining this tension between similarity and difference distinguishes relating to the other as subject from relating to the other as object. Consequently it may be argued that the father's ability to entertain difference, and to locate similarities within difference, is important to the task of relating ethically to the different son.

Taken together, discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory render a binocular, psychosocial perspective on claims of similarity and difference. From this psychosocial perspective, attention is given to self and other positioning within available discursive repertoires, as well as possible unconscious and personal investments in these discursive subject positions.

6.1. Analysis of data

As is evident in the extracts below, talk of similarity and difference served as a primary discursive framework for this sample of fathers, in order to account for experiences of challenge and disappointment, or intimacy and understanding between father and son.

6.1.1. Similarity, difference, and understanding

In line with the interview protocol discussed in chapter five, interviews routinely began with participants being invited to 'tell' the researcher 'about' their sons. In their responses, all of the participants drew comparisons with themselves in order to elucidate who their sons 'are'. These constructions of similarity and difference were used to account for the challenges or enjoyments

participants experienced within the father-son relationship. Constructions of similarity tended to be associated with ease of understanding between father and son, and the enjoyment of shared activities. On the other hand, constructions of difference tended to be associated with challenge and, for some of the fathers, relational distance and disappointment.

John

The opening segment of John's interview illustrates several of the above features. It is evident that John rapidly establishes similarity and difference as the explanatory framework for identifying his son as 'challenging':

Um:: and I suppose um (.) just for starters (.) um (.) which is the son that came to mind when I/ when I sort of-

Well, ironically (.) it's Sean (.) my oldest son, he's ten years old (*yes*) and he's the least like me/ or maybe he's a lot like me (.) I don't know (.) I haven't figured that out yet. But (.) you know (.) that's the one that comes to mind, because the other one, when I/ when I think out loud (.) he's difficult (.) he's very challenging (.) but he's a lot like me (.) so I understand him (1) you know (.) and that-and so then it's my older son (.) Sean (.) who's ten (.) who (.) when you say (.) you know (.) 'the more challenging one' (1) yet he's very well behaved (.) you know (.) but I'm challenged in/ in/ the ways that I didn't expect to be (*ja*).

John begins his interview by responding to the primary request that he focus on his 'more challenging' son. John quickly establishes that his choice is 'ironic' because, as he later explains, his oldest son is 'very well behaved'. So John constructs his parenting challenge as counter-intuitive, or perhaps as running contrary to the expectations of his audience. John's younger son is "very challenging", but the challenge presented by his oldest son has to do with difference as opposed to bad behavior. John is making the point that encountering difference is more challenging for him than encountering bad behavior because sameness, or identification, facilitates understanding.

John puts forward the argument that he is better able to understand his younger son because 'he's a lot like me', whereas his older son is 'the least like' John. This phrasing shows how

encountering difference gives rise to both self-constructions and constructions of otherness: claims of what is deemed ‘me’ and what is deemed ‘not me’. This binary framework has the effect of polarizing John and his oldest son such that John’s ability to understand or attune to his son is compromised.

However, the sentence ‘Or maybe he’s a lot like me...I haven’t figured that out yet’ suggests that confronting difference in his son is provocative for John, that it generates a restlessness at the level of his own self-identifications: of what is and isn’t him. John constructs this as an unresolved and ongoing issue which he hasn’t ‘figured ... out yet’. Adopting Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) notion of the ‘defended subject’, it may be argued that John’s claim that his son ‘is the least like’ him, generates anxiety, because it implies relational distance. The phrase ‘or maybe he’s a lot like me’ may then be seen as an attempt to salvage a sense of connection to his older son.

The conclusion to this extract seems to summarize John’s dilemma. His oldest son is ‘very well behaved’ but John came into fatherhood with the assumption that his son would be similar to him. This assumption has not been met and consequently John is ‘challenged’ in ways that he ‘didn’t expect to be’. As the father, John constructs the experience of difference as more ‘challenging’ than bad behavior.

Brian

As with John above, the extract below comprises the beginning of Brian’s interview. In accordance with the interview protocol, I ask Brian to choose the son he would identify as being the ‘more challenging’ of his two sons. It is evident that, in similar vein to John above, Brian bases his selection on the connected issues of similarity, difference and understanding:

Brian (.) as I said it’s basically about uh:: you as a dad (ok) and um:: (.) you know uh: (.) just looking at sort of the (.) challenges of fatherhood (ok) (.) and um: so I know you’ve got two boys and I thought um: maybe you could choose one of them (.) like maybe the guy that’s given you sort of most cause to stop and think and wonder and wrestle and things like that? And I think you mentioned your younger boy came to mind? But it will be about one of your guys (ja) so you’ll have to choose (.) ja (.) ok (2) ja.

Uh: (2), ja ok (.) let's choose uh (.) the/ the/ the younger one =ja= (.) ja I suppose the older one's a lot easier hey (.) ja (.) so (1). Probably not easier, I just understand him a lot (.) you know/ sort of can see where he::'s (.) ja (.) can see where he's coming from (.) whereas the younger one is very/ a lot more alternative hey (1) ja.

It is evident that, based on our pre-interview contact, I prompt Brian towards a focus on his younger son. In his response, Brian pauses, and the phrase 'let's choose' restores Brian's rights as the speaker who wants to make his choices afresh. It could also be argued that Brian's response has the effect of indexing his selection as speculative and open to debate. Thus, although Brian proceeds to identify distinct difficulties in his relationship with his youngest son, this opening discursive maneuver has the effect of minimizing these very difficulties. It is as though Brian wants to distance himself from his pre-interview comments regarding his disappointing younger son. In accounting for his choice, Brian first positions his older son as 'a lot easier'. However, Brian then replaces this with the notion that he is able to 'understand' the 'older one' 'a lot'. The fact that similarity is implicit to Brian's understanding is indicated by Brian's construction of his younger son as 'a lot more alternative'. As the father, Brian is able to identify and empathise with his similar son's mind and 'see where he's coming from', whereas Brian implies that he is not able to do this with his 'alternative' younger son. In the project of positioning his youngest son as 'alternative', Brian first uses the word 'very' but he then replaces this extreme-case word with the phrase 'a lot more'. This repair has the effect of shifting the son from a position of categorical (and perhaps hopeless) difference to a position where some sense of father-son connection is maintained ('a lot more'). Nonetheless, the word 'alternative' still casts doubt on the younger son's membership of a circle of legitimacy created by father and similar older son.

In summary, it is evident that both John and Brian are aware of an irony inherent in their selections, in that neither of the challenging sons is badly behaved. Instead, what makes these sons 'challenging' for the father is that they are different, and this difference makes it difficult for both fathers to enjoy an implicit understanding of their sons' minds.

6.1.2. Similarity, difference, and sport

A striking feature of this study was how frequently participants drew on ‘fathering through sport’ as an interpretative repertoire to account for their experiences of similarity and difference between themselves and their sons. Anderson & McGuire (2010) point to the numerous studies which show that sport is a common forum for the production of normative, orthodox masculinity, and Connell (2005) suggests that the “institutional organization of sport embeds definite social relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination of women” (p. 54).

In talking with me as another man, many participants positioned themselves as ‘heroic males’ (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) through claims of sporting competence. In this sample, labels such as ‘A team’; ‘provincial’; ‘Springbok; and ‘national representation’ were used both as a way of ‘doing gender’ and to establish sport as an ‘institutional form of intelligibility’ (Shapiro, 1992, as cited in Wetherell & Edley, 1999). In some cases, having positioned themselves as competent males, approximating the hegemonic ideal, fathers went on to make comparisons between themselves and their sons as sportsmen. Again, expectations of similarity predominated, and where these expectations weren’t met, it was often very difficult for fathers to establish conclusive and convincing positions of acceptance towards their sons’ differences.

David

In his interview David describes his experiences of fathering a son who has had real difficulties meeting the extra mural demands of school. David seemed saddened by his son’s difficulties and he and I were both moved by this topic at various moments in the interview. Reflecting on his different son, David says the following:

I suppose your first expectation (.) without thinking about it too much at the time (1) is that this little guy is going to be a bit like you (.) you know (.) mmh (.) and if he’s not like you, you have to make some (0.4) adjustments you know (.) and say ‘Well ok (.) Greg is Greg (.) and he’s not me, and uh (.) he’s different and you just acc/accept the guy for who he is (.) you know mhm

RP: Now it’s that that I’m particularly interested in so uh (.) could you tell me more about that (0.5) sort of just some of your experiences maybe even times where you

remember that happening to you? (To me as a son?) No, no (.) so in other words (.) remember when you sort of 'Hang on a minute Greg isn't (.) you know, isn't a mini-me' (.) you know (.) and just think of times that you know (.) maybe you've experienced that?

Ok (.) sports field is probably the first thing that comes to mind (.) I mean I loved my sport (.) I was very sporty (.) and did everything that was going (.) you know (.) managed to make the A team without even trying and/and Greg is the opposite you know (.) he's uh (.) he didn't take to sport very well although he's/ he's developed an interest in sport but uh (.) he's um (.) he seems to lack a focus (.) um (1) like in Hockey it wouldn't be abnormal for him to get the ball and start running with it in the wrong direction /didn't realize the object was to score a goal hhh. hhh. He just likes being on the field you know hhh. hhh.

In the first line, above, David says that the expectation of similarity is 'your first expectation' as a father, which indexes his transition as the father. David diminishes the intensity of his initial expectation of sameness ('I suppose'; 'a bit like you'), which can perhaps be read as a strategy to avoid being positioned as disappointed in his different son. However, the phrase 'a bit like you' also has the effect of emphasizing the differences between David and his son: that the son is not even a 'bit' like his father. As David goes on to confirm: 'he's not like you'.

The pronouns 'your', 'you' and 'the guy', give David a somewhat detached perspective in this stretch of talk, where David takes up a matter of fact, rational position as the reflective father who can 'make some adjustments' and 'just accept the guy for who he is'. The implication is that David's avoidance of being disappointed coincides with a degree of relational distance, where Greg is positioned as 'the guy' as opposed to 'my son'. In other words, by positioning himself as the rational male, David is able to deflect disappointment, but this seems to coincide with his use of detached terminology in his self-other construction. A degree of distance is required in order for David to take up a meta-perspective on his son, to move beyond his 'first expectation'.

David then goes on to make sports activity and achievement a primary discriminator between who he 'was' and who his son Greg 'is'. The claim that he made the A team 'without even trying' emphasizes the difference between himself and his son: they are binary opposites. Whilst his son "runs in the wrong direction", David possesses an excess of the abilities needed to

perform in the realm of orthodox masculinity. David, who was ‘very sporty’ and ‘did everything that was going’, has to father a son he constructs as entirely different in this regard. Repeated use of the pronoun ‘I’ suggests David’s investment in being “very sporty” and this aligns him with heroic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

David then turns to his son, whom he constructs as ‘the opposite’. Thus Greg is defined by what he is not. Greg occupies the empty masculine category of the non-sportsman (Frosh, 1994). David repairs this to some extent with the phrase ‘although he’s developed an interest in sport’, which gives his son some level of membership in normative masculinity. But the tentativeness of this phrase suggests that David’s hopes have faded. Principally, the son lacks ‘a focus’ which implies that he is not attending to a central aspect of the world as constructed by his father: a world that has competitive sport as a taken-for-granted activity. To emphasize this, David goes on to a narrative about playing Hockey. The phrase ‘it wouldn’t be abnormal’ hints at the notion that his son is abnormal because he deviates from normative sporting investment. Freud argued that ‘tendentious jokes’ are a means of undoing what is renounced and retrieving what was lost (Billig, 1999). With this insight in mind, perhaps it can be argued that our shared laughter has to do with two fathers’ unconscious awareness of the shame and internal consternation that such an abnormal event (running in the wrong direction) would cause the observing father.

David then makes some reflections on his son’s subjectivity: his “understanding of what is going on” in his son’s mind (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 339). From an intersubjective perspective, David is mindful that his son ‘just likes being on the field’ but as a competent sportsman, David knows ‘the object’ of the game. As the father, David is left having to straddle between identifying with his son’s naïve or childlike ‘likes’ and the normative ‘object’ of competitive sport. Thus David articulates a challenge intrinsic to fathering a different son where, on the one hand he recognizes his son’s (childlike) mind, whilst on the other he knows the overall objective of the world his son occupies. David is an expert on this world; he made A teams ‘without even trying’, whereas his son is ignorant (‘he lacks a focus’; didn’t realize the object’) and these differences create an enduring tension to David’s fathering – between what he knows (as a man) and his recognition of his son’s mind.

Three conversational turns later, I return to the father-son discrepancies identified by David, and raise the issue of disappointment. As indicated in chapter two, Billig (1999) argues that “talk

about emotions is frequently talk about moral expectancies and, thus, about the morality of relations” (p. 189). The extract below illustrates the complexity of broaching the topic of disappointment as it raises the risk of being positioned as a bad father. It is evident that I approach the topic gingerly, and that I start off on the wrong foot by unwittingly linking disappointment with being the (bad) father who withdraws from his son:

Mm (.) mm (.) have you ever felt like (.) with these things (.) have you ever felt like withdrawing from Greg maybe because you just feel (.) you know (.) disappointed or/or let down in some way?

No (2) mhm. No (1) not even close. No (3)

And with all of this (.) have you had any feelings of disappointment?

I don't think so (2) Disappointment? Mhm (3) mm (.) difficult one (.) Greg is Greg (.) He's my son who I love (.) sure (.) I'd like him to be wing for the A team scoring four tries a match (.) who wouldn't? But he's not (.) you know (.) he's hooker for the C team and he's um (.) he's hh. He does his best you know (.) uh (.) uh (.) I don't think I can say that I'm disappointed you know (.) um (2) I think there's just um (.) there's a lot of life ahead for Greg (.) you know there's a hang of a lot he's going to do and (1) who knows? maybe he'll be SA Kung Fu champion one day or (*ha!*) (.) you know he's (.) it's not/ it's not over you know (.) he's uh (.) he's gonna live his life and find whatever's good for him (.) Mhm (2) Mhm (5)

Ja (.) ja (1) I know they're difficult questions (2) Mhm (4)

It is evident that David responds to my initial question by firmly rejecting the position of 'being disappointed'. There is a conversational hiatus following David's adamant disavowal, and then I rephrase my question to the somewhat less scandalous possibility of having 'feelings of disappointment'. There is the sense then, that I won't let David off the hook. With the phrase 'all of this' I make pointed reference to David's recent descriptions of his non-sporty, 'opposite' son, which does not give David much scope to continue as the entirely satisfied father. In response it is evident that, for David, taking up a position of disappointment is a 'difficult one'. David grapples with the dilemma inherent to disappointment talk: how to respond to the otherness of

the son. Primarily, David wants to signal his acceptance of Greg. David associates this acceptance with love; that love means accepting and recognizing the son who is different from me ('Greg is Greg'). However, David can only take up the accepting position if he discards what he would 'like': for his son to be 'wing for the A team scoring four tries a match'. David defends this potentially shameful admission by making it a normal 'like' ('who wouldn't?'). The words 'he's hooker for the C team and he's, um, he's hh he does his best' see David stopping short of detailing his son's incompetence and settling, instead, on acceptance based on the observation that his son is doing 'his best'. Because of this linguistic move – the acceptance that his son is doing his best – David is able, or perhaps only permitted to say 'I don't think I can say that I'm disappointed, you know'.

However, David goes on to construct another basis for not being disappointed, this being the hope that his son will eventually enjoy normative success. The phrase 'Um, I think...there's a lot of life ahead for Greg' sees David taking up a hopeful position and his joke about the 'SA Kung Fu champion' resurrects the enticing possibility of normative physical/sporting success. David concludes by constructing a resolution that blends acceptance of what is with hopes for future success ('he's gonna live his life and find whatever's good for him') and this enables David to sustain his position as the father who is not disappointed.

David became tearful at this stage of his talk. It may be argued that the disclaimer 'it's not over' points away from, or defends against a certain paternal grieving: that, when it comes to orthodox success, it may indeed be 'over' for his son. This interactional moment illustrates something of the profundity of paternal disappointment, in that it is evident that David's love for his son intertwines with his hopes for his son. To love the son means preserving hope, which David achieves by shifting the content of these hopes towards 'whatever's good' for the son. However, this phrase signals that the father's hope incorporates recognition of the son as an independent subject over whom the father has little or no control. The vagueness of the phrase 'whatever's good' makes rebuttals difficult (Gough, 2004) and bolsters David's position as the hopeful father. However, the vagueness of the phrase 'whatever's good' also indexes that preserving hope means that David must hold onto a future that he does not implicitly know and cannot articulate with particular confidence.

In the above two extracts David manages difference, abnormality and disappointment by foregrounding his acceptance of his son, by indexing the fact that his son ‘does his best’ and then going on to construct an argument for his son’s future success. But it seems important to highlight the extent of David’s investment in the hopeful father position. In the second passage disappointment is initially associated with withdrawal and then with despair (‘it’s not over’). These associations give some indication of the stakes involved in being a disappointed father. In fact, David juxtaposes disappointment with love (‘He’s my son who I love’). Therefore it may be argued that, for David, being disappointed is associated with the shameful implication of not loving the son. Clearly then, being the disappointed father is inherently dilemmatic, in that love and acceptance collide with dissatisfaction and non-acceptance. David’s extract provides one instance of the ways this dilemma was managed by this sample of fathers, where the centrality of preserving hope is evident.

Nick

Nick, like David above, also constructs notions of difference with his son based on sporting competence. However, Nick does not overtly claim an expectation of similarity. Instead, Nick associates these expectations with a version of fathering that he has relinquished:

But um (.) ja (.) you know (.) I didn’t have expectations that (.) you know (.) he’s going to be a Springbok Rugby player (.) or anything like that. I was just happy to have a son (.) and (.) you know (.) the first thing you do is count all the toes and fingers and make sure they’re there and you’re happy (.) you know. So for me that was – good health, paramount (.) and all the rest was irrelevant - it wasn’t an issue. And even now (.) you know (.) I went and watched him play C team Cricket and he swam in the B team the day before (.) and it was great (1) I mean I/I was an A team player and uh (1) but I thought I would have an issue with my son playing C team (.) but I don’t which is interesting. I think you love them no matter what they do so (.) (*mm*)

In the extract above, Nick positions himself in two distinctive ways: he is the capable male, but he is also the loving and accepting father. There is the sense that ‘the man’ in Nick is surprised by ‘the father’ in Nick. Nick says that he was ‘happy to have a son’, which endorses previous research findings which suggest that sons have a particular valence for fathers (e.g. White, 1994).

But Nick firmly distances himself from any orthodox hegemonic expectations; instead he is the new father who gives priority to his son's wellbeing. In fact, twice Nick disavows any hegemonic expectations ('the rest was irrelevant-it wasn't an issue'). Whilst these claims remove the threat of disappointment from the discursive frame, it may be argued that Nick's repeated use of dispreference indicates how expectations of success and similarity function as hovering presences that require ongoing discursive management.

Nick then turns to the present, by observing that 'even now' he has no issue with the fact that his son is different from him when it comes to sporting achievements. Again, the phrase 'even now' suggests that his son's performance is, in fact, a persistent issue and that it requires ongoing negotiation. Team designations (i.e. A, B or C) are meaningful social reference points, and Nick reveals that being an 'A team player' has been an important aspect of his own masculine identity ('I was an A team player').

Nick's repetition of the word 'I' represents the first disjuncture in Nick's acceptance talk, in that Nick's self-positioning as a competent sportsman points to difference between father and son. However, Nick says that 'it was great' watching his son play for a low team, which wards off the implication that such a moment may be disappointing for him as a father. Being an 'A team player', Nick 'thought' he 'would have an issue' with his son playing C team, 'but', he says 'I don't'. Nick finds occupying this position 'interesting' which suggests that he has been surprised by his own response: that his priorities have been changed by his relationship with his different son. As he becomes the father of a different son, Nick distances himself from his hegemonic position as a man.

It appears then, that Nick has shifted to what may be termed the 'accepting position' inherent to new fatherhood, where love for your child takes precedence over what he does. New fatherhood, which upholds relational warmth and closeness, says that 'you love them no matter what they do'. The use of pronouns such as 'you', 'them' and 'they' implies that taking up the new father discourse coincides with a self-reflective father position. The phrase 'you love them no matter what they do' is given as a conclusion, and seems to represent a position that Nick has had to work towards. His son's differences have prompted a transition, from Nick as a hegemonic, 'A team player' man, to Nick as the accepting, loving father. As with David, above, loving the son

means accepting difference and this has the effect of moving both fathers away from being disappointed in their sons as *men*.

The above extracts illustrate how constructions of similarity and difference hinged on participants identifying themselves as being capable and usually more competent than their sons in the area of sports. It is also evident that talk of difference and by implication, disappointment, introduces a discursive dilemma. Both fathers manage this dilemma by modifying their own expectations in order to position themselves as loving fathers and to assuage, deflect, or manage the notion of being disappointed.

Angus

Angus's interview provides something of an exception to the above pattern, in that he expressly disavows sporting competence. Instead, Angus constructs himself as 'average' and his son as 'much the same'. As the extract below illustrates, this disavowal moderates Angus's expectations of his son. It appears that Angus is more accepting of his son's performances (he 'can back off') because, in his imagined dialogue below, he can say to his son: 'I'm not much better than you are'. Angus's self-assessment of his stature as a sportsman introduces a morality that regulates the expectations he is allowed to have of his son:

I also think to an extent Rob (.) I/I/ maybe I find it easier to back off because I wasn't great a great sportsman myself whereas if I think if you/if you take a guy like - it will be very frustrating for a guy like Steve Jones to have a son who wasn't a sportsman (.) because Steve is such a competent sportsman (.) whereas (2) I was really (.) really/ and I'm not just saying it/ I wasn't a great sportsman I was / I'm average to below average in terms of ball skills ok (.) and Steven is much the same (.) so I can look at him and say "You know what I'm not much better than you are (.) wasn't much better-aren't much better" (.) so I actually need to be careful (.) whereas I think if you were a very competent sportsman and have a son who maybe isn't (.) that must be very hard (.) and I/I don't know how you deal with that

It is interesting to note that although Angus does not identify himself as a good sportsman in the above excerpt, sporting ability remains a discriminating variable, with a series of implications for Angus's fathering. 'Steve Jones', who is put forward as an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity,

would, Angus imagines, find it ‘very frustrating’ to ‘have a son who wasn’t a sportsman’. For Angus, Steve Jones has a particular status as an exalted exemplar of masculinity (‘such a competent sportsman’), and this status ‘must’ make it ‘very hard’ for Steve Jones to accept a less capable son. Thus Angus projects the experience of being disappointed onto Steve Jones. Steve Jones carries the burden of this intersubjective positioning, whilst Angus is able to ‘back off’ from the dilemma of fathering a son who is different from him in the realm of sports.

As he moves to claim what Wetherell and Edley (1999) term an ‘ordinary’ position, Angus wards off any reassurance that I might have given at the time (‘really-and I’m not just saying it’). This signals that Angus is placing his masculinity at some risk by designating himself as ‘average’. However, Angus’s argument is that, because he occupies this ordinary position, he is able to ‘back off’ from his similarly average son.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how Angus mixes tenses (was/am) which suggests that being a sportsman remains an available self-identification for Angus. Also, through careful choice of words, Angus is not disavowing membership as a sportsman; he is ‘average to below average’; ‘not much better’ than his son. So Angus is still in the mix, even if he isn’t ‘great’. Ironically, then, Angus’s reflections entrench, rather than overturn, the masculine hierarchy that is established by sports accomplishment. The implication of this is that Angus’s masculinity remains under the thrall of the hegemonic ideal, despite his ambivalence regarding how to position himself and his son as sportsmen. This seems to be an instantiation of what Connell (2005) terms ‘complicity’. Furthermore, Angus’s sympathies seem to lie with a particular theory of fathering, where expectations are founded on assumptions of similarity. When it comes to the kind of hierarchical difference that hegemonic masculinity induces, Angus doesn’t ‘know how you deal with that’. The phrase ‘so I actually need to be careful’ suggests that Angus’s expectations of his son should be moderated by his own competencies. The implication then is that sporting prowess gives the competent father some level of moral license to expect the same from his son.

6.1.3. Negotiating different ‘versions of the world’

Fathers were not necessarily reassured by the fact that their sons played in high teams or that they demonstrated sporting ability. As discussed in theme two (‘Making an effort’), fathers expected their sons to display certain attitudes towards sport. Often, these were attitudes that fathers claimed for themselves. Many fathers tended to claim active, competitive and assertive attitudes for themselves, and they expressed concern and disappointment when their sons did not adopt these orthodox attitudes. These findings tie in with Connell’s (1987) observation that hegemonic masculinity represents a ‘winning style’: an idealized way of being masculine that serves as an aspirational goal. Many participants constructed themselves as embodying some variation of a traditional, active or competitive style of masculinity and usually pointed to the successes that these styles have brought. Then, as fathers of different sons, participants described their experiences of negotiating between their established, often successful ways and their sons’ different ‘versions of the world’.

Brendan

Brendan, father of two sons, spent a significant part of his interview describing a transformative encounter he had with his oldest son. In the extract below Brendan reflects on this encounter with difference. In the telling of it, it is evident that Brendan shifts between different and even contradictory positions and perspectives as man and as father:

I myself am very competitive/ I have to win (.) you know (.) second place is first place loser (.) and then to have this little – ag he was six – and he said ‘No everybody’s a winner’ (.) you know (.) that to me was just so different (.) I actually had to- ja – I had this six year old teaching me (1) you know (.) so (.) ja (.) it’s just – you know – I just sometimes – just want to shake the boy (.) you know (.) “Come on, you can do this!” you know (1) but he’s very switched on to other peoples’ emotions (.) you know (.) he picks up when things aren’t great (.) and things like that which is quite nice (.) you know (1) but it’s just (.) I don’t know (.) compared to where I was (.) you know (.) “you gotta win” you know (.) “you have to win” (.) “you gotta play A team” (.) you know (.) “you play B team (.) you/you haven’t succeeded” and things like that (.) But you have to be so careful

A feature of the above extract is the contrast Brendan draws between his own subjectivity and his son's subjectivity. This contrast is then employed to account for Brendan's 'careful' father position. In the first sentence, Brendan positions himself as the traditional competitive male, who is 'then' confronted by his son's different, egalitarian perspective. As with David above, Brendan polarizes the differences between himself and his son by emphasizing his self-investment as 'very competitive'. The unfinished phrase "I actually had to-ja" signifies that his 'different' son has had an intersubjective impact on Brendan, requiring him to reset his version of the world such that, in an inversion of orthodox fathering, the father is taught by the 'little' six year-old son.

Nonetheless, as Hollway (2007) points out, encountering otherness has the effect of intensifying Brendan's own investments. Following the phrase 'I had this six year old teaching me', repetition of the word 'just' sees Brendan reverting to the competitive and hence disappointed father who wants to 'just wants to shake the boy'. Thus, in spite of his 'teaching', Brendan remains invested in his position as a competitive sportsman and, consequently, in his hopes that his son will take up a similarly competitive attitude. However, with the phrase 'but he's very switched on to other people's emotions', Brendan switches positions once more. Here Brendan foregrounds his young son's ability to empathise, and his capacity for relationship. These observations constrain Brendan as the competitive male and see him take up a more relational father position, where taking care of the son substitutes for the 'I' that wants to 'shake' the boy. The phrase 'he picks up when things aren't great' constructs the son as an equivalent other with the intersubjective capacity to recognize his father.

Then, again via the word 'just', Brendan shifts subject positions. Once more Brendan is the competitive man who is frustrated by his son's difference. Here Brendan constructs himself as a young boy like his son, but with a very different outlook. Brendan uses a series of quotes to convey his subjectivity as a young boy who has 'gotta play A team' in order to parry the potential shame of playing for the 'B team'. However, Brendan's use of the pronoun 'you' as well as the phrase 'compared to where I was' have the effect of distancing Brendan from the invested position he constructs at the beginning of the extract. It may be argued then, that Brendan's encounter with his son has induced a change in Brendan, leading to the capacity to objectify his original competitive philosophy.

Hollway (ibid.) points out that “giving up omnipotence is never secure and the desire for control remains a constant feature in adult life” (p. 56). In Brendan’s case, the phrase ‘but you have to be so careful’ sees him take up a father position that involves restraining the desire for control over his son. Interestingly, this phrase follows on from his construction of the imaginary shame-filled ‘you’ that hasn’t ‘succeeded’. It’s as though Brendan wants to protect his son from the very threat of shame that galvanizes him as the boy/man who has ‘gotta play A team’. Thus, whilst Brendan retains a hegemonic position that asserts ‘you gotta play A team’, this ‘you’ is constrained by Brendan’s awareness that this hegemonic position is potentially damaging for his son.

Consequently, it may be said that Brendan alternates between a traditional version of masculinity and fathering (‘just want to shake the boy’) and a version of masculinity and fathering that is informed by Brendan’s intersubjective encounters with his son’s mind. In fact, what Brendan foregrounds in these encounters is his son’s ability to entertain vulnerability as opposed to the hegemonic imperatives of a competitive masculinity (‘he’s very switched on to other peoples’ emotions you know, he picks up when things aren’t great’). That the son embodies, or represents vulnerability is also denoted by the phrase ‘this little’.

Brian

The extract below, taken from Brian’s interview, is the conclusion to his response to being disappointed in his different son (the first part of this extract appears in chapter ten). Here, Brian shifts from an earlier position as the frustrated, disappointed father towards a concluding position of ‘respect’ towards his different son. However, the number of hesitations and false starts indicate that it is not easy for Brian to articulate a position that suffices as a counterpoint to the disappointed self he constructs just prior to this extract:

Um:: (3) ja Rob (.) uh (.) I mean, at the end of the day (1) no (.) not really – I mean (.) yet (.) I/ I’ve/ I respect him (.) I/ I/what I do enjoy about him – he’s got a – he’s got a – he handles life well (.) you know (.) as I said he/ he/ how do you put it? You know he’s – he’s naturally organized (.) you know (.) he’ll eat when he’s hungry and (.) you know (.) he’ll sleep when he’s tired and he (.) you know (.) pack his bags when he’s gotta go on a trip (.) you know (.) he’s quite a independ – quite a independent guy – ja (2) you know (.)

whereas some kids will leave their stuff lying around and (.) you know (.) you'll tear your hair out with lost keys (.) you know (.) he'll look after his keys (.) you know (.) and it just comes to him naturally that type of thing (.) you know (.) whereas Shane / that doesn't come as naturally (1) I'm comparing the two but (1) ja (1) you know (.) I think that – I think that's where William's strength is you know (2) and maybe he does see the bigger picture (.) you know (.) that achieving on the sports field is not the be – all and end – all at the end of the day (.) you know, he's/ he's/ it's not a big issue to him and (1) ja (2)

The above paragraph is framed by the phrase 'at the end of the day' which signals that Brian wants his listener to understand that he is taking up a concluding and preferred position as father of his different son; a position beyond frustration and disappointment. However, Brian's use of emphasis in the phrase 'not really' indicates that disappointment is not entirely effaced. The sequence of false starts ('I mean (.) yet I/ I've... I/I ...he's got a – he's got a –') indicates that it is not easy for Brian to position himself or his son post disappointment. Brian settles on the intersubjective position of 'respect' as a way of transcending disappointment. In accounting for his respect, Brian foregrounds the fact that his son is 'naturally organized' and that he is 'quite a independent guy'. Wetherell and Edley (1999) point out that autonomy and independence are hegemonic values that may be employed to shore up masculinity within displays of non-conformist, feminine behavior. Accordingly, the emphasis which Brian places on his son's independence may be read as an instance of such a discursive maneuver.

However, from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, the word 'independent' may be read as indexing distance between father and son, where the son does not have an obvious need for the father. Brian lists a series of the son's 'strengths', all of which could be viewed as a list of stereotypical *maternal* or at least generic parental concerns (sleeping, eating, packing bags). Here the 'you' that 'will tear your hair out with lost keys' is more of the new father/parent than orthodox the father who is focused on 'achieving on the sports field'. However, Brian's repeated use of the phrase 'you know' indicates that he wants his listener to support the validity of his son's strengths as well as his construction of himself as a non-disappointed parent. The phrase 'and maybe he does see the bigger picture' may be read as a moment of recognition, where Brian provisionally takes up his son's version of the world: that 'achieving on the sports field is not the be-all and end-all'. However, the phrase 'it's not a big issue to him', constructs father and son

standing apart from each other regarding the issue of sports. This seems to be an instance of ‘not me’ othering on Brian’s part, where difference between father and son is emphasized rather than bridged. As indicated in chapter two, Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) propose that identification involves being ‘transformed’ to some extent, by the other. With this in mind, it may be argued that Brian does not appear to be transformed via his observations of his different son. Rather, his son remains ‘different’.

Hence it may be argued that Brian’s son offers Brian a different ‘version of the world’ that is inherently disappointing and therefore difficult for Brian to assimilate to himself. Like the phrases ‘just one of those things’ and ‘at the end of the day’, the term ‘bigger picture’ indicates that Brian is attempting to come to terms with disappointment by going beyond his investment in a masculinity that is constituted on ‘sports field’. The word ‘maybe’ (like the opening phrase ‘not really’) signifies that Brian remains disappointed even as he reaches towards his resolution as the new father who is not disappointed (‘not really’). Consequently it seems that the intersubjective orientation of ‘respect’ established by Brian at the start of this extract is somehow anticlimactic and detached. What is missing, it seems, is identificatory love, or “recognition through identification” that Benjamin (1995, p.60) suggests makes the son so significant to the father.

Scott

One of the reasons Scott’s interview stood out was that, in wrestling with the experience of difference and disappointment in his son, Scott displayed an uncommon degree of self-reflection and self-critique, and he tended to be conscientiously egalitarian in his self-other positioning. Nonetheless it is evident that, like Brian above, Scott’s struggles to articulate a post-disappointed relationship that is not to some degree attenuated by difference between father and son.

The following two extracts constitute sequential portions of a single stretch of talk. In the first portion below, issues of similarity and difference are linked to the problem of ‘favoritism’ whilst in the second portion I introduce the notion of disappointment, and Scott works hard to articulate a relationship that, despite difference, is not marred by disappointment:

So I have no regrets, um – I mean the kids – the way they’ve turned out (.) So as I say (.) ja - agh it would be nice to have a son/ where (.) where it worried me before – which it worries me less now because I feel I have a nice relationship with Chris (.) is that (.) I

think that I am going to treat – I think it's – it's – I am going to be treating them differently because Trevor is outdoors, does want to go up the Berg, does want to go on the Otter Trail and do things with me (1) and I've decided (.) “Well look, I don't have to treat them (.) they don't want to be treated equally (.) they don't want the same things!” (.) and the fact that I go up the Berg say, with Trevor, or do things, um, (3) (sigh) uh, we just, I just have a different relationship with Chris, and I'm not going to feel guilty about treating them differently or/ or whatever (0.5) and that/ that has allayed a lot of my sort of anxiety about favoritism /that sort of thing/ because I could see / you could conceivably end up in a situation of favoritism, where / if you do have common interests with one child (.) and not much with the other (.) you know (.) you might be in their company more and you might enjoy doing things together and you could/you kn/favoritism.

I don't see/ um/ just feel uh, lucky or pleased that um I've got enough in common with Chris that (.) even if I go off to the mountains with Trevor (.) I've still got something in common with Chris (.) you know/ you know what I mean? I mean it could have been (.) um I can conceive that you could be unlucky enough to/for he and I not to have anything in common (1) but luckily we have (*ja*) (.) well I dunno if it's just luck or just sort of an inevitability or what (.) I don't know (1) but at least it seems to be – so that doesn't bother me too much (1) you know cause we certainly (.) I certainly will be doing things (.) in fact we're even planning a berg trip (.) “Chris do you want to go?” “No” hh doesn't want to. (*Ja*) (2)

In accordance with the focus of this theme, it is significant to note that similarity and difference provoke the issue of favoritism for Scott. The implication is that fathering similarity is easier and more enjoyable than fathering difference and it is evident that Scott works hard to construct a relationship with his different son that is equal to his relationship with his similar son.

Scott begins this extract as the entirely satisfied father (no regrets'). However he then shifts into a position as the disappointed father ('it would be nice to have a son where') which Scott associates with the dilemma of favoritism ('where it worried me before'). Saville Young (personal communication) suggests that a psychoanalytic register may be used to ask the question 'why this association here?' It is argued that Scott shifts the topic of his discourse from disappointment to favoritism because of his anxiety that similarity is associated to intimacy and

that he may feel some guilt that there is an element of preference in his relationships with his two sons.

Nonetheless, Scott's emphasis on the word 'before' as well as the phrase 'it worries me less now' relegate his concerns over favoritism to the past. Scott accounts for this relegation with the observation that he and his different son 'have a nice relationship'. However, as with Brian's orientation of 'respect' towards his 'naturally organized' son, the phrase 'nice relationship' does imply that Scott's relationship with his different son has been calibrated by disappointment. This sense of calibration may be contrasted with the spontaneity implicit to Scott's construction of his relationship with similarity, where father and son are unified through shared activity ('does want to go'; 'do things with me'; do things'). The difficulty faced by Scott is that of upholding his relationship with his different son when his similar son engages so much more of him as a father and man. Scott worries that he is going to 'treat' his sons differently but he then asserts that he will indeed be treating them differently ('I am going to be treating them differently'). The phrases 'they don't want to be treated equally' and 'they don't want the same things' give Scott a sound basis for his resolution, because the disparity in his fathering is based on what his sons 'want'.

Nonetheless, the three second pause, followed by a sigh, indicates that it is difficult for Scott to articulate just what his 'different relationship' with his different son is, and how it might match the quality of his relationship with his similar son. Consequently, Scott is left pointing away from guilt and the charge of favoritism ('and I'm not going to feel guilty'). To shore up his position as the father who does not show favoritism, Scott constructs a hypothetical scenario where the father does show favoritism towards his similar son. Here, Scott positions himself as a social commentator who looks on at a situation of favoritism based on 'common interests'. The pronouns 'you', 'one child', 'the other' and 'their' have the effect of distancing Scott's situation from such a scenario. Nonetheless, in this imagined scenario Scott associates similarity with 'being in their company', where the father is able to 'enjoy doing things together' which accounts for his moral predicament: that similarity has to do with intimacy and enjoyment.

In contrast, as the second paragraph indicates, difference comes with the worrying prospect of having nothing 'in common': an absence of attachment. Scott begins by distancing himself from this problem the basis that he has 'got enough in common' or 'something in common' with his

different son. Here the qualifiers ‘enough’ and ‘something’ indicate the constraining effects of disappointment, and link back to Scott’s earlier construction of his ‘nice relationship’ with his different son. At this point Scott invites his listener to endorse the quality of Scott’s bond with his son (‘you know what I mean?’). Scott then constructs a second hypothetical scenario where he and his son could be ‘unlucky enough... not to have anything in common’ which he again uses as a contrast that enables him to assert his bond with his son (‘but luckily we have’). However, the boldness of this self and son positioning is moderated by the phrase ‘it seems to be’ and Scott ends this paragraph less than entirely confident as the father of a different son (‘so that doesn’t bother me too much’). In contrast, Scott is more certain in his self and other positioning as the active father (‘I certainly will be doing things’) who must tolerate his different son’s negations (‘Chris, do you want to go?’ ‘No’).

Consequently, Scott ends the above paragraph in the position of the disappointed father and, as the following extract shows, I take this as an opportunity to make disappointment an overt focus of the conversation:

In a way (.) um (.) um (.) and it might sound an odd word (.) but I think it’s quite a common uh (.) uh (.) thing for us as dads to work through - we’re talking about the process of encountering disappointments and (.) and how (.) what one does with those (.) um (.) do you think that’s a fair (.) comment in terms of?

(2) Um, disappointment in my case (.) might even be slightly too strong a word (.) but yes it is something along the lines/ you/ it’s something that you sort of thought that you were going to have and then you haven’t (.) um (1) I suppose you could call it that (1) Maybe I’ve just sort of (1) sort of got an alternative that’s adequate/ adequate and so it doesn’t feel like a disappointment (.) I don’t know (.) do you know what I mean? Uh (.) it doesn’t – it hasn’t left a lingering feeling of disappointment (yes) it um (2) that’s why I say that it’s a bit too strong a word (.) but maybe that’s the origin of it – a sense of “I would have liked this but now I’ve got to (.)” uh (.) something of the same (.) ja something of the same flavor (.) (ja, somewhere in that field maybe) Ja (.) ja (.) that makes sense (1) Ja (.) Ja.

Um (.) but really (.) no – that is definitely too strong a word (.) because I don't feel a sense of uh (.) disappointment (.) I feel a sense of um (3) um (2) uh (.) sort of success (.) uh that given that we don't have those things in common (.) we've still managed to connect and (.) and um (.) enjoy each other's company (1) so (.) I don't have a - I'm not aware of having a lingering feeling of/of disappointment or anything (.) um (3) I don't think so (hh) (*hh ja*).

Again, my introduction to disappointment indicates the awkwardness of the topic. I begin by indexing away from the 'oddness' towards the commonality of disappointment, and the phrase 'for us dads' normalizes disappointment as I invite Scott to align with me and other fathers who also know disappointment. I go on to set the agenda for the talk (we're talking about...') but I don't finish my sentence because I do not want to say 'in terms of *you and Chris*'. It is evident that I am aware of the distastefulness of being disappointed and I don't want to risk Scott's censure. This may be read as an instance of dialogic repression (Billig, 1997).

Scott does in fact take up my invitation to join me as one of the disappointed 'dads' although not without making a qualification. Like other fathers in this sample, Scott is prepared to entertain being disappointed, but only because he is also able to construct a basis for his connection with his son. Thus disappointment is 'slightly too strong a word' because Scott has 'got an alternative that's adequate'. Because of this 'alternative' Scott argues that 'it doesn't feel like a disappointment'. This argument is akin to David and Brian's argument above, where disappointment is largely disavowed on the basis of 'love' or 'respect'. Again then, this indicates the dilemma of being disappointed, in that disappointment raise the spectre of detachment or disconnection from the son.

The phrase 'it hasn't left a lingering feeling of disappointment' relegates disappointment to the past, as does the phrase 'the origin of it'. On this basis – that disappointment holds no validity in the present – Scott constructs himself as a satisfied and in fact successful father. Scott and his different son have managed to 'connect' and 'enjoy' one another despite not sharing a base of similarity ('we don't have those things in common'). The phrase 'enjoy each other's company' serves as a rejoinder to his earlier observation that 'you' (the father) have a spontaneous propensity to be in the 'company' of, and 'enjoy doing things' with a similar son. However, Scott's conclusion to this extract does to some extent undercut his position as the non-

disappointed, successful father. Scott's repair ('I don't have a/ I'm not aware') keeps open the question of whether Scott is or isn't disappointed, as does the phrase 'I don't think so'. At this point Scott and I laugh, perhaps to cover over the potential embarrassment at this breach in Scott's satisfied, successful father position.

Jake

Like Scott, the primary theme of Jake's interview has to do with relinquishing early assumptions and intentions. However, in Jake's case, there is a strong coincidence between Jake's evolution as father and his ongoing renunciation of a hegemonic masculinity that Jake casts as destructive. In fact, as the extract below demonstrates, Jake manages issues of difference and disappointment by constructing his own version of the world as 'bad':

I also just used to worry that he would um (.) uh (.) I used to worry sometimes that maybe he was just too generous (.) you know (.) I kind of wanted to/I wanted him to just sort of (.) you know (.) just (.) fight a little bit more (.) but/and then I started to think "but that's what you were like" (.) you know (.) everything (.) I kind of got I had to fight for (.) it just/ an' I thought (.) you know (.) "I/I don't want him to have to fight the way I fought" (.) but it took me a little while to kind of come to grips/ you know/ I wanted him to be/at one stage I almost wanted to toughen him up (.) "hey I've gotta make him tougher now" you know (.) and then I realized that I was slipping/ you know my thinking was slipping into s/some old thoughts (*ah:*) (.) and that if he/ you know/ and if I'm just confident because to/ you know it's very easy/ cos I've been an very conflicted individual and you know (.) and complex and/ just because of perhaps how I was brought up/ and just everything for me has been just hard work (1) just you know (.) nothing at all has just fallen in my lap (.) I've had to grind and grind and grind and fight (*mm*) and you know when I was in the corporate world it was/ it was very competitive you know (.) and you just (.) you know (.) you didn't sabotage those around you but you didn't lift them up either (.) you know (.) because it was all about me (1) and kind of/ that was the world I was a part of (.)

And then I realized I don't want it to be like that (.) because there is another way (.) you know (1) I'm not always able to go (.) you know (.) "that's why the other way is better"

or (.) but I realize (.) and I look around and I go “Gosh” (.) you know (.) and I look at some of the great leaders in the world (.) who have been successful (.) they didn’t go through life the way I kind of/in my/ my thinking (.) so you know (.) he’ll be ok (.) you know (.) he’s gonna be just fine hey (1) you know (.) he- he uh – he’s (.) uh (.) grounded (.) he’s kind (.) you know (.) whose not gonna like a kind person? You know (.) me – I would – I would have probably taken advantage of people’s generosity (.) and so (.) you know (.) um (.) in my mind I’m thinking people are gonna take advantage of his generosity (*ja*), you know.

And so (.) for a while (.) you know (.) I’ve gone through all these like – they’re all me things (.) um (.) where a lot of my concerns have kind of come from (.) but for the most place I just know that um (.) uh (.) I’m comfortable with who he is (.) and I’m comfortable with the choices he’s making now

Jake begins by constructing his ‘worry’ regarding his ‘too generous’ son as a thing of the past. Jake then expands on his worry regarding generosity by indexing his desire for his son to ‘fight a little bit more’. This unusual coupling of adjectives defends against the notion that his son is weak. Instead, Jake wants to construct his son in positive terms and to sustain the argument that that his version is bad whilst his son’s version is good. Consequently, Jake is able to pull back from, or disqualify this worry because, as a ‘bad’ male, he was one who ‘fought’. This retraction is evident in the phrase ‘but/ and then I started to think “but that’s what you were like”’. In fact Jake constructs two reasons for not getting his son to fight, the first being that he wants to protect his son from a life of struggle and strife. Words and phrases such as ‘hard work’, ‘grind and grind’, ‘very competitive’ and ‘sabotage’ construct Jake’s world as damaging and hence Jake is partly the father who wants to protect his son from such a world (‘I don’t want him to have to fight’).

The second reason that Jake constructs for not making his son ‘tougher’ is that Jake’s son represents ‘another way’ of being a man, which Jake wants to warrant in this extract. Consequently, Jake positions himself as a man who has to monitor and manage his orthodox ‘old thoughts’ in order to countenance the new masculinity his son represents. This process seems central to Jake’s attachment to his different son: that Jake sets about *admiring* his son’s difference. However, it is evident that the process is not necessarily easy for Jake. The phrase

‘and if I’m just confident’ constructs Jake as a father who must tolerate letting go of what he knows in order to trust in what he does not know, this being his son’s version of the world. Thus Jake is the father who is ‘not always able to go, you know “that’s why the other way is better”’. In the second paragraph, Jake links his son’s ways with those of ‘some of the great leaders of the world’. Importantly, these ‘great leaders’ have ‘been successful’ which means that they can substitute for Jake and his way of ‘thinking’. Therefore, Jake is able to say that his son will be ‘ok’ and ‘just fine’.

Jake then turns to the task of positioning his different son. As with other fathers in this sample, it is not easy for Jake to construct the qualities of the different son, as indicated by the number of false starts in the phrase ‘you know (.) he-he uh – he’s (.) uh (.) grounded (.) he’s kind (.)’. The rhetorical question ‘whose not gonna like a kind person?’ bolsters the legitimacy of the son’s masculinity. However, Jake immediately undercuts this legitimacy by referencing what he knows, and this is a hegemonic masculinity that renders his son’s version vulnerable. There is the sense then, that in the process of recognizing his son, Jake has to suspend himself as an orthodox, hegemonic male (‘all me things’). This part of Jake is bracketed out of his fathering as he moves to locate a new basis for fathering (‘for the most place’) from where he is able to be ‘comfortable’ with who his son ‘is’ and the ‘choices he is making now’. This is a current, new version of fathering that recognizes his son’s agency as well as a version of masculinity that Jake does not really know. In fact, Jake constructs his son’s version as existing outside of his implicit knowledge, such that there is an ‘I’ position that remains uneasy regarding the legitimacy of his son’s ‘new man’ ways (‘in my mind I’m thinking people are going to take advantage of his generosity’).

6.1.4. Sameness

As is evident from the above extracts, difference is associated with challenge, reflection and adjusted fathering, whereas similarity is associated with enjoyment, understanding and spontaneous fathering. This subtheme focuses on the discursive work that goes into constructions of sameness, with some reflection on the possible unconscious investments in these constructions.

Douglas

A striking feature of Douglas's interview was his portrayal of his son as a 'replication' of himself. For Douglas, this replication is constructed as a basis for him to spontaneously enjoy his son and to do things with him. However, sameness also seems to occlude Douglas's ability to recognize his son as an independent other, even as it protects Douglas from the experience of disappointment. In the extract below, Douglas describes how he is able to identify with his son because his son 'replicates' Douglas's childhood:

He's quite an outward going guy (.) very different to the girls (.) obviously (.) boys and girls very different (1) um:: (.) very enthusiastic (.) you know (.) there's nothing that he doesn't want to grab or try and pretty much (.) you know it's almost like a/people say it's a replication of my childhood you know of also just looking for things to do (.) um (.) so it makes it easier for me to – to grab those things and it's given me the opportunity to – to do the things that I used to do as a kid all over again (*hm*)

Here the son is constructed as an extension of Douglas, reawakening Douglas's childhood self. In his early use of the word 'obviously', Douglas proposes a taken-for-granted binary view of gender difference consistent with Connell's (2005) notion of hegemonic masculinity and psychoanalytic notions of 'gender certainty' (Samuels, 1989). Douglas constructs his and his son's masculinity as a taken-for-granted approach to life, where both father and son assertively 'grab' and 'do'. Like other fathers in this sample, Douglas makes activity central to father and son intimacy. Douglas's use of extremes such as 'very' and 'nothing' position Douglas as an enthusiastic, wholehearted father. In contrast to the extracts above, here there is 'nothing' that Douglas's son doesn't want to try: it's an assertive, 'outward going' approach to life and Douglas identifies strongly with this. Sameness has made fathering his son 'easier' for Douglas and in fact it is constructed as an 'opportunity' for Douglas to identify with his son at a boy to boy level. The phrase 'do the things that I used to do as a kid all over again', constructs Douglas's fathering as implicit, whilst the word 'kid' denotes Douglas's enjoyment of the project.

Douglas's interview provides a good illustration of how difference and disappointment talk entails performances of masculinity. In the above extract, the phrase 'very different to the girls', establishes a way for Douglas to index what masculinity is. In the extract below, Douglas continues to use the framework of similarity and difference to account for the success of his fathering as well as his position as an orthodox man:

You know the-the girl lies here and watches a movie (.) whatever (.) that's what I expect (1) or if she wants a pink – pink hockey stick (.) that's what I expect (1) you know (.) she might want a blue hockey stick and shorts which is – then you deal with it differently – I don't know how I would have – I've been quite lucky in that um:: (.) he/ he/ he's just/ everyone says he's a real little boy um: (1) not to think that m-things would have been any different had he been different (.) I would have just had to adapt I think (.) which I probably would have battled with hey (.) I don't think I would have- it wouldn't have been easy for me (1) I don't think I would have (.) it wouldn't have been easy for me

Douglas relates to similarity and difference in distinctive ways. There is something dismissive in the phrase 'the girl lies here and watches a movie, whatever'. Douglas expects passivity from the feminine and he constructs a dismissive or disinterested orientation towards it ('whatever'). In his binary, hegemonic perspective, Douglas also seems to close down space for his daughters to identify with him. If 'the girl' wants a pink hockey stick then she stays within Douglas's expectations. However, should she 'want' to identify with her father, Douglas would be confounded ('I don't know how I would have - '). The 'I' that would 'battle' to 'adapt' to difference is positioned as entirely too masculine to brook difference, hence Douglas the father is 'lucky' that his son is not different. Douglas's masculinity is shored up by having a 'real little boy' and this is linked to the implication that father-son sameness coincides with implicit or automatic fathering. At the point of considering difference, Douglas retracts from his position as the 'lucky' father. Here, like other fathers in the sample, Douglas works to preserve connection in the face of difference: 'not to think that things would have been any different had he been different'. In the face of imagined difference, Douglas constructs two 'I' positions. As the father who wants to preserve connection, Douglas would have to 'adapt', but as the man, Douglas 'would have battled'.

The extract below follows directly after the extract above, as Douglas continues to reflect on the challenge of fathering difference. As argued above, Douglas uses the difficulty of dealing with difference to position himself as a 'real man'. In this next extract it is evident that Douglas extends the challenge of difference by constructing an imagined scenario where he is the father of a 'very effeminate' son. This discursive maneuver supports Connell's (2005) observation that feminizing labels are used to expel boys and men from circles of legitimate masculinity.

Furthermore, the contrast Douglas draws between his relationship with his son and this imagined father-effeminate son relationship highlights the effects that identification with sameness makes to the father-son bond as constructed by Douglas:

You know um (.) ja you s – it’s a – it’s a difficult one – we talk about it often with/ with mates who have got um (.) you know (.) good friend of ours’ older son is/ is very effeminate an/ and you know people talk about it and say (.) “D - How do you interact with him?” You do (.) you make a plan (.) he’s still a decent (.) nice guy and you know (.) if you need anything done you say to him “Hey boet (.) won’t you sort this?” and he’ll do it (1) my little guy (.) you know (.) might turn around and say “Nah, I’m busy playing” (1) so you sort of interact on a different level (.) you know (.) and you all get on (.) but ja

In turning to a ‘very effeminate’ boy, the question that Douglas poses is ‘how do you interact with him?’ Through ventriloquation, Douglas makes this question a normative question that ‘people talk about’. Douglas fashions a response to this question: ‘you make a plan’. This phrase denotes that, in dealing with difference the father is required to go beyond the ordinary, to stretch himself in order to meet the unexpected. The phrase ‘he’s still a decent, nice guy’ seems to echo Brian’s resolution that ‘at the end of the day’ he ‘respects’ his different son (see above). This strategy of approaching difference seems to incorporate relational distance and formality (‘you interact on a different level’) without the spontaneous gratification that identification with sameness brings. As with Brian’s son, who will ‘eat when he’s hungry’ and ‘sleep when he’s tired’, being ‘nice’ and compliant does not excite identificatory love in the father. Both fathers shift to a ‘different level’ where identification is lacking. Both fathers seem to take up a moral rather than personally invested father position and consequently, neither Douglas nor Brian is transformed by their interaction with difference. Rather, they are engaged in doing the right thing: acknowledging decency, niceness and responsibility all the while entrenching their investment in orthodox hegemonic masculinity. As the stereotypical boy, Douglas’s son is constructed as relationally assertive and even difficult (‘nah, I’m busy playing’) whilst the different boy is constructed as relationally compliant (‘and he’ll do it’). Thus, like John above, Douglas makes difference into a greater challenge for the father than bad behaviour.

After my interview with Douglas, I recorded the following field notes:

I found it easy to like Douglas. I understood his sense of humour: it reminded me of a kind of male off-handedness which feels very familiar to me. It's a minimizing humour with a vein of toughness running through it. I found myself enjoying the interview, often colluding with Douglas through this humour.

Evidently humour or laughing was a significant aspect of my intersubjective exchange with Douglas. I laughed with Douglas as a way of joining him in a particular performance of masculinity and I enjoyed the experience of being a 'like subject'. However, along with the enjoyment, I felt anxious. I felt that I should laugh at otherness if I was to connect with Douglas. My own pressure to be 'similar' to Douglas perhaps represents my unconscious positioning of him as the hegemonic male, with the prevailing threat that I would be inadequate or 'othered' as subordinate if I was found to be different. In this sense my laughter serves as a defense against my anxiety that, like Douglas's son, I may be discovered as not completely masculine: not a 'proper' man.

Certainly, there is evidence of Douglas refusing to recognize difference in his son. In the extract below, Douglas reworks his son's identification with the feminine into an acceptably distanced, masculine disposition:

Douglas (.) have you ever felt worried or frustrated by the sorts of choices or things that Kevin has done?

Um:: (.) I don't (.) I don't really think so hey (.) in his grade (.) out of choice (.) he'll say "No (.) I'm going to play at Susan's house" you know he's got other mates and his motor bike sits permanently at the Jones's house because he likes to go and ride because they've got a track there so he goes and plays there (.) but you know (.) if I said to him "Who do you want to go and play with today?" he's got this girl in his class (.) and I think it's such a good balance to have that (.) and the mother comes back and says "I've never met such a caring guy" and you know he'll help her do this and you know as a little guy I think it's such a strong trait to have

In the above extract Douglas is troubled by the fact that 'out of choice' his son will go and play at Susan's house. However, Douglas positions his son as a 'little guy' who is willing to 'help' Susan, so that even if he spends time with a girl, Kevin remains the dominant male. And even

though Kevin may, out of choice, go and play at Susan's house the word 'permanently' is linked to riding a 'motor bike', suggesting that this is where the son's primary desire belongs. The phrase 'good balance' maintains the son's masculinity despite his interest or involvement in feminine activities. Consequently, Kevin's relationship with Susan is constructed as an additional or extra attribute. The son is a real boy first and foremost, but he can also 'care' for Susan. This is at one remove from friendship. The son is still the 'strong' and independent male. Hearn (1999) argues that 'not caring' is defining of traditional masculinity and, by qualifying his son's caring as a 'strong trait' Douglas keeps his son within the ambit of acceptable masculinity. So Douglas constructs similarity and difference along gendered lines, and he is invested in relating to his son as a replica of himself. Douglas defends against being disappointed by his son's inclinations to identify with the feminine by constructing these as indexes of appropriate masculinity.

In the extract below, it is evident that similarity acts as a foil against disappointment because Douglas is able to identify with his son's foibles:

Um: (.) and this one is sort of a-an odd one (.) you may need to kind of think about it a bit (.) because uh (.) it can be sort of a bit unusual to think of in parenting (.) but have you ever felt kind of disappointed with some of your-your son's choices or actions? So that feeling of feeling disappointed (.) and if so (.) how/what have you done with this?

Um: (.) ja a couple of actions you get disappointed (.) but they are also the traits that you see that you had as a kid coming through in him (.) you know (.) a little temper tantrum every now and then (.) it obviously disappoints um:: ... but on the whole (.) not/ not too many things that have disappointed me (.) um:: no (.) I wouldn't say (.) no (3) I don't think so =mm= it's just – just little things (mm)

The above extract indicates once more the sensitivities involved in doing disappointment talk. Through the words 'odd' and 'unusual', I warn Douglas that I am going to introduce something controversial into our conversation and I use the phrase 'think about it a bit' in order to steer Douglas away from making a quick disavowal. The fact that I make disappointment 'unusual' to parenting signals my unconscious awareness of the scandal of disappointment: that it equals bad parenting or the shame of not loving the son. On reflection, my hesitancy at introducing

disappointment may also have been heightened because I was aware that disappointment would go against the grain of Douglas's narrative of enjoyment through sameness. In addition, as indicated below, to some extent I was part-participant with Douglas in exulting over hegemonic sameness.

In his response to my question, Douglas picks up my invitation to take 'actions' as a possible source of disappointment but Douglas is quick to remove any sense of import in his observations because ('but') his son shares his 'traits'. Thus Douglas's argument is that he is not disappointed because his son's 'temper tantrums' are glossed as further evidence that he and his son are the same. Furthermore, it could be argued that 'temper tantrums' fall safely within the ambit of acceptable assertive/aggressive masculinity, which makes it easier for Douglas to find these displays acceptable. In conclusion, Douglas settles on a position of not being disappointed because his son's foibles are constructed as 'just little things' such that who his son is – a real little boy, remains untarnished.

Returning to the field notes detailed above, it is argued that Douglas and I unconsciously colluded in performing a version of masculinity that occludes vulnerability and keeps difference and disappointment at bay. My enjoyment of Douglas coincides with the enjoyment Douglas attributes to a father-son relationship based on shared replications of hegemonic masculinity. Turning to his relationship with his father, Douglas says the following:

Ja (.) also (.) you know (.) um (1) very much um (.) hero worshipped him and his interests were my interests um (1) he was in the army so everything involved you know/you look at my homework from when I was six to twelve years old (.) every picture was a soldier um (.) and so you know we sort of fitted into his lifestyle (1) um (.) my folks got divorced when when he was – when I was six (.) so we were split between the two homes (1) but they/ they maintained a good relationship and so our time between them was split evenly (.) and we even spent/he used to join us for family Christmases and that (1) so that was quite a (.) different set up (.) but it worked very well (2)

Um: (.) as I (.) as he he grew older my dad (.) you know (.) then got married again and then he got divorced for a second time and that hit him quite hard – he basically lost everything (1) he was unmotivated (.) he then had a heart attack (.) he lost his job (1) so

his whole world sort of crumbled down (.) you know (.) around him (*hm!*) and we were then – I had left school when this whole thing unfolded so you almost become like a pillar – you sort of propping him (.) at the age of uh:: nineteen (.) so you’ve gotta be strong and be there for him (1) but you know he’s been unconditional in his support and love (.) and all of those things (.) you know (.) he’s never not been there for us (.) but he’s had/he’s had thirty quite sad years (*hm*)

You know he’s (.) he’s (.) he’s you know he’s still working now (1) um (.) he (.) he (.) um (.) you know he/ money doesn’t mean anything to a lot of people (.) but you know he came from quite a wealthy situation into (.) basically into poverty and he’s basically living month to month (*shoo!*) (2) which is quite hard for him (.) you know hey (.) he’s seventy odd (*hm hm hm*) (.) but you know my relationship with him has always been of respect (.) you know (.) I respect the guy (.) irrespective of where he is (.) what he does (.) um (.) although it’s b-(1) i-(1) you know (.) it’s been quite difficult

M:: lots of different seasons in a way Douglas

Ja it’s (.) it’s been one of those things where you just never know what’s round the next corner you know (.) he’s also one of those guys whose got uh (.) who doesn’t let the grass grow under his feet he/ he won’t sit in a job for longer than three years and we’ll say “Dad that’s a – that sounds like the perfect job” uh (.) two years later he’ll (.) look for something else (.) um: (1) and I – we’re pretty much all like that (.) you know none of us (.) sit around you know (.) we (.) you know (.) afternoon sleeps are something that we don’t (.) we don’t do (1) um (.) so there’s always something on the go you know (.) that that trait’s followed through with Kevin so (.) sort of I think it’s a Williams thing where you just keep/ keep running (*on the go* (.) *ja*) although I’m feeling a bit tired now hhh.
hhh.

In the first paragraph, Douglas’s early use of the word ‘also’ establishes the idea that he and his son share the same attitude to the father – an attitude characterized by identification and idealization (‘hero worshipped’; ‘his interests were my interests’). In this orthodox arrangement, the father dominates the son’s mind (‘every picture was a soldier’), the father establishes the way of being, and the son complies (‘we fitted into his lifestyle’). Then, at the age of six, Douglas’s

parents divorced. However, with the word ‘but’ Douglas directs his listener away from implications of difficulty or discord and towards Douglas’s construction of family cohesion (‘he used to join us for family Christmases and that’; ‘it worked very well’) which preserves Douglas’s idealization of the father figure as well as Douglas’s rationale for replicating his father’s ways.

There is a shift in the second paragraph, where Douglas becomes the young adult ‘propping’ his vulnerable father. The phrase ‘he got divorced for a second time’ undercuts the happy solution constructed in the first paragraph and Douglas’s father is constructed as vulnerable and un-heroic (‘that hit him quite hard’; ‘lost everything’; ‘a heart attack’). In an inversion of the first paragraph, the son becomes ‘like a pillar’ for his vulnerable father. Douglas’s use of the pronoun ‘you’ (‘you sort of propping him’) indicates that Douglas is somewhat detached from this position (as the son who supports a vulnerable father) and to some extent Douglas repairs his father’s standing by emphasizing his father’s ‘love’ and ‘unconditional support’.

This pattern is repeated in the final paragraph, where Douglas first positions his father as vulnerable, and in fact something of a failed man, but then repairs this by emphasizing his respect for his father. The phrase ‘irrespective of where he is, what he does’ seems to signify that Douglas is invested in preserving his father’s status. It is evident that Douglas struggles to conclude this paragraph, where there appears to be a ‘breach’ in his routine ‘egoic’ speech (Frosh & Saville Young, 2008). It seems that contemplating his father’s vulnerabilities and failings is difficult for Douglas and that he is more invested in his position as the idealizing son (‘my relationship with him has always been of respect’). It may also be argued that the position of ‘respect’ serves as a defense against disappointment, in that the position has the effect of shutting down the ambivalences and complexities Douglas details in the above narrative.

In the final paragraph, Douglas continues to reflect on his father’s struggles. The phrase ‘just never know what’s round the corner’ re-introduces uncertainty and insecurity into Douglas’s relationship with his father. The father is momentarily positioned as irresponsible, whilst Douglas and his brothers take up a mentoring/parental position (‘he won’t sit in a job for longer than three years, and we’ll say “Dad...perfect job!”). The phrase ‘two years later (.) he’ll look for something else’ implies that Douglas has actually been disappointed in his father, although the hesitations in Douglas’s talk signal that this is difficult territory for Douglas. In fact, Douglas

quickly moves to repair disappointment in his father, by turning flightiness into a trait that all of the males in the family share. This has the effect of normalizing his father's ways, as well as making them a part of the father's acceptable masculine identity. Masculine unification becomes a method of denying problematic behavior and vulnerability, as well as Douglas's disappointment in his father's failings. The father's ways are recast as part of the family's active, assertive, 'on the go' masculinity and Douglas is happy to admit his son to this circle.

The phrase 'Although I'm feeling a bit tired now!' provides an example of the way Douglas used humour in his interview. In this instance, Douglas's humour does at least two things: first, it prevents Douglas from seeming too earnest in his uptake of orthodox masculinity and second it promotes Douglas's toughness because he is able to laugh at tiredness. Consequently, our shared laughter is safely within the realms of orthodox masculinity because we collude in 'laughing off' vulnerability.

As Douglas implies at the very beginning of the above extract, Douglas is 'also' hero worshipped by his son. So Douglas, his father, and Douglas's son are united by idealized identifications. Certainly, in describing his relationship with Kevin below, it seems clear that Douglas is replicating the relational frame that he constructs between himself and his father. According to Schafer (1999, p. 1094) idealization has to do with unambivalent pleasure and "a denial of complexity". In the extract below, the idealization linking Douglas, his father and his son, seems to include a denial of the ambivalences and complexities that constitute disappointment:

I think (.) I think the best part is the/sort of emotional attachment (.) you know when (.) you know (.) everyone/everyone who – who meets me (.) who knows/who's known Kevin before (.) they say "Ah all he talks about is his dad" (1) so I think to me that's the best thing is that he/or/there's that same respect that I had for/ for my folks (.) or not even respect (.) it-it's almost like – like hero status (1) you know (.) he goes to school and they've got to talk about their hero and straight away he says "I'm talking about my dad" (.) and (.) you know (.) to me that's something where you sort of sit back and think (.) you know (.) "Well (.) you know (.) I've never - never really done anything other than being a dad" (1) but (.) you know the best thing you can be in the world is be a dad

And (.) you know (.) um (1) so that to me would be the best thing that if (.) you know he always says to me/ he says goodnight to me/ he says (.) “goodnight my best friend” you know (.) so we/ we are like best friends and (3) on a totally/ and it also gives you an opportunity to move to a level where you so in your comfort zone it’s scary (.) whereas with your friends you never know, unless you’ve got/ and I’ve got lots of good mates and they would never judge me (.) but other people that you (.) sit and interact with on business levels or/ or socially you/ you/ you’re always on a platform where people are judging you (1) it’s in people’s natures to judge people (1) an’ I think with/ with/ with a son (.) it takes you down to a level where there’s/ there’s no judging there boy (.) that/ that love from both sides is unconditional you know (.) and whatever he does (.) you know (.) it doesn’t make me think any worse of him (.) you know (1) whatever I do (.) it’s the same

The above extract constitutes Douglas’s response to the interview prompt to talk about his ‘best moment’ as father of Kevin. Douglas responds by foregrounding the ‘emotional attachment’ he and his son share. Here, the focus is on what the son does for the father, functioning as a mirror for the father. Douglas continues to construct his son as a replica of himself in that, as sons, both Douglas and his son grant exalted status to the ‘dad’. Interestingly, Douglas first uses the word ‘respect’ but then settles on the term ‘hero status’ in order to convey something of the substance of father-son ‘attachment’. This links to the argument made earlier: that participants use the word ‘respect’ to convey attachment to difference, whereas the term ‘hero status’ seems to connote idealized identifications and aspirations for sameness.

In the second paragraph, Douglas extends his construction of his attachment to his son, which he portrays as an ideal love. Douglas begins by constructing the relationship as a ‘best friend’ model which again evokes the element of boy-boy identification that fathers in this sample associate with sameness. Furthermore, Douglas constructs this love as ‘unconditional’ and he makes this a distinctive feature of the father-son relationship: it goes ‘down to a level’ where there is ‘no judging’. This argument makes implicit links to Douglas’s self and other positioning regarding his own father where, as the son, Douglas ‘respects’ his father ‘irrespective of where he is, what he does’. Like Jake above, Douglas distinguishes the father-son relationship from the performance-based versions that belong to the world of business. This distinction has the effect

of immunizing the father-son relationship from disappointment. Instead Douglas constructs a kind of loyalty-based relationship where father and son protect each other's worth: 'whatever he does... it doesn't make me think any worse of him... whatever I do (.) it's the same'. Both Douglas and his son serve the function of upholding their father's masculinity.

According to both Douglas and Jake, intimacy with the son is linked to diminished demand regarding masculine performance. However, in Douglas's case orthodox masculinity is shored up via the son's identifications with the father, whereas Jake is disappointed in his own version of masculinity and he accesses a 'kinder' version of masculinity via identifications with his different son.

6.2. Summary

The primary question guiding this research asks 'how do fathers describe their experiences and responses in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons?' The above excerpts show that most participants construct difference as an unexpected challenge which requires adjustment from them as fathers. Perhaps obviously, the process of reflecting on their sons sees participants positioning themselves in particular ways, both as men and as fathers. Connell (2005, p. 76) argues that constructions of masculinity involve the creation of a "circle of legitimacy" around the self and a distancing and rejection of those deemed 'other'. In the extracts above it is evident that most participants index sporting competence and orthodox masculine attributes in their self-positioning as men. However it is also evident that participants are careful in their negotiations of difference and that most take up various forms of 'accepting' positions as fathers of different sons. Indeed, it is evident that there are complexities and risks involved in disappointment talk. Being disappointed carries the risk of being positioned as a 'bad' father who does not love his son and participants respond by constructing varying justifications for their ongoing connections with their sons.

Being the father of a different son seems to entail vacillating between different subject positions, where positioning the self as man is distinguishable from positioning the self as father. This is evident in Nick's narrative, where the 'I' that was an A team player is surprised by the 'I' that does not have a problem with a son who plays in the C team. It is also evident that Angus references his self-positioning as man in order to gauge the legitimacy of his expectations as a

father. For fathers of different sons, being the father entails reflective negotiation of self investments as opposed to the perhaps more spontaneous and enthusiastic investments that coincide with sameness between father and son.

In some cases, being the father of a different son seems to induce a particular type of ‘new fathering’. However, whereas the ‘new father’ discourse is said to refer to close, warm, non - authoritarian versions of fathering, the new fathering described above refers primarily to acceptance of difference. Clearly, overcoming disappointment and accepting of difference does not necessarily coincide with warmth and recognition. Instead, the above excerpts suggest that acceptance of difference may coincide with intersubjective distance and even ‘othering’ (e.g. Douglas and the ‘effeminate’ boy). However, it is also evident that participants are troubled by their experiences of intersubjective ‘distance’ (e.g. Scott and David) and that restoring or maintaining connection is important to many in this sample of fathers. For Scott, Nick, Brian and David, difference presents an opportunity to recognize the son as an independent other who won’t be colonized. These fathers articulate the rupture of difference, the threat of detachment that this brings, and their attempts at restoring connection with and recognizing the negating other. However it is evident that these fathers construct resolutions that are inflected with disappointment and that therefore, these resolutions remain provisional – something that the new father is always reaching towards.

Freud (cited in Hall, 1996) distinguished between ‘being’ and ‘having’ the other, and Douglas’s interview portrays some of the potent gratifications available when father and son can ‘be’ like each other. For Douglas, sameness facilitates an idealized father-son relationship, which Douglas defends by denying difference and disappointment. Certainly, Douglas appears to enjoy the status of being the heroic father. However, it is also evident that Douglas shares a boy to boy, ‘best friend’ identification with his son, and that this is a significant source of gratification. Thus in one sense Douglas is the ideal new father because his relationship is characterized by involvement and warmth. However, it is clear that this father-son relationship shores up traditional masculinity and it is also evident that Douglas struggles to recognize his son as ‘other’. As indicated in chapter two, Benjamin (1998) distinguishes between identification and incorporation on the basis that identification preserves and values the independence/difference of the other whereas incorporation involves a taking in of the other until it “becomes a part of the

self and is no longer psychically distinct” (Frosh, 2010, p. 111). The frequency with which Douglas references similarities with himself in order to understand his son suggests a lack of psychic distinction, and there is no doubting the gratification that Douglas derives from ‘sameness’. There is the sense then, that to the extent that Douglas incorporates his son as an ideal, he is unable to recognize him as other.

It is the gratification of sameness that seems to be missing from the accounts of other participants in their experiences of being the father of a different son. The accepting positions articulated by Scott, David and Nick serve as a something of a foil for disappointment, although it is evident that disappointment is not entirely quelled. However, it appears that, for these men, the accepting position does restore the connection between father and son, even if joint productions of identity are not possible. This is perhaps evident in Nick’s intriguing phrase “I think you love them no matter what they do”. Nonetheless, David’s tears and Scott’s phrase “I would have liked” indicate that maintaining connection with difference does entail something of a Kleinian mourning: an acceptance that, as the father of a different son, one cannot have it all (Frosh, 2012). If disappointment talk constitutes prohibited speech (Billig, 1997), then it may be argued that both hopes for and hostilities towards the disappointing son are split off from every-day awareness and that unconscious loss may lie within the accepting position.

Brian, Douglas and Jake’s interviews reveal something of the interplay between investments in masculinity and fathering a disappointing son. In Brian’s case, it appears that his investment in traditional masculinity means that difference is approached with ‘respect’ rather than identification, and that Brian is reluctant to overturn his ‘version of the world’. In Douglas’s case, he imagines that fathering an ‘effeminate’ son would be ‘difficult’ and that he would have to relate to this son on a ‘different level’. With the claim ‘he’s still a decent, nice guy’ Douglas takes up a position towards difference that, like Brian’s position of ‘respect’ may be read as a disavowal of disappointment rather than identification with difference. In contrast, what sets Jake’s interview apart is his rejection of his historical version of masculinity (what he calls his ‘old thoughts’), and his identification with his son’s version of masculinity, such that he is able to be the ‘same’ as his different son.

From Benjamin’s (1998) intersubjective perspective, recognition emerges out of an ongoing interplay between perceptions of similarity and difference. The other is only related to as subject

(as opposed to object) when this paradox is negotiated. Recognition depends on an appreciation of the resolute difference of the other, but recognition also requires the acceptance of similarities with the other as a separate center of consciousness. Therefore, it may be argued that constructions of similarity and difference are fundamental to tracking the presence of recognition in fathers' talk. Where similarity is reduced to sameness, and where difference is repudiated as deviance, the inter-subjective tension required for recognition dissipates. In the wake of the disappointment of difference, some of the above fathers take up positions of 'acceptance' that seem to illustrate the intersubjective tension of recognition (e.g. Scott). However, as Brian and Douglas illustrate, it is also evident that 'acceptance' or 'respect' can form part of a hegemonic process of maintaining a particular 'circle of legitimacy'.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MAKING AN EFFORT

As indicated in the previous chapter, in constructing similarities and differences, many participants tended to index personal characteristics of themselves and their sons, with obvious implications regarding acceptable versions of masculinity. Traditional psychoanalytic theory posits that physicality is an important dimension of the father-son bond. For example, Diamond (2007) proposes that “a boy embarks on forming his sense of masculinity largely by identifying with his father’s physicality, modulated aggression, autonomy, and eagerness to explore” (p. 72). This chapter foregrounds the expectations expressed by fathers regarding the types of characteristics, attitudes and orientations they hoped to see or develop in their sons. As the title indicates, participants typically referenced the issue of ‘effort’ as a desirable orientation and one that that they wanted their sons to display. As a study of difference and disappointment, particular attention is given to fathers’ accounts where sons fail to show requisite effort.

Consistent with previous studies, participants frequently referenced the world of sports in constructing themselves as fathers of sons. Previous research has found that fathers are inclined to encourage assertive, independent and goal oriented behavior in their children (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Lamb & Lewis, 2004). Research has also shown that parents view their children’s sports involvement as opportunities for inculcating appropriate attitudes and values (Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012). In this sense, promoting effort forms part of the discourse of good fathering, where the father takes up a traditional ‘moral teacher’ position (Williams, 2008; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2010).

However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity foregrounds the notion of ‘dominant acceptability norms’ (Joseph & Lindegger, 2007) and the idea that fathering takes place within a framework of a hegemonic hierarchy of masculinities. Because it operates as a ‘fantastical’ ideal (Frosh, 1994), hegemonic masculinity may constitute some of the fantasies and hopes that fathers hold for their sons, if only they would ‘make an effort’. Furthermore, from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, only certain attitudes or preferences are given legitimacy, such that ‘making an effort’ in the world of sport may constitute complicity with hegemonic masculinity.

Because it establishes hierarchies of acceptability, hegemonic masculinity also places men under the constant threat of falling short of the hegemonic ideal and being ‘othered’ as subordinate. Thus vulnerability is inherent to hegemonic masculinity, because of the constant threat that one will be found wanting and therefore shamed (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009). Thus the son who won’t make an effort on the sports field may bring shame to the father who is watching on the sidelines, because the son (and by association the father) fails to display acceptable masculinity norms.

From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, an insistence on ‘effort’ may signify the father relating to the son as an object in order to satisfy his own fantasies. According to Benjamin (1995) “from the intersubjective standpoint, all fantasy is the negation of the real other, whether its content is negative or idealized” (p. 45). In thrall of his own fantasies regarding what the son could achieve, the father may expect his son, as an extension of himself, to identify with these fantasies, experiencing significant disappointment and frustration if the son fails to comply. The son who doesn’t or, in particular, refuses to make an effort provides a challenge to the father’s omnipotence, forcing him to see the limitations of his self and to confront the fact that his son is not his object. The son has his own reality and his ‘own center’ (Benjamin, 1995, p.39). In confronting the limits of his assertions, the disappointed father has an opportunity to go beyond his fantasies and to appreciate his son as different. Clearly however, disappointment of fantasies may result in retaliation, intensified assertions, or withdrawal and rejection (Schafer, 1999; Zeelenberg et al. 2000).

Stern’s (1985) concept of ‘selective attunement’ provides an additional perspective on this theme, because the concept places emphasis on what Stern (ibid. p. 208) terms the ‘internal state’ of the child, and (as indicated in chapter two) those states that fall “inside or outside the pale” of parental acceptance. According to Stern (ibid.) attunements are “one of the main vehicles for the influence of parents’ fantasies about their infants” (p. 207). For the purposes of this theme, the concept of selective attunement foregrounds the notion that fathers are selective regarding the kinds of subjective experiences they want to see in their sons, and that this selectivity is informed by the fathers’ “desires, fears, prohibitions and fantasies” (ibid. p. 208). Effort, in its various guises, may be considered an ‘internal state’ given priority by this sample of fathers, primarily because it enables acceptable or desirable versions of success and achievement.

7.1. Analysis of Data

As evidenced below, participants tended to construct ‘making an effort’ as a requisite ethic, and readily identified themselves as ‘disappointed’ when their sons don’t take up this attitude.

‘Making an effort’ was constructed as ‘common sense’ or as a ‘winning argument’ (Edley & Wetherell, 1999) that justified being disappointed as the good parent. Based on this taken-for-granted argument, participants positioned themselves as especially disappointed when it was deemed that their sons have potential, but would not use it.

Many participants tended to extol the notion of physical effort and were generally critical of and disparaging towards physical passivity. Although participants seemed comfortable moralizing about effort, in some instances participant talk elided into hegemonic discourses regarding whether or not their sons were acceptably masculine, possessing qualities such as ‘animal instinct’ or ‘killer instinct’ and a disregard for their physical selves. Consequently, participants enacted hegemonic masculinity by constructing a taken for granted hierarchy, where those with ‘drive’ and the will to achieve were positioned at the apex of acceptable masculinity, whilst physically passive boys (in some instances their different sons) were seen as ‘other’, and positioned as subordinate (Connell, 2005).

7.1.1. Falling short

Reflexive Notes:

So here I sit, in Quinton’s plush waiting room. I’ve been offered tea by a well-groomed secretary. On the coffee table in front of me lies a pile of financial magazines and two school magazines; the alma mater of the senior partners at this firm. I feel out of place, bringing psychology, and talk of parenting, to such a place. I check to see whether my shoes are scuffed.

As the field notes above indicate, I entered many interviews expecting the participant to be dismissive of my project: that it would be viewed as an inconvenience, out of place in the serious world of ‘real’ work. Many of the buildings I visited were rather imposing, and spoke of power and wealth. I felt out of place as a psychologist, with my interest in family relationships. I felt ‘other’, feminized, with a nagging anxiety that I have avoided a male rite comprising the

corporate world, competition and success. I find myself identifying with the different sons; that like them, I am failing somehow.

Quinton

The above sentiments were evident both before and during parts of Quinton's interview. It must be said, however, that I was surprised by how eager Quinton was to talk about his son, and his experiences of being a father. This reveals a prejudice that I have carried into this research: a certain defensive disparagement of men's capacity to parent. At the same time, I was unnerved by Quinton's resolute investment in being 'competitive'. During the course of our interview this attitude or 'internal state' was associated with success. As indicated above, I have carried my own anxieties regarding success into my interviews with these men and these were particularly active during the following stretch of talk:

I'm fiercely competitive (1) everything th/that I've done on the sports field (.) except for riding my bicycle (.) is hugely competitive (*mm*) (.) so (.) kind of all through school (.) um (.) and until we had children (.) all the sport that I played was at the highest level (*mm*) and that was also the product of hard work (.) so the discipline of training, of competing, was never a problem for me (.) and I love to compete (.) um(.) I really do

Here Quinton strongly identifies himself as competitive. I felt that there was something implacable to Quinton's 'fiercely competitive' position. It seems to summon up a particularly combative energy that I experienced as a threat to my own adequacy. The phrase 'highest level' shows how Quinton links hierarchy and success with being 'fiercely competitive'. I couldn't help fearing that Quinton was being 'fiercely competitive' with me – a competition I would lose because I had failed to play at the 'highest level'. This seems to be an instantiation of hegemonic masculinity – an interactional moment where a clear hierarchy of masculinities is established. I remember becoming noticeably nervous at certain moments during this interview, and this was one such moment. I found myself unable to identify with Quinton at this point and I feared that my face, voice or body would betray this. I became rather distressed, fearing (I think) the disdain, shame, and relational rupture that would follow if Quinton were to perceive this. Perhaps this is what it feels like when one anticipates the prospect of disappointing another: that relational rupture, rejection and shame are imminent.

Based on my reflexive account, one might ask what space is left for a son to be other when his father so strongly identifies with the values and aspirations of hegemonic masculinity. To be other is to risk shame as well as the relational rupture that comes with disappointing ‘fierce’ expectations of similarity. It is far safer to take up a position of complicit silence as I did in the above exchange. In the extract below, Quinton reflects on his son’s attitude towards being competitive, in the process blending his own ‘version of the world’ with that of his son’s:

Um, on the/on the s/sports field he wants to do well (*ja*) you know he does want to do well (.) he does want to compete (.) um (.) but I/ I’m not yet sure (2) to what degree (.) you know I mean I/ I think that’s something that will come in the next three or four years (*ja, ja*) (1) But (.) I’ve certainly instilled in him the fact that you just give it horns when you participate (.) but thereafter you’ve just got to put that behind you (.) and you’ve got to be able to interact with the people you’ve played with and against (*ja, ja*) (1) And I think that that’s slowly coming through

Analysis of Quinton’s opening sentence indicates that Quinton himself ‘wants’ to assert that his son ‘wants to do well’. The repetition of the phrase ‘he wants to’, together with Quinton’s shifting emphases (‘he wants to do well’...‘he does want to do well’) suggests that Quinton is uncertain of this claim. The phrase ‘you know’ sees Quinton inviting his listener to endorse his observation, however, Quinton then underscores his uncertainty with the phrase ‘I’m not yet sure (2) to what degree’. Quinton goes on to construct his son’s ambivalence as a sign of the son’s young age. Thus Quinton is protected from being disappointed in his son’s possible difference, because the right attitude will ‘come in the next three or four years’. Quinton also reassures himself and his listener that, as the father, he has ‘certainly instilled in him the fact that you just give it horns when you participate’. Quinton concludes this extract by referencing broader attitudes and values that constitute sports culture, endorsing Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik’s (2012) research which finds that parents view sports participation as an opportunity for learning what the authors refer to as “sports values”.

However, the ‘give it horns’ attitude is constructed as a taken-for-granted attitude (‘certainly’) which signifies its hegemonic status. The word ‘horns’ denotes an animalistic attitude that some of the participants wanted their sons to display. According to Glaser and Frosh (cited in Frosh, 1994), traditional masculinity “focuses on dominance and independence, an orientation to the

world which is active and assertive, which valorizes competitiveness and turns its face from intimacy, achieving esteem in the glorification of force” (pp. 2-3). It seems that a ‘give it horns’ attitude approximates this traditional version of masculinity that some of the fathers take up for themselves and expect from their sons. As is evident in the extracts below, the absence of this active, animal attitude is indexed as cause for disappointment by some of the participants, prompting a dilemma regarding how they should respond as good fathers.

Angus

In the extract below Angus turns to his son’s unacceptable attitude on the Rugby field. Angus shifts between father positions, from the moral guide, to the hegemonic father, to the supportive father who restrains his expectations of his son:

I’ve been hugely frustrated with Steven from a Rugby point of view for example/ cos he just doesn’t tackle hhh. you know? And I/I find him a bit selfish um (.) with the ball (.) an/and I think that’s probably a stage they at because I have seen quite a number of the other kids be exactly the same/they’re very selfish, once they get the ball (.) they don’t look for support they just run (1) And I’m not a great Rugby player / I never have been / but at that level (.) you know (.) you don’t have to be a great Rugby player to be able to say “you should be doing this or that or the next thing” (1) And um (.) so (.) you know I have commented to him / I have talked to him about tackling (.) um (1) but ag it’s fortunate Rugby’s over now (.) but I got to the point where eventually I just kind of tried to back off (.) because I just thought ‘it’s not/ you know / you’re just dakking on him’ you know (.) every time he (.) I mean Steven was a classic hey Rob (.) you know (.) he would/ he played full back (.) and basically he/ he would run backwards down the field shouting ‘Tackle him, tackle him! Hey Luke tackle him! (hhh.) Ben (.) get him (.) get him!’ while he was bloody running backwards down the field so he didn’t have to tackle him (.) you know an I would say to him ‘Steven, no, you go an’ flippin get him!’ you know

But eventually I just thought ‘Ag Angus (.) you’re just wasting your time’ you know (.) ‘He’s a little boy/ just-just leave him’ (1) Um (.) and/ and then I you know (.) I sort of tried to comment on the more sort of positive aspects of the game and just say ‘Well tried

boy' you know (.) um (.) 'I/I don't think you guys had a great game (.) um (.) I think (.) you know (.) there were aspects that / that could have been better (.) but I think (.) you did/ you did ok (.) you know (.) and I think (.) for the most part you/you tried hard' um (.) so ja I do find it frustrating sometimes

Angus begins this excerpt by positioning himself as 'hugely frustrated', and he invites his listener to identify with his position ('you know!'). Angus then shifts to a moral teacher position regarding the ethic of 'selfishness'. This move offsets Angus's earlier and more intense investment in being frustrated with his son. Angus then goes on to normalize the situation, as his son is 'exactly the same' as 'other kids'. Angus then positions himself as a competent man who knows enough about Rugby to be able to 'you should be doing this or that' to his son. The words 'commented' and 'talked' position Angus as the reasonable and supportive father who is in control of his own desires.

However, Angus then reverts to the frustrated position, where the issue of not tackling comes between father and son ('it's fortunate Rugby's over now') and here Angus vacillates between intersubjective assertion and disappointed withdrawal ('I just kind of tried to back off'; 'you're just dacking on him'). Angus accounts for his frustration and disappointment by constructing a narrative where the son is shamefully passive and avoidant ('bloody running backwards'). The phrase 'you're just wasting your time' indicates that, in the face of disappointment, Angus withdraws from his son. With the phrase 'he's a little boy, just leave him', Angus shifts the morality of his argument, from the shame of passivity to the shame of asserting oneself on a young child. The phrase could also imply that Angus restrains himself as the father because he recognises his son's young age and vulnerability. However, it is evident that Angus's assertions have not vanished, because his revised father position comprises a combination of support and criticism. Angus encourages his son with what may best be described as 'faint praise' ('you did ok'; 'for the most part, you tried hard') and it is evident that he concludes the paragraph as the disappointed father ('so ja I do find it frustrating sometimes'). It seems then, that the father who 'just leaves' the 'little boy', suspends rather than overturns his hegemonic assertions. As is evident below, other fathers in this sample also reference the son's young age as a strategy of preserving hope and warding off disappointment.

Both of the above extracts show the father negotiating the fact that his son falls short of an appropriately competitive, aggressive attitude. As a point of triangulation, my field notes suggest that these competitive, aggressive attitudes constitute ‘dominant acceptability norms’ (Joseph & Lindegger, 2007) that are enforced through the threat of shame. In both instances, the fathers index their sons’ young age in order to account for the sons’ current shortcomings and this has the effect of deflecting disappointment and preserving the hope that the son will take up this attitude in time.

7.1.2. Good fathering and ‘the big rule’ of effort

As indicated above, many participants took up the ‘moral of effort’ as a discursive repertoire that accounted for their positions as disappointed fathers. Typically, participants constructed themselves as united with their wives regarding the importance of effort. The morality of the position was usually bolstered by separating effort from performance. In other words, whilst participants were ready to align themselves with the expectation of effort, participants tended to detach this expectation from the expectation that their sons should be successful. In fact, participants actively distanced themselves from this latter expectation.

Angus

In the extract below, Angus illustrates some of the above features. It is evident that it is not easy for Angus to separate the ethic of effort from the issue of performance and that, in Angus’s case, there is a linguistic link between his son’s achievements and Angus’s self-identification as a ‘relatively competitive person’:

Um:: we always (.) Nicole and I have always stressed with our children/ we don’t care/ it’s a huge thing in the Smith household/ we don’t care about the result (.) we care about effort (.) ok (1) So we’ve always said to our children (.) “We care less about where you come – wonderful if you do well – we’ll celebrate with you and we’ll enjoy your success with you (1) But frankly we don’t care if you come bone last” (.) So/ and / and we/ we’re blessed (.) in that I’m a relatively competitive person and our children have been blessed because they’ve been average or slightly above average (1) They’re not at the top of their (.) tree in anything, but they certainly are in the top third (.) probably as a general statement in terms of whatever they do (.) and we’re blessed with that because they’ve

had success to - to a moderate level in – in what they've done (1) Um: so we've always emphasized the issue of "get amongst them (.) get involved (.) but what you do with that afterwards (.) we don't mind (1) But give it a go (.) Give it a full effort.

In the opening sentence Angus positions himself and his wife as standing together regarding the moral of 'effort' ('Nicole and I have always stressed'). From this joint parenting position, Angus demotes the value of 'the result', something that he emphasizes through the phrase 'bone last'. In fact, Angus makes achievement something that really only matters to the children which is why he and Nicole, as loving parents, are happy to make something of a fuss ('wonderful if you do well, we'll celebrate with you, and we'll enjoy your success with you'). However, following the phrase 'bone last', Angus shifts from the non-competitive co-parent position towards the first exclusive father position of the extract – and it's as 'a relatively competitive person'. Thus Angus sets himself apart (from the mother) as the 'relatively competitive' father. It may be inferred that, from the 'relatively competitive' position, Angus doesn't want his children to come 'bone last', although the word 'relatively' moderates Angus's investment in this position. Furthermore, the word 'blessed' positions Angus as accepting what comes his way without having to assert his competitiveness as the father. Angus then goes into a series of comparative and competitive reflections ('average or slightly above'; 'top of their tree'; 'top third') which establish the notion of hierarchy. Angus is careful about pegging his children's performances because he is primarily engaged in constructing a 'moral of effort' discourse, where hierarchy is supposed to be irrelevant. However, for the 'I' that is 'relatively competitive', effort and performances are linked.

With the phrase 'Um, so', Angus drops the notion of achievement ('what they've done') and reasserts his main point: that he and his wife want effort ('get amongst them') but that he and his wife don't care about achievement ('we don't mind'). Angus's repeated use of the pronoun 'we' re-emphasizes his alignment with his wife in the 'moral of effort' position. In this position, Angus reaffirms the definite expectations that he and his wife hold.

Nick

In the extract below, Nick also openly proclaims his 'philosophy' regarding effort as well as the fact that he and his wife share this philosophy ('we both'). However, in contrast to Angus's

extract above, the clear distinction that Nick makes between effort and performance is linked to his own transition as a father of a different son:

I mean we both have the same philosophy when it comes to activities (.). So long as you do it (.). and you can't give up (.). you know (.). that's our rule (1) If you wanna do something that's fine (.). you do it (1) But you're not giving up (.). If you come a week later and you say 'No Dad I don't like this' tough (.). You've elected to do it (.). you're gonna do it-you'll see it through (*mm*) I don't care whether you like it or dislike it. Um: (.). so (.). although we (.). as I said (.). we don't (.). stand over them and push them (.). we do insist on certain rules that they/that they go by um: (.). Because you know I think one of the worst things is (.). lack of commitment in- in- people (.). in general (.). and I think a lot of that stems from the way they were brought up (1) I think if you can instill that commitment and discipline (.). and (.). and determination in somebody (.). then it will see them through for the rest of their lives in whatever they do (1) So that/that's really all we try and instill is that basic discipline.

As is evident above, Nick makes the 'rule' preminent: a shared parenting perspective. Nick constructs an imagined father-son exchange where he is positioned as morally bold ('tough! ... I don't care whether you like it or dislike it'). At the same time, Nick discards expectations regarding what the children should do ('whatever they do') as well as expectations regarding performance ('we don't (.). stand over them and push them'). Nick warrants his position on effort by describing the benefits that the ethic will bring to his son ('then it will see them through for the rest of their lives'). In the final line, Nick's emphasis on the word 'all' suggests that he is mindful of other possible expectations, but that his parenting has been pared down to the essentials: a 'basic discipline' that Nick indexes as a taken-for-granted requirement.

One conversational turn later, I take up Nick's distinction between effort and performance, and position him as the father who is 'gratified' by his son's acceptable attitude. Perhaps because I foreground his own gratification and 'pleasure as a dad', Nick responds by re-emphasizing his distinction between effort and achievement, which he goes on to link to the need to protect his son's enthusiasm and enjoyment:

Ja (.) and as you/as you watch Dylan playing his Cricket (.) maybe that's what gratifies you Nick (.) is that it's not really about the team (.) but you see him kind of going for it-he's in the game (mm) and that gives you pleasure as a dad

Ja (.) and I think it's important for him to be in the team (.) I/ I/ I don't know if you mean that (.) that by the A team or the team dynamics? =You, you were saying earlier that it didn't matter that he wasn't in the A team =oh yes (.) ja = and you were just pleased to watch him =that he's there (.) ja

No – no that's what/you know it's commitment that I want to see and/and/ because at the end of the day we/we are all given certain um: limitations you know (.) and you can only perform within those limitations or/or abilities or whatever you want to call them so I don't expect him to perform out of his capabilities you know (.) he can only perform within those capabilities-having put in the effort (1) So:: ja (.) to see him enthusiastic about playing and enjoying playing (.) and wanting to play in the future gives me much more pleasure than let's say he was in the A team (.) but he was out of his depth (mm) he:: wasn't really enjoying it because he was uncomfortable (mm, mm) and didn't really wanna play again, but it was just a prestige thing for him because he can say 'I'm in the A team' (ja) (1) I'd much rather he be in the C team and be happy than be in the A team and be unhappy (ja)

Although (.) I'm not the sort of father that it would make me happy to/ I can say 'he's in the A team' so/ and that is something I've surprised myself in (.) because I thought I would be the sort of father that (.) insisted he was in the A team, but I've found that when it comes to one's own children you often change your values and you adapt so-

What do you think that was for you Nick, when you think back to that shift?

I think it's because you want to see your child happy (mm) um (.) you know (.) I don't want to see him unhappy (.) I know if I put too much pressure on him that will make him unhappy (1) And if he's in a position where he's out of his (.) capabilities and out of his comfort zone (.) he will be unhappy and I don't want to see that. *No I respect that-ja.*

The opening exchange between Nick and I see him defending against the desire that his son play for the 'A team'. It could be argued that, by using words such as 'gratifies' and 'pleasure', I trigger the notion of illicit paternal desires. Nevertheless, it is evident that, whilst expectations regarding 'commitment' and 'effort' remain, Nick foregrounds his own realization of his son's 'limitations'. This realization moderates what Nick can expect of his son ('I don't expect him to perform outside of his capabilities, you know'). Nick, like Brian in the previous chapter, constructs this realization as a position of acceptance that he has reached as the father ('at the end of the day') and this meta-perspective serves as a foil against disappointment.

Nick then shifts ('So::: ja') to a father position from where he derives 'pleasure' from recognizing his son's enthusiasm and enjoyment. To account for his position, Nick constructs a scenario where his son 'was in the A team', but without enjoyment because he was 'out of his depth'. Nick then introduces the notion of 'prestige' as a social benefit of being able to say 'I'm in the A team'. As indicated in the previous chapter, Nick is able to claim this prestige for himself. However, as the father, Nick makes his son's happiness paramount ('I'd much rather he be in the C team and be happy').

Nick then distances himself from fathers who derive pleasure and prestige from their sons' performances ('I'm not the sort of father'). As in the previous chapter, Nick the man is surprised by Nick the father ('I've surprised myself'). As the father, Nick has been changed by his different son ('you often change your values and you adapt'). It seems that Nick's recognition of his son's 'internal state' has generated this adaptation. Nick wants to 'see' that his son is 'happy' and he is mindful that his own assertions could hurt his son ('I know if I put too much pressure on him that will make him unhappy'). Twice Nick places emphasis on the pronoun 'him', which foregrounds his son's reality, while the phrase 'your child' positions Nick as a parent with responsibilities. Hence it may be argued that Nick instantiates new fathering in that care for the child is placed ahead of the injunctions of traditional masculinity. From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, it may be said that Nick represses intrapsychic desire in the process of recognizing his son's reality.

Scott

Scott provides something of an exception to the above findings, in that he suspends the ‘big rule’ of effort in order to preserve his relationship with his different son. Scott is the father of two sons and, as with other participants, Scott makes difference the basis for his selection of Chris as the more ‘challenging’ of his two sons. As is evident below, Scott indexes ‘effort’ or ‘trying’ as the distinguishing characteristics, which for Scott make for ‘a lot’ of difference between himself and his son:

So the way that I’ve normally started this is to say just for starters (.) tell me about um (.) Chris as you experience him?

um, he’s (.) I think where we’ve differed a lot is which/I think I see myself as a person who//who does a lot of trying (.) you know for example at school, at some stage I decided to work hard um (.) worked hard- I was a (.) an academic and then (.) I tend to put effort into things (.) whereas he’s um (2) I get the impression he/he’s just effort is not/sustained effort/he’s a bright kid, um but he doesn’t (.) if things bore him or if it takes a lot of effort he doesn’t do that (1) So that/that started out as a (.) problem – ‘Try harder!’

And I – quite a long time ago I came to the conclusion that (1) um (.) it’s there’s – no (.) in fact somebody put it very well but um (.) and I can’t remember exactly (.) there’s no rule that says you have to try your best or try your hardest” and that sort of – I thought - ”ok (.) there isn’t some/some big rule out there that says you have got to always put in the effort and try hard” (1) So then I thought “well (.) ok (.) Chris (1) hasn’t got that (.) desire to put in effort and so on – then that’s him and I just accept him for that” (1) Now once I reached that sort of conclusion (.) which didn’t - wasn’t a sort of major conclusion (.) it’s may/ it/ it wasn’t sort of like earth shattering (.) um (.) but once it sort of reached that – you accepted that (.) it – it has made life easier (.) you know (.) Because now (.) if you don’t try, I say “well (.) that’s you – that’s how you do it (.) there’s a – there are certain minimums you have to do (.) And we keep changing (.) You know (.) for example (.) for a long – for years I’ve tried/I thought “well let me set the example” (.) I don’t ask the kids to do things or what – I just do them (.) and if they-they see how I u- act around the house and do chores and things like that (.) Um (.) I’ve become more (.) assertive I would say

(.) lately (.) I will say “hey no – this is a training period – you’ve gotta – you’re a part of the family – you do your share”

Um (.) so that’s more recent (.) um (.) so (.) I’m getting le/in a sense I’ve accepted that he doesn’t have an innate striving drive to/to/ and effort is not him (.) um (.) um (.) so have accepted that (.) but now still putting more pressure on him to do things you s/you know/I don’t know/does that make sense? *Ja*

Um: (3) I think (.) in a sense I’m (.) although as I say it’s not an earth shattering conclusion (.) I’m not sure – I’m interested that (.) you know I’m quite pleased with myself in the sense that I’ve been able to accept that you can be a person and not put all your effort into life (*mm*) hhh. I thought that was a bit of an abstract sort of um (.) concept (2) um (2) *ja*, which (1) I’m not sure that everybody would make the same sort of/would reach the same sort of conclusion (*ja*) (1) But it certainly/it certainly made for a more smoother – smoother sailing (*ja, ja*)

Scott positions himself as a person who ‘does a lot of trying’ and then, as a means of heightening the contrast between himself and his son, he references a school-going self who ‘decided to work hard’ and was an ‘academic’. Thus Scott establishes a link between effort and performance, and he also brings effort into the realm of choice or will. This accounts for the historical ‘problem’ between Scott and his son, with Scott in the assertive, domineering father position (‘Try harder!’).

However, Scott makes insistence on effort something he has relinquished ‘quite a long time ago’ and instead introduces a contrasting ‘version of the world’ which has enabled him to reach a new ‘sort of conclusion’ and to turn towards his son with acceptance (‘that’s him and I just accept him for that’). Scott’s ability to objectify the ‘big rule’ of effort and achievement, and make it relative enables him to recognize and accept a son who doesn’t have ‘that desire to put in effort and so on’. The word ‘conclusion’ suggests some kind of resting place in Scott’s mind; that he has had to journey towards this new set of relational expectations. There is the sense that Scott has acquired a new skill, or an intersubjective practice that he consciously adopts in order to get past the disappointment of a son who won’t try: ‘Because now, if you don’t try, I say “well that’s you, that’s how you do it”. When the son doesn’t try, Scott is able to recognize a ‘you’ that is

different and Scott is also able to recognize a way of ‘doing’ that is different (‘that’s how you do it’).

As an aside, Scott emphasizes that his new conclusion is not ‘major’ or ‘earth shattering’, which seems linked to Scott’s efforts, at various times in his interview, to avoid being seen as proud. For example, referring to his ability to accept his son’s differences, Scott says the following:

So I don’t know if that’s a - in a way I feel that that’s a plus for me (.) but I don’t want to blow my own trumpet hhh. (*Scott, blow away*). *Ja hhh. (blow away!)*.

In this exchange, humor is used to pierce the intersubjective tension caused by the prospect of Scott being positioned as proud. Nonetheless, Scott positions himself as ‘quite pleased’ with himself, and both Scott and I concur that being the father who can accept difference brings a certain ‘new father’ status.

Returning to the preceding extract, the phrase ‘but once it sort of reached that – you accepted that’ indicates that Scott has ‘reached’ a new ‘you’ that has altered the intersubjective terrain between Scott and his different son. Scott is ‘still putting more pressure on him to do things’. What is evident, however, is that these ‘things’ have to do with fairness and family living *not* achievement. In the process of recognizing his son, Scott lets go of achievement (‘I’ve accepted that he doesn’t have an innate striving drive to-to-’) but he still insists that his son be ‘a part of the family’ and that he does his ‘share’. This description seems to match Benjamin’s (1995) conception of recognition, which entails the balancing of assertion and recognition. Scott allows his son his independence, he recognizes his son’s will, but he also has expectations of his son, and asks that he (Scott) be recognized in return. For Benjamin (*ibid.*), the ideal resolution of recognition is for it to endure as a constant tension between recognizing the other and asserting the self. Scott’s statement ‘effort is not him, so have accepted that, but now still putting more pressure on him to do things’ appears to be an example of such a constant tension, and the phrase ‘you know, I don’t know – does that make sense?’ indicates that Scott has a sense of the paradoxical quality of intersubjective recognition.

The statement: ‘I’m quite at peace with myself in the sense that I’ve been able to accept that you can be a person and not put all your effort into life’ suggests that Scott is able to recognize his son as an equivalent center of being, a ‘person’, despite the fact that his son flouts the ‘big rule’.

Furthermore, Scott's acceptance of his son's differences helps Scott to feel 'at peace' with himself. Accepting difference has helped Scott to find a resting point as father.

The above excerpt suggests that difference requires a more conscious fathering, as opposed to an automatic, hegemonically oriented fathering. According to Frosh (2010), Benjamin's concept of recognition acknowledges the "existence of the other as other in the context of relatedness: there is a real difference yet this difference is not necessarily marked by preference, it is 'just' difference" (p. 131). There is evidence of this recognizing process above, as phrases such as 'well that's you, that's how you do it' see Scott construct a father-son connection where difference becomes just difference. Shortly after Scott's interview, I wrote the following in my field notes:

I am struck by Scott's humility and his ability to think about his experiences as a father. I liked that Scott could laugh at himself. This was a primary point of connection for me – a non-competitiveness that I experienced as a drop in threat. I felt like I could be freer to be in the interview; unlike other interviews where I have felt apologetic, needing to compensate or go covert with my own thoughts and reactions.

As a point of triangulation, these field notes indicate my sense that Scott would recognize me: that I would be able to respond more openly than was the case with some of the other participants. In some of the other interviews I was aware that I was part-participant in performing acceptable masculinity, which usually coincided with feelings of tension and discomfort. Perhaps then, my reflexive experiences of being with Scott serve as further evidence that Scott did not position himself as the traditional or 'heroic' father, with taken for granted views on who or how his son (or I) should be. This does not mean that Scott's fathering is wholly free from disappointment and in fact Scott acknowledges its presence. However, it is evident that Scott wrestles with some of the intersubjective ethics of being disappointed (e.g. issues of 'favoritism' and 'guilt') and that, as the father, he is proud of the 'connection' that he shares with his different son.

Scott continues, in the following extract, to construct his father position in the face of difference. Here it is evident is that acceptance involves an ongoing negotiation between Scott and his son, with recurring ruptures and repairs. Whereas the father in the previous extract is 'pleased' about

his relationship with his son, the following extract shows that Scott's accepting position requires ongoing negotiation of difference:

You know he's – that's – he's also obsessed with computers (.) I don't know/I don't know how/ I think many of the kids are (.) so (.) and that bothers me a bit um (1) And I say to him (.) you know (.) “You're going to develop uh:: uh/a good relationships with computers hhh. but I'm not sure where you're getting the experience of relationships with people” um (.) because you know that's/that's his/he just gravitates to/to computers and things (.) which again has been a hard thing to accept (.) because it's so unlike our childhood (.) my childhood (*mm*) being out and/and active and (.) uh (.) quite physically active (.) uh (.) interacting with the world (.) whereas he's interacting with uh (.) uh this cyber world (*ja*) (1) But interestingly (.) the other/and so that's also/I think I've had to accept that my notion of what a child/childhood should be – probably have to accept – the world has changed (*mm*) (1) So I've gotta accept that

Um (.) though lately it's been very interesting – he's/ he wants to do computer programming (*yoo*) and (.) for all the//the lack of effort (.) or (.) won't say lack of effort - sort of hatred of effort (.) um (.) he - at – he's much closer to knowing what he wants to do than I certainly was (*ja*). You know (.) he's quite - to my mind- it's (2) I think it's very very likely that he's going to do something in that line and he's single minded about it (1) So it's quite interesting isn't it (*it is*) someone who's not really necessarily (.) driven but is neverth/ is still so clear (*uh ha*) on what they want to do (.) So that's quite interesting (.) So I don't know what the future holds for him (.) um (.) I think though the abhorrence of effort is still there (.) but sometimes (.) it's the hardworking people who get the dull mundane jobs and they work hard all their lives and the clever ones (*hh*) who don't like effort go and make some clever hhh. clever thing *ja ja*

In the above extract Scott re-positions himself as a more orthodox father struggling to relate to his different son. Like Douglas, Scott evokes involvement in computers as an interpretative repertoire denoting lassitude. The word 'obsessed' immediately subordinates the son's investment in computers. It's an activity that 'bothers' Scott and he tries to provoke his son to change. Scott's laughter suggests that he's aware of the risk of shame – that he's using shame to get his son to change, which is in itself a shameful admission for a good father. Scott accounts

for the difficulty of acceptance by highlighting the differences between himself and his son. Whilst his son ‘gravitates to computers’, Scott is the orthodox ‘physically active’ male. Scott invites the hearer to identify with his position as a father facing fundamental difference (‘our childhood’). The shift in tenses (had to accept’/’ probably have to accept’) indicates that acceptance is ‘hard’ and that it’s a work in progress. The conclusion that Scott reaches towards the end of this paragraph is somewhat bleaker than his earlier ‘conclusion’: ‘I think I’ve had to accept that my notion of what a childhood should be – probably have to accept – the world has changed. So I’ve gotta accept that’. There is the sense of Scott being left behind as the father, perhaps redundant in his views, with less to offer his cyber-world son. Again, such ‘acceptance’ seems to approximate Kleinian mourning, which involves accepting that reality is frustrating (Frosh, 2012), despite the presence of wishes and hopes that do not simply fall away.

However, something ‘very interesting’ emerges out of this acceptance, as Scott recognizes the advantages of his son’s view of the world. Scott constructs a revised take on his son’s ‘abhorrence of effort’ and ‘single minded’ ways where these are transformed into attributes that lead to future success (some clever thing’). His son’s differences and independence from Scott are now constructed as advantages: ‘he’s much closer to knowing what he wants to do than I certainly was’. So Scott gives currency and legitimacy to his son’s ways and in the process Scott challenges his own ‘physically active’ version of the world. His son may not be ‘driven’, but he is ‘single minded’ and ‘clear’. In contrast, Scott associates his effortful approach with people who ‘work hard all their lives’ at ‘dull mundane jobs’.

In summary then, Scott’s recognition of his different son as a ‘person’ does not mean that Scott jettisons his concerns regarding his son’s performance in the world. As is evident in his second extract, Scott constructs a world where his son’s ways *can* lead to success and this construction seems to revitalize Scott’s hopes as the father (‘But interestingly’). By demoting his historical investment in ‘effort’ and promoting his son’s single mindedness, Scott is able to imagine a possible future for his son as one of the ‘clever ones’. This helps Scott to evade the disappointing prospect of a son who will be unable to achieve orthodox success.

7.1.3. Effort and potential

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, some fathers identified themselves as distinctly disappointed because their sons had potential to perform but they refused to make an effort or lacked suitably competitive attitudes. For these participants, their sons seemed to carry something of the promise of masculine glory, usually in the form of sporting success, which participants indexed in order to account for their frustration and disappointment with their sons.

John

The following extract illustrates some of the above processes. Early on in his interview, John identifies his son's lack of 'drive' as the primary site of conflict in their relationship:

I feel like he's-he lacks drive (.) like/ he's got huge potential (.) he's very smart (.) like we don't have to-we don't have to-um help him with his homework (clicks fingers 3x) you know(.) he's just there (.) he's driven academically (.) he won the scholarship at school (.) you know (.) so ja (.) he's got all of these things but he'd rather throw himself over the couch and just be lazy than really actually apply himself (.) you know he- hhh (1) it just burns me You know (.) he's got all this potential

In the opening sentence, John immediately constructs a state of tension between his son's lack of 'drive' and the fact that 'he's got huge potential'. The word 'huge' serves to heighten the sense of tension, and it's a tension that implicates John as the father ('it just burns me'). In line with Coakley's (2006) observation, the phrase 'we don't have to' makes the disparity between his son's potential and achievement into a taken-for-granted parenting concern: something the good parent 'has to' do. Interestingly, John distinguishes between homework drive and what turns out to be physical drive. Mark is 'driven academically' but this is not enough. As is evident below, John wants to see physical drive in his son. With the phrase 'he's got all these things', John skips over his son's academic drive, and with the conjunction 'but' he turns to the fact that his son would 'rather throw himself over the couch and just be lazy'. This phrase connotes a sense of physical lassitude and wastefulness which disqualifies this way of being as immoral. Taking Stern's (1985) perspective, it is behavior that falls outside of 'the intersubjective pale'. The word 'rather' makes this behavior inherent to the son; a preference that John does not want to recognize as the activity of a like subject.

John's laugh, together with the emphasized phrase 'it just burns me' indicates an elevation in the emotionality of John's talk at this point. It seems that the phrase 'burns me' signifies something of the extent to which John's own sense of self is invested in his son's achievements. The son's lack of drive 'destroys' John's fantasy of who his son could be, and the gratifications this would bring to John in his own hegemonic aspirations. John goes on to say 'You know, he's got all this potential!' because he wants his listener ('You know') to identify with or take up his frustration as the father of a son who has 'potential' but won't use it.

In the extract below, John continues to address the issue of his son's lack of 'drive', in this instance positioning himself as the frustrated and disappointed father who looks on at a son who fails to use his physical potential to be 'brilliant' on the sports field:

I mean he's a brilliant-he could be a brilliant Rugby player (.) he um (.) and I don't/and I don't push him (.) it's just not in my nature to push-push-push (.) and he's in the A team (.) but (2) like (.) I've noticed that he lacks that animal instinct (1) I mean there are some kids out there who are just boom-boom-boom (.) always in the ruck (.) on the ball (.) An-I can see Sean (.) ugh just taking his time to get up (.) and looking around for the play (.) "Agh, I'll go over to where the play is", and I'm like "Sean! Go!" you know hhh. And-and so ja (.) I mean, then you wanna like kick him up the backside and say "Just don't waste this beautiful God-given talent (.) You're a big kid (.) you're strong (.) and you know (.) you could really- I mean look at these other little kids that are not even (.) you know (.) three quarters of your size (.) and they're outperforming you (.) And look at your ab-at your God-given talent and ability" And I don't say this to him, because I wouldn't wanna (.) you know (.) like kill his spirit for it (.) So ja, I mean you do (.) you get disappointed (.) I mean (.) what do I do? How do I? (2)

John opens this account rather ambiguously; his son is 'brilliant' or he 'could be brilliant', which positions John as straddled between recognizing what is ('he's in the A team') and the enticing fantasies of who his son could be ('he could be brilliant'). John quickly moves on to distance himself from being positioned as 'pushy' ('and I don't push him') which, from Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) perspective may imply that John becomes somewhat anxious as he gives voice to his fantasies; that this coincides with an assertive impulse that John needs to disavow. John goes further; he disowns 'pushing' (it's just not in my nature') particularly of the insistent

variety (push – push – push), and points out that his son is ‘in the A team’. However (‘but’) John has ‘noticed’ that his son ‘lacks that animal instinct’. The conjunction ‘but’ restores a sense of dilemmatic tension: John does not ‘push, push, push’, ‘but’ his son lacks an essential masculine quality (‘animal instinct’) that accounts for the gap between his performance and that of a ‘brilliant’ rugby player.

John goes on to make unfavorable comparisons between his son and ‘some kids’ who represent acceptable masculinity. These boys are ‘out there’, physically assertive (‘just boom-boom-boom’) and goal driven (‘always in the ruck, on the ball’). In contrast, Sean is passive. The way John sees Sean (‘ugh, just taking his time’) positions Sean as culpably passive and avoidant (‘looking around for the play’). John ‘speaks for’ his son (‘Agh I’ll go to where the play is’), to entrench Sean’s position as both subordinate and unwilling to engage with hegemonic masculinity. This enables John to account for his position as the highly frustrated father who wants to induce a normative active attitude in his son (‘and I’m like “Sean! Go!” you know hhh). Again, with the phrase ‘you know’, John looks to elicit listener empathy for his position as the exasperated father.

John then introduces an imagined father position which is both hostile towards and shaming of the disappointing son. Sean is a ‘big kid’ but he is being ‘outperformed’ by ‘other little kids’, the shame of which causes the father to ‘wanna kick him up the backside’. John elevates his fantasy for Sean to something divinely ordained: ‘God-given’, which also positions John as the moral father who has a mandate to get the best out of his son. John then constructs an imaginary exhortation which contains two strategies to get his son to comply. Firstly, John tries to get his son to share in his fantasy. John wants his son to see that he’s ‘big’ and ‘strong’, leading to the phrase ‘you could really (.)’. This phrase expresses John’s idealized fantasy which, because it is left unfinished, retains a fantastical allure that he wants his son to see. John’s next strategy is more hostile. John fantasizes shaming his son by comparing him to ‘other little kids’ who are ‘not even, you know, three quarters of your size’, but who are ‘outperforming’ Sean. Thus Sean’s physical advantage is emphasized, which undercuts any excuse Sean may proffer for his passivity. Then, to underscore his righteous indignation and his son’s culpability, John re-emphasizes the fact that his son’s ability is ‘God-given’. By not making an effort, the son is sinning against man and God.

Following the above outburst, John pulls back from his hostile position ('and I don't say this to him') because of the awareness that he could damage his son ('I wouldn't wanna...kill his spirit for it'). The word 'spirit' emphasizes his son's vulnerability whilst the word 'kill' signifies John's destructive capacity as the disappointed father who fantasizes a retaliatory shaming of his frustrating son. Nevertheless, by restraining his aggression John positions himself as disappointed and still stuck with a dilemma: 'I mean, what do I do? How do I?' Although John recognizes the possibility that he could damage his son, he is still the father who must get his son to comply. Recognizing his capacity to damage his son limits John's options, but it does not alter his fundamental project. John doesn't want to hurt his son, but at the same time he is captivated by the prospect of his son 'outperforming' other boys: he wants his son to move towards the apex of hegemonic masculinity.

So John faces a dilemma: his son could be 'brilliant' but he won't make an effort, and if John tries to assert his ways, he could damage his son. John continues, in the extract below, to construct his solution to this dilemma, which hinges on the fact that his son is still young and that he will take up appropriate attitudes in time:

And then you think (.) I mean (.) geez (.) he's ten years old you know (.) and-and you want to say (.) 'Agh geez, I didn't even start playing Rugby until I was like thirteen (.) Which he's still got three-four more years to go to get there (.) And so you think "ok (.) well" (.) That's why I back off and I say (.) you know (.) it's going to come with time (1) Let the coaches do their job (1) Let him be exposed (.) He's going to excel at one of these things (.) It's going to be peer pressure that causes him to do it (.) And I think for me Rob (.) the most important thing has been to just give him the freedom and space to choose to put that effort in (*right*).

In the extract above, John emphasizes his son's young age ('ten years old') and then the notion of time. Using himself as a point of reference, John constructs the notion of a training period; that his son has 'still got three-four more years to go to get there'. The phrase 'get there' is constructed as a destination; that moment when the son will take up the father's ways. This framing of time alleviates John's disappointment. He is able to think "ok well". Furthermore, John is able to 'back off', to drop his intersubjective assertions because of the reassuring homily

that 'it's going to come with time'. Acceptable masculinity ('it's') will eventuate and time, rather than the father's current agitations, is the solution.

Then, in a series of short and deliberate sentences John constructs a series of predictions that show how, ineluctably, the son will comply with hegemonic masculinity, thus resolving John's dilemma. Key to John's imagined future narrative is the influence of other males ('coaches' and 'peer pressure') and an environment where performance is the norm ('let him be exposed'; 'he's going to excel at one of these things'). John imagines that the coaches will do their 'job' and that 'peers' will cause his son to 'do it' – to take up the hegemonic attitude of making an effort. With these contextual parameters in mind, John is able to settle on an ethical father position where he 'just' gives his son 'the freedom and space to choose to put that effort in'. The phrase 'to just give him' implies that John is conscientiously standing back as the father. Additionally, John places emphasis on the word 'choose', which implies that his son's agency is respected. It seems, however, John is able to be the father who doesn't need to 'push-push-push' because ('that's why') he has some reassurance that 'it's going to come with time'. Connell (2005) makes the point that hegemony has to do with power rather than force, where others are induced to comply, or buy into the hegemonic ideal. The above extract seems to illustrate how complicity with hegemonic expectations may be induced without recourse to overt aggression.

Brian

Brian's response to his capable son's lack of effort shares some similarities with that of John's. As is evident below, Brian foregrounds the fact that his son is big and physically capable, but that he lacks a quintessential masculine quality, in this case 'killer instinct'. Brian's son is also academically capable, but this does not seem to compensate enough for Brian's disappointment in his son's lack of competitiveness or desire to perform on the sports field. Furthermore, like John, Brian constructs a future solution, where his son will be induced to take up the right attitude in time, which protects Brian from having to fully confront disappointment and accept his son's differences in any final way.

However, whereas John seemed to enjoy the opportunity to speak about fathering, this was not the case with Brian. Instead, I often felt like I wanted Brian to give more of himself and that I

was pursuing him as the interviewer. Shortly after his interview, I recorded the following field notes:

Field Notes

That was hard work! We met at Brian's office, and I think he'd rather have been working. The questions seemed to be a bit of a check-list chore for him, and I felt like I had to work hard to sustain his engagement, and keep him happy. Brian adopted a minimalist, 'no problems' attitude that I recognize as a masculine style of relating – no soft emotions! Brian remained the 'reasonable' man which I think protected him from engaging with the questions. I think Brian was rather mistrustful of the process. I left feeling very tired.

As indicated above, Brian's way of 'doing gender' meant that he remained comparatively disinvested in his father talk. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2003) point out that the interview may be seen as both an opportunity and as a threat to the male participant. At one level an interview gives men the opportunity to 'do gender'; to "signify, in culturally prescribed ways, a credible masculine self" (ibid. p.55). But, at another level, because the interviewer tends to control the interaction and asks personally revealing questions, performances of masculinity are put at risk during an interview. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (ibid.) argue that male interviewees may be inclined to react to this risk by attempting to take control of the interview, to exaggerate their capacity for rationality and by glossing over particular topics.

The way Brian approached the issue of fathering difference, and my reflexive experiences during his interview, suggest that Brian reacted to the risk of the interview in the manner identified by Schwalbe and Wolkomir (ibid.). Primarily, I felt that Brian's interview performance involved a deflecting of vulnerability and in the analyses that follow it is argued that this deflecting coincides with Brian's construction of a hegemonic orientation towards his son's differences.

The extract below forms part of Brian's response to my opening invitation to 'tell me about his son'. Here Brian articulates his disappointment that his 'very capable' son lacks the necessary internal state, such that the promising potential revealed during his son's early years remains frustratingly unfulfilled.

Uh (.) I think he (.) I think he's probably/ he's very laid back (.) he doesn't (.) achieving is not uh:: a big driving force with him – you know he seems to be a helluva laid back sort of guy (.) ja (3) Uh:: yet I think he's very capable (1) I think he – you know (.) he-he just hasn't got that killer instinct (.) at all. Um:: you know you say s/uh:: talk about sport (.) he::he broke the high jump record at/at/at school (.) you know (.) and that's sort of/sort of a thing that doesn't require any effort – and I know – when he was younger (.) you know (.) when all the other kids weren't being driven and that (.) I mean at pre-primary he used to win hh. all of the races an – everything there by/by a long way (1) So (2) ja (.) I just don't think he's/he's got that drive, um:: which is a concern to me (.)

In the first two sentences, Brian constructs a sense of disparity: his son is 'very laid back', 'yet' he's 'very capable'. The conjunction 'yet' conveys this disparity, and it also introduces Brian's dilemma – how does he accept who his son 'is' ('laid back') when he also knows ('I think') that his son is 'very capable'? Brian accounts for his son's lack of performance by constructing his son as lacking in certain masculine essentials – a 'driving force' and a 'killer instinct'. Emphasis on the words 'at all' means that, like John above, Brian constructs his son's different ways, his non-competitiveness, as constituting an absence. Frosh (1994) argues that femininity has "in many respects been an empty category in the sense that it is defined principally in terms of its distance from masculinity" (p. 89). Like 'animal instinct', 'driving force' and 'killer instinct' denote innate aggression and dominance, a 'glorification of force' to use the words of Glaser and Frosh (1988) as cited above. Without these requisite attitudes, the son is subordinated and excluded from acceptable masculinity, and perhaps 'like' the feminine, he is rendered an 'empty' subject, without positive content.

The high jump exploits are raised by Brian as a complex piece of evidence for his predicament as father. Breaking the record is evidence of ability, but the conjunction 'and' actually links this achievement to heightened frustration, because 'that's sort of a thing that doesn't require any effort'. Therefore the high jump achievement adds an element of pique to the father's disappointment. Brian then re-evokes a personal knowledge ('and I know') of his son, that has to do with his son's early school achievements, 'when he used to win all of the races...by a long way'. This knowledge forms the basis of Brian's disappointment because it contains the promise of who his son could be. The phrase 'when all the other kids weren't being driven' creates a

sense of competitive urgency in Brian's talk as it evokes the presence of other fathers who are successfully shaping their sons towards competitive success, whilst Brian is left with a son who 'hasn't got that drive'. It is therefore evident that 'drive' has to do with achievement within a competitive forum and that, by not having 'that drive', his son is positioned as the subordinate other. Brian concludes this paragraph with the sentence 'So ja, I just don't think he's got that drive, which is a concern to me'. This sentence makes the son's preferences the father's business, with the implication that the son's lack will rouse Brian towards some kind of action. The emphasis Brian places on the word 'me' suggests that, like John above ('it just burns me'), Brian is personally invested in the way his son responds to the world of competitive sport.

Slightly later, as part of his response to my opening question, Brian turns to his son's school peer group. Here, it is evident that Brian accounts for his son's disappointing attitude by pointing to the deleterious social influences of a particular 'faction' at school:

Uh (.) I think they haven't got a very good year at (.) you know (.) at school (.) you know the year that he's in uh: (.) and I think that hasn't helped him too much (.) um: (.) whereas Shane was the opposite (.) they had a very strong year I think in/in his year (1) Uh:: there sort of seems to be two factions at – at school uh: and he – he:: hasn't really sort of (.) he/he's part of the one faction – which the, you know the non-sporting sort of computer guys uhh (.) but I think he/ he/ he/ he – you can see he doesn't sort of find it right in his mind so he's sort of caught between the two (.) Because he's also friends with the other guys in the other faction (.) so-so from a school ground (.) politics sort of point of view (.) I think he's in a bit of a (.) what's the word (.) like a mediator so to speak (.) you know – it's a bit difficult sometimes (.) ja (1) And (.) ja otherwise Rob (.) I dunno what (.) ja I think th – that's pretty much uhh (.) you know (.) a bit of a reasonable sort of a summary I suppose (.) (*it's a great summary*) Ja.

Here, Brian turns to his son's school context to account for his son's lack of drive, which enables Brian to construct various takes on who his son actually 'is'. Like Scott above, Brian takes up involvement in computers as an interpretative repertoire connoting unacceptable masculinity. Brian's argument is that the 'non-sporty computer guys' have weakened David's year group by providing a school-ground political alternative to normative, competitive masculinity. Brian positions his son on a ridge between the subordinate 'non-sporting computer guys' and 'the other

guys': his son as 'in' but not of this unacceptable computer faction. Brian suggests that 'you can see' that his son doesn't really belong to this non-sporty group, that 'he doesn't sort of find it right in his mind' and that, as the 'mediator', his son retains links with the normative group. Consequently, Brian is not required to recognize his son as wholly or irrevocably different. Instead, his son is positioned as unsettled, 'caught between the two', and this opens up the possibility that he can be induced to move towards conformity by being in a more conducive social context.

By way of concluding Brian's interview, I ask him to what he thinks he will 'do' about the disappointment of having a capable son without 'drive'. Brian responds, in the extract below, by constructing a hegemonic plotline that suggests that Brian's ways will ultimately prevail. In similar vein to John above, Brian is able to suspend the dilemma and disappointment of having a son without drive by postponing his intervention as the father:

And Brian (.) maybe just by way of closing (.) um (.) what do think um (.) you should (.) or what do you think you will or might do as far as David goes and uh (.) you know (.) him not having the drive that you describe – what do you think as his dad (.) lies ahead for you and Da/ and David?

Rob (.) uh: at this stage (.) I don't (.) you know (.) from what I've/you know (.) now that I see that Shane's at/at high school (.) you know I sort of (.) it's um (.) my feeling is that junior school is not that important you know (.) let him enjoy his junior school (.) don't push him too hard (1) Uuh (.) you know (.) have a little word here and there (.) and (.) you know (.) uh:: try and build him up as much as possible (.) uhh (.) you know (.) congratulate him when he does well (.) but uh:: (.) at this stage (.) ja (.) you know (.) I sort of feel a bit like the comrades marathon – you don't want to go and get the oke to sprint the first um: (.) you know (.) kilometer (.) he's still got his whole life ahead of him (.) Don't let him burn out now you know (1) I mean at the end of the day (.) you know (.) this junior school stuff –just so long as he gets into high school (.) and you know the school that we want him to go to (.) then the sort of mission's pretty much accomplished (.) hey (.) we can start trying to/ ugh (.) I think at high school we'll/we'll try an' start pushing him a little bit more (.) uh: but if/whether that's right or wrong I dunno (.) but (.) ja-at this stage (.) ja (.) from what I see (.) let him chill a little bit (.) you know (.) let him

enjoy his junior school days and when he gets to high school maybe we'll have to be a bit more severe about it all (.) you know (.) ja

But that's-that's generally our sort of way of going round it (.) is just try an' you know (.) praise the positives and you know (.) tell him when he's done well you know (.) congratulate him and hopefully he'll-he'll bite at that (.) ja (1) Although he doesn't bite at it nearly as much as Shane does (.) so that's where the difficulty does come in you know

In response to his dilemma, Brian immediately establishes the notion of a time-line ('this stage'), which provides a sequential logic to Brian's response. Brian begins his argument by trivializing junior school ('this junior school stuff; not that important'). This frees Brian to step back as the father ('don't push him too hard') and to allow his son to 'enjoy himself'. In this way the son's enjoyment is made temporary, a concession, because the more serious issue of performance lies ahead. In 'this stage' the Brian approximates 'new fathering' in that his focus lies on encouraging and building his son up. However, the marathon metaphor implies that Brian retains the goals that he has for his son; that it's a matter of time before his son will begin to compete and pursue sporting success. Brian's son may be a slow starter, but Brian has a prevailing sense of where he intends his son to get to.

Brian then turns to the high-school ('that we want') as something of a saving grace for his project as father ('the sort of mission's pretty much accomplished'). At this future juncture, Brian will 'start pushing his son a little bit more'. Like John above, Brian is mindful of the censure that comes with being positioned as pushy ('whether that's right or not I dunno') but nonetheless he concludes this timeline by positioning himself as an authoritarian father ('more severe').

The above plotline suggests that, in the face of disappointment, any adjustments made by Brian come with the belief that his hopes will ultimately be fulfilled. Currently, Brian is engaged in 'going around' his son's resistance; hoping all the while that his son 'will bite at' his praise and encouragement. At an intersubjective level, the son is likened to a fish that won't take the bait, and this is 'where the difficulty does come in' for Brian. However, with the advent of high school, Brian sees himself 'stepping in' as the father, and asserting his dominance.

As indicated above, I found Brian rather inscrutable and unreflecting as a participant. Interestingly, in the extract below, Brian associates his son's differences with something of approaching reflexivity on his part, together with a shift towards a new version of fathering. However, it is also evident that Brian closes this reflexivity down by making his different son just as 'hard' as his more conformist son:

I don't think I've consciously thought how I want to be a father (.) I think it's just (.) you know (1) ja/it hasn't been a sort of conscious sort of decision - you know "this is what I must do and this is the way I must be" (1) Uh (.) I think the only sort of really uh: I think the only sort of really con-uh (.) sort of come subconsciously I suppose (.) sort of ingrained in you (.) you know (.) that that's the way you sort of go about it (1) Uh: the only thing I have s-consciously thought you know I need to spend more time with William because you know a lot of time's always been spent with-with-with Shane um:: simply because he's (.) you know he's ja does a lot more sport and he's in all the A sides and you know (.) he goes on all the tours and we go on all the tours with him and you know he's for example tomorrow he's playing (.) you know (.) fifty over Cricket in the A side so we'll go and watch that (.) An we'll also go and watch William if he's playing (.) but he probably won't be playing so uh (.) I have sort of become aware that (.) you know (.) maybe too much focus is on the elder one (.) and not enough on William's side (2)

So I have to sort of (.) spend more time with him (.) and sort of perceive him as being (3) ja (.) just try to be more loving to him y::ou know (.) than Shane maybe (.) Uh (.) although I don't think William's a-a soft sort of character per se uh: you know I don't think he (.) ja you know I think he's (.) he's probably every bit as hard as/as Shane (1) But ja/I/I that's probably my only conscious- s-s-decision of fathering you know that I need to spend more time on-on William's side because I/he/I/ bottom line he's not as talented and therefore doesn't get as-as much attention/ he doesn't demand as much attention a-as well you know (.) it's just uh-his nature he gets on with (.) as I said (.) he gets on with his own things you know

Brian begins this extract by positioning his fathering as 'subconscious' and 'ingrained', founded on implicit notions regarding 'the way you sort of go about it'. However, the sequence of false starts suggest that it is not easy for Brian to articulate this taken-for-granted position as it has

been breached by the need to 'consciously' consider his different son. This reiterates the finding that fathering difference requires more conscious fathering and that difference has the capacity to disrupt or agitate hegemonic assumptions. Shane's sporting exploits mean that Brian has been able to follow an 'ingrained' or 'subconscious' fathering script that has to do with supporting a successful school sportsman. William doesn't provide this script ('he probably won't be playing') and this means that Brian is required to improvise as the father. Brian first identifies 'more time' as part of his improvisation. Brian then moves on to identify a need to 'perceive' his son in a particular way that Brian is unable to articulate ('perceive him as being (3)'). This suggests that it is difficult for Brian to conclude just how his son should be perceived or recognized. Brian repairs this false start by concluding that he needs to be more 'loving' towards his different son than he is towards his normative and successful son. The implication is that Brian and his similar son enjoy a more automatic attachment through sport, whereas with his different son needs something unusual from his father – a 'loving' that is not activity-based.

At this juncture it appears that Brian is on the brink of articulating a 'new' version of fathering for himself. However, Brian is quick to assert that his youngest son is not 'soft' and that 'he's every bit as hard as Shane'. It seems that, in the process of positioning himself as a 'loving', recognizing father, Brian becomes uncomfortable about issues of masculinity. Adopting a 'softer' approach as a father seems to raise the threat of both he and his son being 'soft' and feminine. By way of repairing this, Brian reasserts the notion of spending 'time' with his son, which represents a more orthodox fathering task. This linguistic shift takes Brian away from recognizing the internal state of 'softness' either in himself or in his son.

Brian summarizes by reiterating the achievement-attention ratio that explains his proximity to his normative son and the lack of attention he has given to the son who 'bottom line', is 'not as talented'. Brian quickly asserts the independent 'nature' of his different son, which prevents Brian from being positioned as neglectful, or of showing favoritism. In his concluding phrase 'he gets on with his own things you know', Brian constructs an intersubjective distance between father and son, together with the notion that his son doesn't need him as much as his normative, sports-playing son.

Later on in the interview, I pursue the notion of being 'loving' because I saw it as a moment of vulnerability in Brian's otherwise fairly resolute performance. However, Brian did not want to

position himself in this way. Instead, in the extract below, Brian replaces ‘loving’ and makes ‘spending time’ central to his fathering of William:

I was interested a-a short while ago (.) you were saying consciously to be loving to uh William

(.) It's not so much loving (.) it's just spending more time with him (.) I suppose? and (.) you know I consciously try and give him a hug y-you know (.) and sort of have a little (.) word with him just before he goes to school and ask him how he's done at school at the end of the day – that type of stuff (.) Um: (.) and I/I d/you know-try and do a one-on-one activity with him, for example tennis (.) We'll go and play tennis with him for a good hour or two (.) two or three times a weekend sort of thing (.) you know if (.) you know (.) we can get around to it (.) uh:: (.) and then we'll go and have a coke afterwards or something like that (.) ja (.) So maybe it's not so much loving as trying to spend more time with him-ja one-on-one quality time I suppose (1) Ja (.) ja.

As is evident, Brian was quick to repair this chink of vulnerability by replacing being ‘loving’ with ‘just spending more time’ with his son. So Brian moves away from a ‘softer’ version of masculinity and repositions himself as the orthodox father, who engages his son at the beginning and end of each working day. As a remnant of ‘being loving’ Brian will ‘consciously try’ to give his son a hug – this is constructed as a deliberate innovation for Brian the father. But the ‘one-on-one quality time’ that Brian spends with his son is safely within the familiar and approved ambit of sport, where the father has intentions for his son. Within sport, Brian and his son are able to use time well (‘a good hour or two’) in the overarching project of getting his son to achieve.

As is evident in the extract below, Brian continues to position himself as the orthodox father who spends ‘time with his son, inculcating ‘internal states’ that will bring about success in the world ‘out there’. Here, Brian’s ‘best moment’ has to do with the successful transmission of the ethic of effort. However, it is evident that Brian remains expressly frustrated by his son as he positions himself as constantly pulling his son towards a desired way of being:

I don't think there's anything that partic/particularly stands out in terms of worst and best moments (.) but I think probably the best moment for me is just to have got him from

being a very average tennis player to-to a good tennis player (.) uh (.) that-that has-it's just come about from me spending a lot of time an/and with him and you know getting him to realize to/to/to enjoy something that's worthwhile you've got to go through a bit of pain and (.) you know (.) frustration I think (.) more so on his side (.) you know (.) it-it just doesn't come as naturally to him as the elder one (1) So probably that's the best part of it I'd say (.) Uh (.) the worst part I'd say (.) ja (.) frustration that he's maybe not doing his-trying his hardest (.) uh (1) ja

Brian positions himself as the active, assertive father ('the best moment for me is just to have got him...'). Brian spends 'a lot of time' 'getting' his son 'to realize' a set of taken for granted priorities. Brian is initiating his son into the world of competitive masculinity. By 'getting' his son 'to realize to enjoy something that's worthwhile', Brian is enacting hegemonic masculinity. It is Brian who defines what is 'worthwhile', and he tries to 'go through' his son's 'pain and frustration' in order to 'get' his son to 'enjoy' it. The frequency of words such as 'getting', 'got' and 'got to' suggest that there is an inflexibility to Brian's position as the frustrated father. Brian is resolute in his expectations and he won't allow his son to remain a 'very average tennis player'. Both father and son are frustrated, but Brian's version of frustration is validated whereas his son needs to 'go through' his frustration in order to 'realize' his father's ways.

The last two sentences of the above extract illustrate the deadlock between father and son. Brian's best moment has to do with getting his son to take on an attitude that 'just doesn't come...naturally to him', and this must co-exist with an abiding frustration that his son is 'maybe not...trying his hardest'. Written in the present tense, these two sentences depict a stand-off that remains unresolved, leaving Brian disappointed as the father.

As indicated above, I found that Brian did not want to share much of himself and that he tended to avoid my invitations to reflect on his personal experiences as the father. It seemed that Brian's rather inflexible approach to the interview matched his inflexible responses to his different and disappointing son. The extracts above suggest that Brian's deflection of vulnerability coincides with conservative fathering in the face of difference, in that Brian avoids taking up a new and more 'loving' position with his different son. Rather, there is an erasure of 'softness' in favour of dominant norms of acceptability.

In summary, it is evident that, for both Brian and John, the notion of ‘potential’ acts as a means of preserving the father’s fantasies regarding who his son could be, if only he would try. Thus, disappointment, in any final sense, is allayed because sons who have potential may continue to carry the father’s hopes that his idealized hegemonic aspirations could be fulfilled. However, in order for these sons to realize their potential, their internal states need to shift towards ways of being that fall within acceptable masculinity. In this respect both Brian and John confront a dilemma as fathers regarding whether or not they should ‘push’ their sons towards complicity. This dilemma is addressed further in chapter nine.

7.2. Summary

This chapter focuses on the ‘internal states’ that participants wanted to see in their sons and gives some indication of just how predictable and prevalent the experience of parental disappointment is. The notion that their sons should ‘make an effort’ was proposed as a taken-for-granted concern, which most participants readily identified as an appropriate expectation that they and their wives held. In the face of disappointment, it is evident that some of the fathers rework and refine the moral of ‘effort’. Some participants made this expectation more defensible by separating effort from performance, with performance being constructed as a questionable expectation. However, it is difficult for fathers to separate expectations of effort from expectations regarding performance. So for example, Angus is strident regarding the moral of ‘effort’, but his talk tends to elide into discourses of competitiveness and hierarchy, which he carefully manages because he wants to claim that he doesn’t care about his son’s performance.

It is also evident that not all versions of effort are equal, as neither Brian nor John is satisfied by their sons’ efforts and achievements in the classroom. Both these fathers want their sons to take up normative aggressive attitudes in order to fulfill their potential for sporting success. Similarly, Quinton constructs clear links between a ‘give it horns’ attitude and success on the sports field. It is argued that, by looking to ‘instill’ such attitudes in their sons, these fathers were enacting a hegemonic masculinity that was part of their interview performances. Evidence for this lies in the establishment of a hierarchy of masculinity (e.g. John: ‘other boys’) as well as my reflexive experiences regarding the threat of shame. These features reveal something of the ‘impossibility’ of hegemonic masculinity, and of how difficult it may be to avoid disappointing the hegemonic father.

Regarding resolutions in the face of disappointment, Brian, John and Quinton respond by postponing their expectations regarding effort, with the reassurance that their sons will take up acceptable attitudes in time. There is the sense that the ineluctable influence of hegemonic masculinity will prevail as their sons get older and move into high school. In Quinton's case, his son already has the seeds of 'fierce' competitiveness, so his progress towards full acceptability requires only maturity. In John's case, the cultural influence of high school 'peer-pressure' will prevail, whereas in Brian's case there is the sense that he will be able to be more 'severe' with a son that is older.

In contrast, Scott and Nick displace their expectations for the sake of their relationships with their different sons. Scott overturns the 'big rule of effort' by accepting and recognizing achievement in his son's terms, whereas Nick retains expectations regarding effort, but he discards sporting achievement and foregrounds his son's happiness instead. Thus both fathers recognize their sons as independent centers of consciousness and enact new, supportive fathering in the process. Interestingly, both fathers continue to uphold the moral of 'effort' but they change their expectations regarding success i.e. the goal or purpose of the effort. It is this that restores the relationship between father and son, leaving Scott 'pleased' and Nick 'surprised'. Also, the scope for shame is diminished. Scott's son can pursue his interest in computers and be one of the 'clever ones' and Nick's son can play in the C team and 'enjoy' himself.

In conclusion, it may be seen that, when the son lacks desirable attitudes and orientations, being the good father becomes dilemmatic. On the one hand fathers want to assert their ways and the above extracts show how 'making an effort' serves as an available interpretative repertoire for the assertive father. On the other hand it is evident that participants are mindful of their sons' vulnerability and this coincides with the uptake of a discourse of care (e.g. John: 'I wouldn't wanna, you know, like kill his spirit for it' and Angus: 'he's a little boy'). The ways fathers negotiate this key dilemma is explored further in chapter nine.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MENTORING

Chapters six and seven show that participants expect similarity between themselves and their sons, and that, in many cases, this similarity extends to adopting similar attitudes to desirable pursuits. It could be argued that these two themes are subsumed under the current theme, which describes participants' hopes that they will be able to successfully mentor their sons towards acceptable masculinity. As indicated previously, traditional notions of fatherhood emphasize the father's role as moral authority and mentor to his son, teaching him the skills and attitudes required to be a successful man (Samuels, 1995). Associated to this is the orthodox psychoanalytic notion that the son is socialized into acceptable masculine practices via his bond with his father (Gough, 2009).

In this study, most participants positioned themselves as teachers or mentors of their sons, which is consistent with previous research. White (1994, p. 122) finds that fathers assume particular responsibility for teaching their sons "to become productive and contributing members of the community". Nydegger and Mittenen (1991) find that fathers feel responsible for fostering their sons' independence and social and economic success, even after sons reach adulthood. According to Coakley (2006), mentoring has emerged as a defining function for fathers in recent years, such that "fathers who don't actively advocate the interests of their children are seen by many people today as not meeting standards for good parenting" (p. 154).

Research has found that, in two-parent families, mothers spend more time overall with children, whilst fathers spend greater proportions of time engaged in play, recreation and goal-directed activities (Lamb, 2010). As regards recreation and goal-directed activities, the previous two themes show that many participants refer to sport in order to account for their experiences of difference and disappointment. Again, this is consistent with previous research. Messner (2009) finds that fathers readily identify sport as a medium in which they are able to spend time with their children, where they may develop close relationships with their children and where they feel able to teach their children. For Doucet (2006) sport is particularly relevant to fathering because it affords men a way to parent while distancing themselves from feminine styles of caring. In Harrington's (2006) study of Australian fathers, sport emerged as "the predominant context for fathering" and "an arena of discourse about which many Australian fathers feel at

ease, are most animated about, show most interest in, and in which they can claim some competence” (p. 176).

Thus it may be argued that mentoring, perhaps especially through sport, constitutes an interpretative repertoire that men take up in their performances of good fathering. However, it is perhaps obvious that being the father of a different or disappointing son is likely to render mentoring a vexed or problematic father position. How does the good father mentor his son towards the world when the son resists the father’s ways? What does the father have to offer his son when the son won’t let his father mentor him, or when the son’s preferences fall outside of the hopes and goals that the father has in mind for his son? What if the father perceives his son as altogether too different to mentor? In the extracts which follow, attention is given to the investments that participants make in ‘being a mentor’, as well as the ways that fathers respond when these investments are frustrated or disappointed.

8.1. Analysis of Data

As already indicated, most participants invested in the discourse of mentoring in order to position themselves as good fathers of their sons. In the extracts which follow, it is evident that investments in mentoring include complex hopes which meant that mentoring proved to be an important discursive site for an analysis of paternal disappointment.

8.1.1. Bonding

Towards the end of each interview, participants were asked to describe their best and worst moments as fathers of their sons. Several fathers selected moments where they were mentoring their sons which indicates how significant the mentoring position was to this sample. Many participants constructed the mentoring relationship as a context within which they were able to form close relationships, or ‘bond’ with their sons. In addition, some participants referenced the mentoring relationship as a means of ‘correcting’ (Byng-Hall, 1995) the hurts and disappointments they experienced in their relationships with their own fathers. Consequently participants linked potent hopes and expectations to the mentoring relationship, where father and son are able to attach through ‘doing things’ together. Pease (2000) finds that many men carry the sense of having been betrayed by their fathers, due to a lack of emotional support or the experience of having been shamed by their fathers. As is evident in the following analyses, it is

this sense of betrayal that some of the participants look to correct by ‘being there’ as mentors for their sons.

Brendan

In the extract below, Brendan makes a link between his two ‘big’ concerns as a father, the first being to get his sons to where they ‘have to be’ and the second being to be the ‘dad my father wasn’t’. Brendan goes on to account for his ‘corrective script’ by pointing to his own experiences of paternal neglect and shaming:

My big concern (.) is that (.) I want them (.) you know when you can see that/where they have to be? And what they can do (.) but they can’t see it? That frustrates me (1) That really (.) really frustrates me (1) And then a big thing as well is that (1) I want to be the dad my father wasn’t (.) Does that kind of make sense? Um: I never got/got along with my parents (.) I ran away from home three times at prep school (1) I ran hh. to my aunt and uncle and I never quite figured out until much later (.) as to how all my clean clothes were hh right there hanging up hhh. (...) um (.) my dad was there for my older brother/he used to go and watch his sports matches and things like that and I always had (.) to get a lift with friends or whatever the case may be (mm) you know (.) and that kind of bugged me um (.) and I remember as well (.) being compared to my older brother and younger brother (.) And my older brother got four distinctions and an A in Matric (.) and a scholarship from Axxe and my dad says “well if you want to study you have to do the same as your brother (.) or you pay your own way” (.) I s/studied on student loans (.) And (.) my uncle signed surety not my dad you know (.) so (.) I/ I’ve always wanted to be the father which my dad wasn’t

Brendan begins by inviting his listener to empathise with his ‘big concern’: the fact that he can ‘see’ where his sons ‘have to be’ and what they ‘can do’ but his sons cannot see this. So Brendan’s frustration is based on the issue of ‘potential’ described in the previous chapter, which Brendan constructs as a taken-for-granted perspective that his listener will share (‘You know when...’). Again it is evident that the issue of potential makes for a disjuncture between the minds of Brendan and his sons in that his sons ‘can’t see’ the same goals that he can as the

mentor father. Brendan's use of emphasis in the phrase 'have to be' creates a sense of urgency or pressure and it also makes what Brendan 'sees' into a 'taken-for-granted' goal for the mentor father. Using a psychoanalytic register, it may be argued that Brendan is engaging in projective identification, where what he 'sees' in his son is his own projection, which then becomes an imperative for his son.

Brendan then shifts to his second 'big thing' which has to do with being a better father than his own father. Brendan goes on to construct something of a split perspective on his parents. His older self acknowledges his parents' care ('all my clean clothes were hanging there') but the younger Brendan takes up a position of protest against his parents ('I never got along with my parents'; 'ran away from home three times'). These details shift the younger Brendan away from a position of powerlessness (as a victim) towards a position of agency or assertion. Brendan then focuses on his father, and constructs a relationship defined by favoritism ('my dad was there for my older brother'), shame ('I remember ...being compared to my older brother and younger brother') and disinterest or neglect ('my uncle signed surety not my dad'). It is against this experience that Brendan asserts his longstanding intention to father according to a 'corrective script' ('so I've always wanted to be the father which my dad wasn't').

It may be argued that Brendan's fathering straddles two potentially conflicting corrective scripts, the first being an assertion of adequate masculinity in response to the shame of being compared with high-achieving siblings and the second being a pursuit of a close bond with his sons based on Brendan's experiences of paternal neglect. In the extract below, Brendan constructs a narrative of shared activity between himself and his son which illustrates how mentoring is able to facilitate both of these scripts for Brendan:

I took him and his brother down (.) cause Nigel Smith was riding and I said "Guys (.) just look at this guy (.) he's an absolute machine and his bicycle is a hundred thousand rand"/ and we went and watched (.) and Nigel heard that the next race was a short one – only 5 k's and he wanted to do it (1) So he did it on his little bicycle and he liked it and so I said "Would you like to do a proper race?" and he said "ja" (.) The Fern race was in two weeks' time (.) The two of us did the Fern one - in the rain (*hhh*) (.) And it was really horrible (.) and it was wet (.) and it was muddy (1) But it was just (.) so nice afterwards (.) It was just the two of us (.) Sharon wasn't there (.) it was just Nigel and myself (.)

Battling away and having an awesome time (...) It was just awesome (.) just spending that time with him (.) you know (.) ja (.) that was really nice (...) It was difficult (.) but afterwards the two of us just/I had a coffee and he had a hot chocolate and we just sat in the rain and giggled (*hhh*) you know it was silly (.) you know it was one of those silly things (.) we just giggled (.) It was/it was awesome

As mentor father, Brendan points his son to an exemplar of acceptable masculinity ('an absolute machine') and encourages his son to do a 'proper race'. Brendan warrants his paternal influence by claiming that father and son want the same thing: his son 'wanted to do it', he 'liked' the race, and when Brendan invites his son to do a 'proper' race, his son says 'ja'. Thus, this is an instance where Brendan and his son are constructed as sharing the same mind, or 'see' the same goals. Within this complementary relationship Brendan is able to fulfill both scripts in that he is both close to his son and his son is engaged in a 'proper' competitive pursuit. Thus mentoring, in this case, is free from the frustrations which Brendan identifies in the first extract above, where his sons cannot see what he can see.

In the above extract Brendan constructs the mentoring context as a site of exclusive male intimacy ('it was just the two of us. Sharon wasn't there), where Brendan and his son are doing something 'really horrible' together, thus fulfilling traditional masculinity notions of physical exertion and the denial of bodily discomfort (Connell, 2005). This narrative is constructed in somewhat idealized terms ('it was just awesome') and Brendan concludes the extract by constructing something of a child-like connection that he and his son share ('we just giggled'). This is a moment of unambivalent pleasure (Schafer, 1999) indicative of idealization, and it serves as a contrast to the isolation of the younger Brendan who 'always had to get a lift with friends'. Again, therefore, the above narrative sees the fulfillment of Brendan's two 'big' expectations, the first being that his sons will see what he can see in terms of competitive performances, and the second being the redressing of Brendan's disappointment in his father through new father mentoring. However, it may be argued that this instance of successful mentoring is predicated on the assumption of identical minds, where the son is an extension of the father.

David

In the extract below, David contrasts his relationship with his father with that which he now shares with his own son. David references mentoring, or fathering through activity in order to account for his experience of having been neglected by his father. For the purposes of this research project, the focus lies on David's construction of a 'very different' relationship with his own son which, as the second extract shows, is fulfilled primarily through mentoring. As with Brendan above, mentoring represents an important forum for correcting experiences of paternal neglect or hurt, which also leaves David vulnerable to disappointment, should his son's differences make it difficult to form a mentor-mentee bond:

My father was a different sort of figure (.) He was um (2) I wouldn't say he was at a distance, he was – he was there (.) He worked unbelievably hard (.) He used to disappear at seven in the morning and come back at six thirty at night (.) and Saturday mornings he would be in the office and (.) as a result of that work he had very little time and very little energy to spend with kids (.) I mean he was in the house (.) but um (.) we did (.) I think probably safe to say I did no activity with my father (.) ever =*geesh*= (.) We didn't go and play tennis (.) I mean I might have played one or two games of golf with him ever (.) maybe one game of tennis (.) We never went picnicking at the dam (.) we never went hiking (.) we never went for a drive we never went to climb the mountain (.) we never went cycling together (.) We didn't throw a ball we didn't go and play cricket in the nets (2) we did nothing =*Geesh*= He was there and he was my dad and I loved him but (.) very different figure (.) um (.) from that aspect (.) Also from the aspect of um (.) he was a different generation (.) you know (.) he came from where (.) um (.) his father was the very authoritarian figure (.) you know I think my dad thought it was quite a big concession that I didn't have to call him 'sir' hhh=*hhh* you know (.) But a very authoritative figure (.) where his word was law (.) whereas I see my relationship with Greg now as more (.) much more of a friend as opposed to a dad (.) I mean you do have to wear both hats – sometimes you have to pull weight and even give him a klap now and then you know but uh (.) on the whole he's/ he's a friend you know (.) he's company (.) And I encourage him and things (.) But uh (.) very different relationship to me with my dad

Referring to his own experiences of being fathered, David describes a father who was ‘there’, ‘in the house’, but who was emotionally unavailable (‘very little time and very little energy to spend with kids’). David references the absence of shared activity in order to account for the relational distance between himself and his father, which he emphasizes through repeated use of the adjectives ‘ever’ and ‘never’. Through the phrase ‘He was there, and he was my dad, and I loved him’ David depicts his experience of unrequited love and betrayal, where ‘we did nothing’. So David constructs a sense of prevailing disappointment in his absent father. David then goes on to make the observation that his father was from a ‘different generation’, which serves as a way for David to explain, or understand his father’s choices, so mitigating his disappointment.

David’s experiences with his father serve as a backdrop for David to point out the different relationship he shares with his own son. David identifies himself as a ‘more of a friend’ than a ‘dad’, where he demotes the traditional father function of discipline and he promotes a new fatherhood based on the mentoring qualities of proximity (‘company’) and support (‘encourage’). Thus David’s relationship with his son, through mentoring, serves as an antidote to the disappointments of his own childhood experiences with his father.

For his ‘best moment’ as a father to Greg, David constructed a narrative about mentoring and, as is evident in the extract below, this proved to be a very moving exercise for both David and for me as the interviewer:

And the best moments?

Um:: ja, um (2) few best moments (.) I think (.) Some of which are (.) mhm (.) teaching him something that he learns (.) like how to canoe (1) um: and he listens and he gets it and he practices and (.) and he actually can paddle the thing that I can hardly paddle you know (ha) (.) Um: teaching him things that he learns (.) wonderful (.) Ja (.) teaching him “You don’t bowl like that-you bowl like this” and I see him-all afternoon- bowling hh. at a tree or something (.) you know = ja (.) *special hey* = mmfh (4) shoo (5) mmhm =*really special hey* = (5) (ja) (5) (ok) (.) Geesh (.) mm (.) shoo (.) digs up some emotions these questions

They do (.) they do (.) you’re not the only one (mm) and uh (.) I suppose (.) it’s just (.) we love these little guys so much hey (.) Ja.

Ja (3) anyway (4) managed to get through the last two

You did David (.) You nearly had me going (.) Hhh=hhh.

Ja (2) ja (.) Poor little guy

In the above excerpt, David associates ‘teaching’ with his ‘best moment’ as the father. His position as teacher is complemented by a son who ‘learns’ and ‘listens’ and ‘practices’. It is this complementary relationship between father-son that elevates this mentoring moment to a ‘best moment’, which illustrates that the son holds the power to accept or reject the father as mentor. As the mentor, David has the opportunity to position himself as the proud father of an achieving son. His son can paddle a canoe that David ‘can hardly paddle’. My response (*ha!*) indicates that I received David’s invitation (‘you know’) to recognize his son’s suitably masculine accomplishment.

However, there is also a sense of pathos in the image of a non-sporty son bowling ‘all afternoon’, just as his father has taught him and it is at this point in the discourse that David becomes distinctly emotional. As indicated in chapter six, David expresses a sadness regarding his son’s struggles to meet the demands of school and sport. However, in this instance it may be argued that David is moved because he is able to identify with his son’s eagerness to respond to his father’s mentoring. David recognizes how much he is loved by his son and that it is this that has his son bowling ‘all afternoon’. The discourse ‘digs up some emotions’ for David, which suggests that he is displaying sentiments that are usually suppressed. At an intersubjective level, it is evident that I have resonated with David’s emotions and that I articulate this as having to do with a love that David and I both share for our children. However, it is also evident that there is something more, and that David’s sadness also has to do with the love that a son has for his father. David’s conclusion ‘Poor little guy’ implies this: that his emotions are prompted by recognizing and perhaps unconsciously identifying with his son’s earnestness as a devoted mentee. However, this same phrase may also subtly index David’s recognition of the pressure he places on his son within the mentor-mentee relationship.

It is not possible to make direct links between the above two excerpts, or to propose that David’s experiences of father absence lie ‘behind’ his emotionality in the second extract. However, these two extracts do show that David associates mentoring with father-son attachment and that his

recognition of (and perhaps identification with) this attachment in his son prompts powerful sympathies in David. David's mentoring story represents his 'best moment' as a father of Greg and it is proposed that this construction comprises both normative discourses of good, involved fathering and unconscious identifications with a son's eager love for his father. Thus it is proposed that mentoring a non-sporty son incorporates complex disappointments for David, which have to do with his son's difficulty learning and getting it as well as David's unconscious yearning for his absent father.

Quinton

The extracts below show that Quinton also references his disappointment in his father in order to account for his uptake of a corrective script with his own son. Central to Quinton's corrective script is his identification with his son through their shared investments in competitive sport. It is also evident that because Quinton is able to identify with his son through mentoring, Quinton is able to claim that he is never disappointed. Instead, Quinton is able to understand and support his son because he and his son are on the same road, which is the basis for mentoring. In the first extract, Quinton constructs a sense of father absence by indexing the fact that his father did not spend 'time' with him. In Quinton's case, sport is foregrounded as the context of father absence:

You know home was always a very warm loving place but (.) but dad worked hard (*mm*) you know (.) And - you know you/you sort of missed out on- on some of those (.) I think (.) father and son bonding um (.) opportunities (.) you know (.) um (1) certainly my dad's sporting interests were different to mine-he was an endurance athlete (.) I was much more of a team sport person (.) um (1) so he never spent any of the time that I spend with Russell (.) on the sports field you know (.) he'd come to watch and he would try and those sorts of things, but not quite the same approach that we have today (...)

So I think in some ways (2) you know when I look back I think that I/I missed out on quite a lot of that time with my father (.) um (.) a/an I think that in our relationship now it's still (.) it's still there (.) you know (.) it's the fact that he didn't have those um (.) opportunities (1) So I have/ I have um (.) always made the kids my priority (*ja*) you know (.) so (.) I will structure my diary when I get to the office (.) to be able to get to uh (.) and

when I look back now (.) I think probably some of that is because (.) I reflect on the fact that I never had that (.) (ja)

Like David above, Quinton indexes the fact that his father ‘worked hard’ in order to account for his experience of father absence. The phrase ‘you sort of missed out’ positions Quinton as having been disappointed by his father, although use of the pronoun ‘you’ helps to detach Quinton from the vulnerability of the experience. As indicated, the ‘bonding opportunities’ Quinton’s prioritizes have to do with sport, where there is a lack of sameness and identification between father and son. This again suggests that mentoring is founded on sameness. Quinton makes difference and lack of identification the basis for his father’s absence (‘so he never’). Quinton’s father would ‘come and watch’ and he would ‘try’ but, as is evident in the following paragraph, his father’s ways fall short of the self-investments involved in Quinton’s corrective ‘approach’.

In the second paragraph, Quinton contemporizes the absence or lack of bonding between himself and his father (‘in our relationship now...it’s still there’). On this basis (‘So I have’), Quinton constructs his new fathering, which hinges on giving ‘priority’ to his children’s activities over and above his work commitments. However, in the extract below it is evident that Quinton’s new fathering is enabled by his son’s like-mindedness in that, like Quinton, the son enjoys sport and he is ‘quite happy to put in the hours’. This like-minded ‘bonding’ through activity may be contrasted with Brian’s observations in the previous chapter, where Brian finds it difficult to bond with his non-sporty son because ‘he probably won’t be playing’. In Quinton’s case, father and son have been able to ‘spend ages in the Cricket nets or the Hockey field’ and this is where Quinton and son have ‘really bonded’. In summary, there is the sense that Quinton only allows himself to see sameness in his son, which implies that difference would equate to disappointment. There is also the implication that similarity (through shared investment in sport) is an essential basis for ‘bonding’.

The extract below sees Quinton explaining his son to his listener. It is evident that Quinton positions himself as the father who understands his son, because he is able to identify with his son:

I think he gets some of his security from the time that you spend (.) he loves having either of us (.) you know (.) supporting him at the side of the sports field (.) or um (.) you know

just on the end of the telephone now that he's at boarding school/ he likes just to touch base (.) 'specially with his mother in particular (1) You know he just likes the-that comfort (mm) um (1) ja (.) I think he's a hard working diligent boy (mm) (.) Um (.) he's (.) he does like to succeed at what he does um (.) you know he's quite happy to put in the hours (.) uh (.) to/to work at it (.) uh (.) which I think distinguishes him from quite a few of his peers (mm) who haven't yet worked out that it's/it's a time investment more than anything um (.) to achieve excellence (1) There's nothing/ there's no substitute for that (.) And I think that I view things a lot from a sporting perspective because I think that's where my real passions lie (mm) um (.) and Russell has inherited that and we've spent ages um (.) in the Cricket nets or on the Hockey field (.) and that's where we've really bonded a lot (.) um. That having been said he's also/he's also very happy to (.) knuckle down and do his school work and/and balance those things (3) He also likes to just lie on the couch and watch TV from time to time=hhh= which I think is a/a trait that all children have

Quinton begins by constructing a harmonious and secure arrangement between father, mother and son, which he bases on the 'time' that he and his wife spend 'supporting' their son 'on the side of the sports field'. Consequently, Quinton's son is both secure and content ('he loves'). Quinton does distinguish between mother support and father support, where mother support has to do with 'comfort' whilst Quinton takes the 'sporting perspective' because this is where his 'real passions lie'. Fortunately, Quinton's son has 'inherited' this passion and therefore father and son are able to bond through sameness. Furthermore, Quinton's son makes an effort: he is a 'hard working, diligent boy', which Quinton directly links to his son's competitive achievements (which I think distinguishes him from quite a few of his peers'). Thus Quinton's son is compliant with his father's perspective, where effort leads to the shared goal of 'excellence'. Schoolwork is constructed as a 'balance' to sport, but schoolwork is not the primary site of the father-son bond. On reflection, Quinton notes that his son also likes to 'just lie on the couch and watch TV' and Quinton's laughter suggests that he recognizes this behavior as contrary to his primary construction of sports investment, effort and excellence. However, Quinton normalizes this disappointing detour as a 'trait that all children have'.

In the following extract, Quinton's mentoring involves helping his son to stay on the road towards sporting success. Again, it is evident that sameness allows Quinton to know his son's mind but this is a knowing does not see any difference. Instead, because his son is following an approved route, Quinton is 'never disappointed':

Shoo (.) so that he's at a particular time when (.) in the next three or four years (.) you know in terms of his sport (.) is there anything that you feel (.) you might need to bring or do as a dad over the next three or four years?

You know I think that (.) one of the things is (.) and it's certainly something that we've always tried to do (.) is to be there (.) um (2) in the sense that it doesn't always go well (.) you know (.) and/and I think you need to consistently be there/ Jane and I play different roles in that sense (.) um (.) in that if he's-if it doesn't go so well I think that Russell sort of feels "Ah well now maybe dad (.) will be a bit disappointed" and/and it's never that for me you know (.) um (1) I've said to him (.) before (.) "Russell (.) I've done those things hhh so I know that feeling" (.) um (.) but I think it's like the desire to (.) to do well (.) you know (.) um (.) and/ and I think that (.) there are a lot of bumps on the way in/in playing any kind of sport or competing at any level (.) and I think that as parents we've just got to (.) continue to be there (*mm*) you know

As the parent, Quinton emphasizes that he will 'be there' together with his wife and alongside his son in the shared project of helping their son to succeed at competitive sport. However, Quinton again distinguishes fathering from mothering by making disappointing performances a father-son affair. It is 'dad' who is in Russell's mind if 'it doesn't go so well'. The words 'maybe' and 'a bit' minimize the extent of Quinton's possible disappointment, which Quinton then extends by promptly denying any disappointment in his son ('and it's never been that for me you know). The words 'you know' are a request for endorsement from his listener; that it's clear that Quinton is *not* the disappointed father.

Having firmly removed disappointment from the discursive frame, Quinton then takes up a mentor position that is based on knowing 'that feeling' of disappointment in his son because Quinton has 'done those things'. Therefore Quinton manages the issue of disappointment by placing it in his son and then identifying with it there ('so I know that feeling') which may be

read as an instance of projective identification. Quinton's 'knowing laughter' signifies authority through knowledge ("Russell, I've done those things hhh. so I know that feeling"). Because Quinton has 'done those things' he is able to take a mentoring position on his son's discomfort. This has some of the elements of an initiation passage, where pain is cast as necessary to the process of becoming like the father. As mentor, Quinton identifies with his son's 'desire to do well' which coincides with his position of compassion and support. Russell is on a recognized and pre-approved road, and so his failures can be recast as 'bumps on the way'. In this sense, 'bumps on the way' works to deny disappointment, but in this process the son becomes a self-extension of the father.

In summary, the above two extracts illustrate how Quinton establishes a bond with his son through mentoring. Mentoring 'corrects' Quinton's disappointments with his own father and establishes a bond of sameness and shared purpose that bars disappointment. Quinton's mentor position may be seen as an instantiation of a hegemonic masculinity where father and son bond through competitive sports whilst the mother is excluded from this domain. Quinton is able to claim a position of 'never' being disappointed because his son is compliant with acceptable masculinity and this allows Quinton to be the father he wants to be.

More generally, the above extracts illustrate the extent to which mentoring hinges on constructions of similarity between father and son. In the case of Brendan and Quinton, mentor father and mentee son are constructed as sharing the same mind. Perhaps it could be argued that the Brendan who 'giggles' with his son, and the Quinton who 'knows that feeling', are engaging in projective identification where the self-other line between father (as the boy he was) and son becomes indistinct. Hence, 'bonding' involves the son becoming a self-extension of the father.

8.1.2. Frustrated Mentoring

For participants of different and disappointing sons, 'bonding' and mentoring do not easily coexist, giving rise to a sense of dilemma regarding what the 'good father' should do. The following two extracts see John referencing his past experiences of absence and disappointment in order to account for his fathering of his own sons. It is interesting to note that John constructs two contrasting father positions. In the first father position John gives priority to 'love' and acceptance of difference, and in the second father position John gives priority to the asserting of

his ways. It is argued that this second, more coercive father position is linked to a particular performance of hegemonic masculinity, where difference is not accepted and the son must acquiesce to the father's ways.

John

In the extract below, John points to his own experiences of father absence in order to account for his initial resolve to give his sons 'everything I never had'. However, John then constructs a transition from this initial position towards a new fathering that prioritizes the giving of 'love' and a relinquishing of paternal coercion:

But Rob (.) let me tell you one thing about myself and that is (.) you know I'm-I'm operating uh, sort of in a/in a/ in an untrained kind of way (.) you know (.) just to give you a little bit of my background (.) I dunno if you – if that is-is part of this at all (*it is*). But um:: you know (.) I/I didn't feel like I had the best examples (.) you know uh (.) my mom divorced my father when I was eighteen months old – I was raised by a step-father who was virtually not there you know (1) um:: And so (.) from my point of view (.) you know of course before I had my children (.) it was like "I'm gonna give them everything that I never had" (.) you know (.) and then once you start having children (.) then you realize you have to temper that (.) you have to say well "Whoa whoa whoa (.) wait a minute (.) you can't give them everything (.) even though you didn't have it (.) You know (.) and I think then (.) then, that what you mean by that is "Well (.) I'm going to give them the love" because that's the most important thing (1) is that they always know that they have a home (.) is that they always know that they're loved and cared for and that they know that/that/that you-you will provide for them (.) the basics (.) you know (.) good education (.) discipline (.) and-and boundaries (.) you know (.) but then (.) but then you let them become who they naturally are

John begins by positioning himself as 'untrained', which indexes the inadequacies of his past, and implies that he has been let down in his own development as a father. John goes on to reference biographical details of absence and neglect. The phrase 'eighteen months' (as opposed to a year-and-a-half) underscores John's position as a helpless infant. In response to this history of neglect, John naturalizes ('of course') his determination to give his children 'everything that I

never had', which again introduces the prospect of projective identification, where the son is related to as an extension of the father. John then constructs a current and more reflective 'you' position that involves restraining his impulses to 'give' his children 'everything' and settling on the giving of 'love'. John's new father position includes the 'basics' of orthodox fathering (providing and discipline) but it seems to hinge on being the father who will 'let' his children 'become who they naturally are'. Thus John's new father position is founded on personal restraint ('Whoa, whoa, whoa') and the acceptance of difference.

However, as the extract below indicates, John's interview sees him vacillating between his position as the receptive and accepting new father and a more assertive fathering that he bases on his position as an independent and 'resourceful' man:

You know (.) I/and I think maybe that's one of our biggest learnings Rob (.) is that I got to where I am without a lot of (.) you know (.) mollycoddling and (.) you know (.) my parents weren't really constructive in-in the development of me and who I am (.) and to get me to where I am (1) And – and I don't want to take anything away from them (.) they obviously did what they did for me as a young kid (1) But I certainly didn't have um:: (.) over the top overbearing (.) you know (.) 'you will succeed' you know (.) sort of parents (.) You know (.) it was almost the opposite (1) It was like "Well (.) we can't afford to send you to university (.) so" (.) you know (.) "deal with it and get there on your own" sort of thing

You know so (.) but that's where I am more like my other son (.) resourceful an-and I'll make it happen (.) you know (.) And I'm just saying (.) that if I could just give Sean half the – half of what I got (.) you know (.) Or even more than that (.) I mean (.) like I think to myself (.) look at where I got in life (.) and I didn't even have that encouragement or support (.) you know (.) just imagine what these kids can get by having that love and encouragement and support

In the first paragraph John takes up a position of competent masculinity ('biggest learnings') which may be contrasted with his position as the uninitiated, 'untrained' father in the first extract. The word 'mollycoddling' eschews dependency and aligns John with a hegemonic masculinity that marginalizes vulnerability. Hence, John's biographical construction involves

quite different subject positions from the previous extract. Here, John positions himself as emotionally needless and indifferent ('they obviously did what they did for me as a young kid'). John points away from neglect (but I certainly didn't have um::) towards the idea that he has somehow benefitted from a 'deal with it' upbringing. In fact, through the phrase 'over the top, overbearing', John makes involved parenting consistent with indulgence.

John reveals the benefits of his 'deal with it' upbringing in the second paragraph, where he positions himself as 'resourceful', and able to 'make it happen'. Thus John is the autonomous, independent and successful man. This alters the way he conceptualizes his mentoring. Rather than letting his children become 'who they naturally are' John invites his listener to 'just imagine' 'what these kids can get by having that love and encouragement and support'.

Benjamin (1988) argues that, in the identificatory process between father and son, the father recognizes himself in his son, and sees in him the ideal boy he would have been. In the above two extracts, John's fathering seems based on different conceptions of the ideal boy. In the first instance, John's restrained fathering is based on the ideal of a secure and accepted child, whereas in the second extract, John's own achievements as a self-made man ('where I got in life') prompt his fantasies regarding where Sean 'could be' if only he would accept his father's mentoring. It may be argued that these two different ideals neatly illustrate the dilemma faced by fathers of different or disappointing sons. Does the father take up a new fathering that foregrounds acceptance and warmth, or does the father take up an orthodox approach that insists on acceptable versions of masculinity and maintains the father's idealizations?

In the extract below John constructs a narrative that sees him taking up the second of these father positions, in that he is primarily invested in 'getting' his son to take up an 'opportunity' that he never had as a child. Here it is evident that his son's negations give rise to significant frustration and disappointment for John as mentor:

But I think it's/ it's things that – I think the biggest challenge is for me as a father (.) Rob (.) is that you obviously want the best for your kids (.) you know (.) and you see maybe your own failings in life (.) about where your – maybe your – my parents didn't push me uh: or maybe didn't even give me the opportunity to play piano (.) you know (.) so now I'm giving him the opportunity to play piano (.) yet (.) it's like a daily grind you know (.) to get him to actually – and he's and he can do it and that's what kills me (.) Is that – and

that's what we're fighting about (.) is that he-he um: just doesn't have (.) he just lacks the drive you know (.) He'll never just sit down and just say "Ooh I'm gonna play" and so I think that's where we rub often

John begins by pointing out that this stretch of talk has to do with his 'biggest challenge' as 'a father'. John then adopts a taken-for-granted moral position based on an amalgam of father as provider and father as mentor. John, 'as a father', 'obviously' wants 'the best' for his kids. John develops his argument by drawing on his own experiences of substandard parenting, where his parents didn't 'push' him, or 'even' give him the opportunity to 'play piano'. John's emphasis on the word 'failings' denotes a personal biographical motive for getting his son to play piano: that his son's accomplishments somehow compensate for current deficiencies in John's personal repertoire, which again signifies that John is engaged in projective identification. John accounts for his 'failings' by pointing out that his parents didn't 'push' him, which introduces the taken-for-granted assumption that the good parent should push his child to achieve.

With the phrase 'so now', John makes an explicit link between his childhood past and his current position as the father: John intends to give his son opportunities that John lacked as a child. Thus, as with the above participants, John's performance of fatherhood is simultaneously informed by normative notions of the father as provider/mentor as well as John's personal narrative of neglect. John continues, through the rest of this extract, to entrench his moral position as the mentor father. The phrase 'so now I'm giving him the opportunity' constructs a complementary dispenser/recipient relationship between father and son, such that Sean's refusal to play the piano is as much a spurning of John's fathering as it is a refusal of an activity. The fact that his son 'can do it' draws on the discourse of 'potential' identified in the previous chapter. This discourse of 'potential' positions his son as willfully uncooperative, which accounts for John's position as the frustrated and negated father ('it kills me'). By way of a conclusion, John constructs his son as incomplete: 'he lacks drive', which infers that he is currently unable to replicate his father's ways. In response, John positions himself as the mentor father who has a prevailing imperative ('and so') to 'get' his son to comply ('we rub often').

The extract below follows directly after the extract above. As is evident, I go on to ask John what he does with a son who refuses to comply. John responds by constructing a vignette which alternates between hope, disappointment and paternal coercion:

Mm-hm what do you do with that?

(Sigh) You know (.) I try and talk to him about it (.) and/and explain to him what a valuable asset this will be to his life (.) you know (.) to say (.) like one day we were (.) we were at some friends' house um, and he did (1) Everybody else was kind of mingling and talking and doing their own thing (.) and Sean sat down and he started playing the piano (.) and people looked and said “Wow is that Sean?” you know (.) And he got like all proud about it you know (.) and he decided to sit down and start playing a little bit more (.) And I just took him aside and said “You see (.) That's the value of a piano (.) That's the value of-of learning is that this is gonna be an asset to you for the rest of your life” You know an-an-and you have that discussion and he agrees (.) yet again (.) there's no like desire to take it (.) ugh (.) I mean he's only ten years old (.) I mean (.) I'm being a bit hard on him (.) but (.) you know (.) you just (.) you hate fighting him all the time you know (.) and that's what it seems like

John begins his response with the phrase ‘you know’ which indicates that he is inviting his listener to share his discursive investments. Early emphasis on the word ‘try’ serves to elicit sympathy for the persevering father who, in the face of disappointment, continues in his attempts to persuade his son to share his father’s mind. The phrase ‘valuable asset’ is the language of commerce, indicating that playing the piano brings social capital over and above simple pleasure. John illustrates the value of this asset by constructing a brief story, wherein Sean actually does play and receives social approval (‘Wow, is that Sean?’). The phrase ‘he got like all proud about it’ serves as evidence of piano playing as an ‘asset’ and justifies John’s insistence. John seizes on this moment of incipient shared feeling and takes this as an opportunity to press home his perspective on the benefits of effort and performance (‘I just took him aside’; ‘You see!’). John’s use of emphases signifies his investment in this perspective. John then shifts to a more detached father position with the word ‘discussion’ denoting reasonableness and paternal self-control. Emphasis on the word ‘agrees’ makes Sean culpable for disappointing his father. This is something of a betrayal, where Sean willfully chooses to spurn his father’s direction. John is disappointed ‘yet again’, as his son fails to share John’s desire, which represents a core feature of John’s disappointment.

John concludes this section by alternating between two subject positions; the self-reproaching ‘I’ that is aware of his son’s subjectivity (‘I’m being a bit hard on him’) and the ‘you’ that seems to blame the son for the ‘fighting’. So John’s empathy shifts from his son to himself. For Benjamin (1995), the discovery that “you and I don’t want the same thing” leads to a breakdown of recognition between self and other (p. 42). Benjamin (ibid.) also argues that when attempts to coerce the other are refused, this very refusal is itself experienced as coercion by the negating other. This seems to be the case here, in that Sean’s refusal to follow his father’s ways leaves John feeling coerced into ‘fighting all the time’, which he hates. This self-other positioning emphasizes the son’s power, as the mentee who has the capacity to reject his father’s mentoring. It may also be argued that John’s ‘you’ position is consistent with Klein’s paranoid schizoid position, in that it is marked by frustrated attempts to control the other (Hollway, 2006). In this case the implication is that John is struggling to shift towards the depressive position. Initially, John is mindful of his son’s young age, and the notion that he’s being a ‘bit hard’ on his son, but this moral position is breached by an omnipotent ‘you’ that has to fight his son ‘all the time’.

Perhaps it can be argued that the above two father positions correlate with the distinctions Samuels (1989) makes between gender certainty and gender confusion. In the first extract, John fathers from a less certain and more restrained ‘you’ position whereas in the second extract it is evident that John takes up a more certain position as a ‘resourceful’ and successful man (‘where I got in life’). Consistent with Samuels’ (ibid.) theory, from the less ‘certain’ position, John is able to recognize his son’s differences, whereas the more certain gender position coincides with coercive fathering. In the extract below, it is evident that John has an ambivalent take on being the uncertain father and that he aspires to an idealized version of fathering that transcends complexity:

You know (.) from my point of view (.) what I’ve tried to do is I’ve tried to seek out other gurus if you will (.) you know (.) other fathers, you know (.) And/and believe me (.) fathers are very proud to give you their advice (.) you know (.) older fathers who are in their (.) you know (.) maybe twenty or thirty years than I am (.) you know (1) And they’ll tell you everything they did ri::ght (.) and everything they did wro:ng (.) and/and all those things (.) and I like to seek those kind of people out (.) I like to talk to them (.) and just see what their philosophy was (.) and what their approach was um: you know (.) because

my/my/my goal/my journey is to be that exceptional father (.) you know (.) I dunno who doesn't feel that way (.) You know I do feel like it's a tremendous responsibility

Diamond (2007) points out that closeness and competitiveness are hallmarks of the oedipal stage and this ambivalence is evident in John's positioning of the 'gurus'. On the one hand John (as the 'untrained' father) has tried to 'seek out' these mentors, whilst on the other he has had to suffer their proud 'advice'. However, John chooses to 'seek those kind of people out' because he wants to be 'that exceptional father'. Consistent with oedipal theory, John yields to these older men's 'advice' but holds on to the goal of eclipsing them in the future. Finn and Henwood (2009) argue that self-identifications as the 'responsible father' may coincide with a "(re) recognition of status and power tied to cultural perceptions of adulthood, at least as it relates to men" (p. 559). It is argued that, in the extract above, John's identification with 'gurus' who dispense fatherly advice is consistent with a hegemonic masculinity that is certain and that knows what is best for young men or sons.

In the extract below, John constructs a story of mentoring as his 'best moment' response. As with Brendan above, it is evident that mentoring allows John to take up the position of that 'exceptional father' who is able to teach his responsive and admiring son. Again this denotes the power that the son holds to recognize his father as mentor. Within this complementary relationship, bonding and performance are compatible, although in this case performance has to do with John's position as the capable father:

The one day (.) I quickly went out for half an hour to um: learn how to sail this little boat and (.) um:: on one of these like little training boats and then I said "Ok, now" (.) and I/and I asked the guy if I could go and fetch my son now (.) cause I wanted to take him out and show him what the experience was (.) and I took him out (.) and the delight on his face was exactly what you want (.) you know (.) he just (.) he looked at this (.) and he says "Wow dad" He says "Where's the motor?" and I said "No boy (.) there's no motor" and he said "you're joking (.) This boat is moving like this with no motor? Just the wind dad?" "Ja (.) just the wind Sean". And he says "Whaa" (.) he said "This is amazing" And he-and he sat there on the front of the boat (.) he just looked at me (.) and we just chatted (.) we just had that one-on-one time together. And he says "Dad this is really cool" He says "Do you think we can maybe get a boat like this (.) and take it out to the dam (.) and

you and I can sail together and/ ” I’ll tell you what Rob (.) that’s the whole purpose of life right there

In the above story, John ‘quickly...for half an hour’ acquires competence from ‘the guy’ – he is not dependent for long – and then John is ready to take up the mentor position. Then, as the mentor father, John is in a position to ‘show’ his son ‘what the experience was’. As indicated, John goes on to construct a complementary relationship wherein he is positioned as the capable male who is mirrored (‘he just looked at me’) by an admiring son. John and his son bond (‘we just had that one-on-one time together’) as John steers the boat and responds to his son’s amazement and adoration. Furthermore, John is sought out by his son, who hopes to prolong his time with his father (‘you and I can sail together’). John indexes this father moment as completing of his selfhood (‘that’s the whole purpose of life right there’). For John, this instance is constructed as the pinnacle of fathering, but it is an instance where the father is recognized by his son, rather than an instance where the son is recognized by the father.

Shortly after John’s interview, I recorded the following reflexive notes:

I was struck by John’s poise and comfort during the interview. I felt like he was eager to present himself – to perform – that this was, in a sense, his ‘show’. John told me that he ‘enjoyed these things’ and during the interview he tended to speak over me in his enthusiasm. I am left feeling oddly irritated. John was so generous with his time and talk, but I feel that John was not really vulnerable or authentic with me.

These field notes suggest that narcissistic needs were incorporated into John’s performance of fathering, and that John took fathering as a forum for the gratification of these needs. Reviewing the above excerpts, it seems that what John wants his son to ‘see’ and to join him in, is the pursuit of narcissistic gratification. John is thrilled when his son, as a self-extension, gets a glimpse of the adoration he could enjoy if he took up his father’s ways (‘Wow! Is that Sean?’). Furthermore, when the son complements the father, John is able to be a ‘guru’, an ‘exceptional father’. My field notes indicate that I felt overlooked by John, and disconnected from him. Perhaps it could be said that, in the thrall of his performance, John was not able to recognize me. Turning to the son, it seems that John’s narcissistic desires make it difficult for John to ‘let’ his son be.

In summary, it may be argued that John's mentoring of his son is constructed as something of a personal project, oriented by two goals: being that 'exceptional father' and 'getting' his son to where he could 'be'. This version of mentoring contrasts with John's initial and more reflective father position which involves 'letting' his sons be 'who they are'. As the 'resourceful' man and the 'exceptional' father, John takes up 'gender certain' position, but this leaves him fighting his disappointing son 'all the time'. Thus it seems that certainty on John's part coincides with inflexible responses to difference. Evidence of this inflexibility may be found in the plotline of John's story in the second extract above: John's hopes are fanned when his son plays the piano, receives approval and feels 'proud'. John takes this as an opportunity to get his son to 'see' John's perspective, and it appears that Sean 'agrees'. But 'yet again' John is disappointed because 'there's no desire'. As opposed to accepting his son's differences, John is left 'fighting' Sean 'all the time'. Hollway (2007) points out that "omnipotence is characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid mode of experience where the other is used as an extension of the self's narcissism" (p. 52). The depressive position provides an account of rising above these dynamics and it may be argued that, inasmuch as he pursues 'exceptional' fathering, John avoids the loss and pain of the depressive position.

Craig

Craig's negotiations of 'frustrated mentoring' serve as a contrast to John's negotiations as described above. It is evident that Craig links distinct hopes to the mentoring position. However, in the face of his son's negations, Craig strives to maintain an ethical position that involves relinquishing the hopes that come with being the mentor father: a process that seems compatible with Klein's depressive position.

In the extract below, Craig associates mentorship with love, with the implication that it is difficult for him to feel loved by his son if he is negated as the mentor. Also, Craig associates the mentor position with a particular position of paternal authority, such that his son's negations represent a 'dethroning' of him as the father:

Have you ever felt like withdrawing from Michael (.) maybe because he's let you down in some way?

Mm (.) mm (2) ja (1) er not so much because he's let me down (.) but if I think he doesn't love me or I feel somewhat rejected in some way (.) I often go into a kind of a recoil (.) um (.) and I suppose a lot of those conflicts come when I'm try'na coach him into a particular way of doing something (.) or I've invested in a particular outcome and he gets sort of defiant uh: and I feel quite badly dethroned and then it feels personal to me um (1)

So historically I have definitely kind of withdrawn, um:: (.) um::: But of late as I have kind of given up more (.) um::: sort of all the things that I have been/that I have been tryna engineer in him seem to be just be sort of more spontaneous hey um: (1) But I do (.) I find it impossible to get that balance between respecting him and insisting on some form of discipline hey (.) um: that you know (.) he can't just have it all his own way (2) Ja

In the above extract, Craig discards the suggested link between being 'let down' and 'withdrawing', and offers, instead, a link between withdrawal and not being loved or being rejected. This has the effect of demoting Craig's expectations as the father and foregrounding his vulnerability in his relationship with his son – that his son has the power to hurt him as the father, by rejecting the mentor-mentee arrangement. Craig then shifts to a self-reflective position where he critiques his own 'doing' of mentoring. Where Craig takes up the position of 'coach', and where he becomes personally 'invested', he becomes vulnerable to his son's defiance. Craig links the words 'dethroned' and 'personal' which means that, when his son won't let him be the mentor, Craig is unrecognized as the father. The word 'dethroned' also implies that being the mentor father comes with a taken-for-granted status which Craig loses when his son is 'defiant'.

Craig then reconfirms that he has withdrawn in the face of this disappointment, however, he emphasizes that this response is historical rather than current. Craig goes on to construct his 'new father' position, which centers on his having 'given up more'. The difference, then, between withdrawal and Craig's new position seems to pertain to Craig having relinquished the hope that he might 'engineer' things in his son. Craig then points to the merits of his new position, these being that his son takes up hoped for ways through his own, 'spontaneous' initiatives. Like Scott in the previous chapter, Craig finds himself striving to find some 'balance between respecting' his son as an equivalent other and 'insisting on some form of discipline'. Although it could be said that Craig and Scott retain elements of the traditional 'father as law-giver' position, it is evident that both fathers have undergone a type of dethroning in that they do not simply hold

sway as the father. Therefore both Scott and Craig relinquish taken-for-granted versions of fathering in order to recognize their sons as different, and this leaves both fathers in the ‘impossible’ territory of having to negotiate the son as an independent and equivalent source of subjectivity.

One conversational turn later, Craig summarizes his new father position, which is based on forgoing the use of ‘force’ as the father and yielding to his son’s self-assertions. Interestingly, Craig goes on to link this new father position with his experience of inadequacy in the company of other fathers:

And so it’s just um, maybe trying to force him into something that he wasn’t ready for and him kind of saying “No (.) I wanna do it on my terms” and then when he does it on his terms it was better than I coulda done it on my terms anyway (2)

So it seems to be um (.) something that um, you come back to quite a bit as we chat (ja) about you and Michael (.) that’s something that’s been quite significant for you?

Ja (.) ja (.) and also embarrassing in front of other dads cause (.) um Michael is un-instruct-able hey *Hhh*. hhh. (1) Um: so if there’s a dad’s evening at school (.) and we’ve got to like build these (.) you know (.) trucks out of boxes (.) you know (.) the other dads are like telling their kids what to do (.) I don’t hey (.) er (1) I/I sit (1) and I watch (.) and Michael does it hey (2) If I go fishing (.) I don’t instruct that oke at all anymore hey (.) He doesn’t want my instruction hey

Hm (.) And what’s that like for you?

Mm (.) I suppose it leaves me feeling somewhat redundant um:: but also proud at the same time hey (.) *mm* (.) ja *mm* (4)

As indicated, Craig begins this extract by constructing a self-other equivalence between himself and his son, where Craig accepts his son’s ‘terms’. Craig accounts for his new position by pointing out that it leads to ‘better’ outcomes than would have been the case if he had insisted on his own ‘terms’. I respond by reflecting back to Craig that this new position is ‘significant’ for him, thus cementing his uptake of this new social identity. Craig then responds by articulating the complications that come with not being the mentor. As a non-mentor, Craig is the outsider to

'other dads', who are active and assertive in their relationships with their sons, whereas he positions himself as passive and powerless. His son 'does it' whilst he is left to 'sit and 'watch'. Craig projects disapproval or mockery onto 'other dads' who he imagines look down on him for his disempowered style of fathering. Thus Craig associates mentoring with a hegemonic masculinity that confers exalted status to fathers of compliant mentee sons. However, for the sake of his relationship with his son, Craig moves away from the acceptable mentor position, which has the effect of subordinating him as a man. On the occasion of this 'dads' evening' Craig must contain the shame that he experiences as the outsider, unable to join with the 'other dads' who are engaged in 'telling their kids what to do'. This is the price that Craig must pay for being non-hegemonic.

As indicated in chapter two, Hollway (2007) cites Kristeva's concept of 'forgetting oneself' as a hallmark of maternal love. In the extract above it seems that, Craig is describing a 'forgetting' himself as the father where he forgoes the narcissistic gratifications that come with being enthroned as the mentor father. Craig's emphasis on the words 'at all' and 'redundant' signify that forgoing mentoring leaves Craig in something of an empty category as the father. However, Craig restores this to some extent by positioning himself as 'proud' of his assertive and independent son. This last discursive move is perhaps consistent with the position of 'rebellious masculinity' identified by Wetherell and Edley (1999), where apparent resistance to hegemonic masculinity "trades on the hegemonic values of autonomy and independence" (p. 350). In Craig's case, being 'proud' may also be seen as a response to, or recovery from the disappointment of being 'redundant', in that it enables Craig to maintain paternal identifications with a son who doesn't want his instruction 'at all'.

In the extract below, Craig constructs a thoughtful, reflexive account of his struggle to accept his son's differences. Craig frames his experience as a 'journey of mourning' that has led towards Craig choosing to 'stand back' from his different son. What is notable is that this accepting position entails tolerating intersubjective distance and uncertainty:

And you might feel like you've already answered it (.) but I will ask you again anyway (.) what have you done with that uh:: sort of experience of disappointment?

It's been a definite journey of mourning for me hey um (.) it's been a/it's been a bereavement, um (.) but something that I am starting to come to terms with and something I am starting to realize is more sacred than umm me telling him how to do it 'cause it makes me feel useful hey (2) I suppose what it/it's made me do at some level is almost um have to respect the oke hey uh (.) that I am very aware that he's a child but in that one area it feels like I've gotta have a-an adult respect for him um which again has been quite a (.) er, quite a tricky process for me hey cause it does uh: mean that um (.) I gotta stand back and just trust some of what I think are really bad decisions (.) that he'll wind his way through them (.) Ja

What do you think a father should do then (.) if he feels like his son is going about things the wrong way?

Jaa hey (.) Sheepers (.) I must say I'm at real odds but I think (.) and it might be a bit of a cop-out (.) but I think a dad's just got to match uh (.) the temperament of that son hey (.) sometimes that son's got to be prodigal and the dad has to stand still and wait for him to come back (.) and other times the dad's gotta go driving into town at two in the morning and save that kid hey (.) and I don't know where that line is at all hey (1) But maybe it's a/maybe the task of a dad is just to (.) go within and try and become more enlightened about what's my stuff and what's my kid's stuff hey (1) Ja (.) that's certainly what Michael has done for me (1) he's/ he's made me um (.) really question myself in a million ways (.) ja

In the first paragraph, Craig positions himself as the father who must come to terms with loss because he is relinquishing the mentor position. With the phrase 'makes me feel useful', Craig constructs the mentor position as self-indulgent, hence something that he should not desire. Nevertheless, the words 'journey' and 'starting' emphasize that Craig continues to reach towards the accepting position: that it is difficult to grasp. Consistent with Benjamin's (1995) theorizing, the son's negation of his father's assertions 'make' Craig recognize his son; to have an 'adult respect' for his son as an equivalent center of being. However, Craig's 'journey of mourning' also seems to coincide with an enhanced sense of morality that is consistent with Klein's depressive position (Hollway, 2007). The phrase 'more sacred' denotes the ethic of Craig's response, where he 'respects' Michael as an equivalent center of consciousness. Benjamin (1988;

1995) describes recognition as a tenuous accomplishment, always threatening to collapse into domination. Craig seems to index this tenuousness in his construction of the ‘tricky process’, where there is an ‘I’ that is required to ‘just trust’ that his son’s ‘really bad decisions’ will lead to something acceptable. The challenge, for Craig, is to demote his own understanding (‘what I think’) in order to let his son live in a different way.

Craig’s use of the word ‘adult’ may be contrasted with Douglas’s use of the word in his phrase ‘flying an adult kite’ (see chapter ten). For Craig, the word implies respect for difference, that his son is apprehended as a person in his own right, whereas for Douglas the word ‘adult’ refers to a hegemonic way of being that Douglas is pulling his son toward: adventurous masculinity. For Douglas, ‘adult’ coincides with identification with sameness, whereas for Craig the phrase ‘adult respect’ represents the work and tolerance entailed in identifying with difference: finding commonality with the other as a like subject. Craig’s phrase conveys an ethical stance, but it is without the confirmation, or perhaps indulgence (‘makes me feel useful’) that Douglas enjoys through identification with sameness. Rather, Craig’s love for his different son involves the difficult task of restraining his own desire.

In response to Craig’s accepting position, I pose a question that makes mentoring a taken-for-granted task of responsible fathering, which has the effect of re-agitating the dilemma implicit to Craig’s position. Craig aligns with me (‘Jaa hey!’) and with the phrase ‘real odds’, indicates that he retains some allegiance to orthodox mentoring. Then, with the conjunction ‘but’, Craig returns to recognition talk, although the phrase ‘and it might be a bit of a cop out’ indicates that Craig is mindful of an audience that would see his proposed flexibility as a failure to display masculine/paternal initiative. Like other participants, Craig invokes the metaphor of a ‘line’ to capture the dilemma of whether or not the good father should get his son to go the ‘right way’. In response to this dilemmatic ‘line’, Craig draws on two versions of fatherhood: the patient, loving father who waits for his ‘prodigal’ son to return, and the heroic father who ‘rescues’ his errant son. Although these two versions offer contrasting imperatives on the notion of paternal intervention, both carry the promise of father-son unification. Craig then turns towards a third option, where the good father undertakes a process of separating himself from his son (‘my stuff’ and ‘his stuff’). Instead of a union based on identification with sameness, Craig’s son has ‘made’ Craig ‘really question’ himself. As the father of a different son, Craig strives to accept his son’s

negations. Instead of pursuing dominance, Craig takes up a reflexive, uncertain father position ('made me really question myself in a million ways').

It seems clear, however, that there is a vein of loss running through Craig's accepting position and that it also constitutes a defense against disappointment. Reflecting on his 'best father moment', Craig constructs a brief narrative that has to do with his hope that he will continue to live in his children's minds as a mentor, and that his connection with his son will survive departure and distance:

But I suppose another good one from me is (1) they have this silly ritual when I drop them off at school where they give each other a hug and they say 'be strong for the day' hey and umm ja that makes me happy (.) mm and I suppose my fantasy is (.) is that uh sort of long into adulthood hey (.) when um, Lara and Michael are maybe even living in different parts of the globe that um when they say cheers umm (.) ja, I hope that still rings for them. I think it will (1) hm (2) Ja but as you can see hey (.) my oke (1) he drills me hey (.) in a way that Lara just doesn't (2) Ja (3)

As is evident, Craig's best moment involves being in his children's minds, along with the hope that his children will identify with him in the future. Craig begins his best moment by casting it as a 'silly ritual', which protects him from the vulnerability that the telling of it brings. Watching his children comply with the ritual is narcissistically nourishing for Craig because, by repeating their father's refrain ('be strong for the day'), they are identifying with them as they go out towards their worlds. In this sense he is close to them and he is revitalized as the mentor father. Craig then constructs a fantasy narrative that carries his hope that he will continue to exist in his children's minds. Connection surviving distance is an important element of this poignant story. The children are imagined as 'even living in different parts of the globe', while the phrase 'even long into adulthood' conveys distance of time and perhaps even the kind of distance that would come with Craig's death. Craig holds onto the hope that he will continue to live in his children's minds despite distance ('I hope that still rings for them. I think it will').

Craig became emotional during this stretch of talk and I felt saddened by the combination of Craig's yearning and love for his son. The phrase 'my oke' combines the tenderness of identificatory love ('my') with the toughness ('oke') that is part of a masculine performance that

limits the expressing of intimacy . Again, connection and distance must be straddled as Craig speaks to another man who can ‘see’ (‘as you can see’) his love for his son as well as his sorrow. The phrase ‘he drills me’ indicates that the son, as the elusive other, has a destructive effect (in psychoanalytic terms) on the ‘me’ that Craig has unconsciously invested in the mentoring relationship. Craig’s different son has forced him to confront and dismantle his assumptions (‘he’s made me really question myself in a million ways’). Craig ends by making this experience (of being ‘drilled’) distinctive to his relationship with his son, as opposed to his daughter (‘in a way that Lara just doesn’t’), signifying that his difficulties have to do with the particularity of maintaining connection with a son who does not want to follow his father as a ‘like subject’.

In summary, it is evident that John and Craig link successful mentoring to a hegemonic masculinity centered on being the proud father who dispenses advice to his admiring and responsive son. However, both extracts illustrate that the father is vulnerable to the son as a recognizing other who has the power to reject the father as mentor. For Craig, this rejection represents a ‘dethroning’, while in John’s case his son’s rejection ‘kills’ him as the mentor father. As they construct their progress as fathers, both John and Craig position themselves as reflective, uncertain fathers who restrain their initial impulses towards their sons. However, John’s ‘best moment’ as a father suggests that he remains in thrall of a hegemonic masculinity that is accomplished through being the admired father. Consequently, John is left fighting his son ‘all the time’, as he looks to assert himself on his son. In contrast, Craig constructs a ‘journey of mourning’ which sustains his position as the uncertain father who tries to find the ‘impossible balance’ between ‘respecting’ his son and maintaining some influence on his son.

8.1.3. Guidance from below

Previous extracts show that, in the face of difference and disappointment, participants sometimes invert the mentor relationship such that it is the father who stands to learn from his different son. So for example Brendan positions himself as the father whose ‘little six year old’ son ‘teaches’ him a non-competitive approach to sport, and Brian wards off being disappointed by claiming that his different son perhaps sees ‘the bigger picture’. The focus of this subtheme, then, is the dismantling or inverting of the mentor-mentee arrangement as a response to difference and disappointment.

Jake

In this sample, Jake provides an exception in that he all but disqualifies himself from the mentor position, based on his argument that he does not have an acceptable version of masculinity that he is able to pass onto his son. As a consequence, Jake also takes up an uncertain position as the father, but in this case Jake bases his uncertainties on his own childhood and early development as opposed to his son's negations. As is evident in the extracts below, it is Jake himself who carries the possibility of being disappointing, whereas Jake exempts his son from this possibility:

You know I must say he/he just never disappoints me hey (.) um, and I guess (.) just (.) uh (.) quite often I kind of relate to when I was a kid (.) you know (.) and what life was like and just me as a kid (.) you know (.) and (.) and you know (.) my dad always just saying um (.) you know "You're always/ you're just such a bloody disappointment" you know (.) or whatever it was (.) But it was just for me like Neil never does that to me (1) He just (.) kind of going/I know that he/ I don't for one minute think he isn't naughty and all those other things (.) but he just for me is a great kid (.) you know (.) um and uh so it's been (.) it's been great hey

Um (.) but I also have to kind of/ like I'd say to him (.) We were/we were out one night and I just said to him "You know my boy (.) ay (.) I know (.) like"/ 'cause also I mean I'm from city so people do talk/ he's gonna land up you know/at some party/ people are gonna say "Your dad was really naughty when he was" you know. So it's kind of/it's probably happened/is happening (.) you know (1) So (.) it's quite a (.) it's/it's just part of life (.) I think, just have to accept that (.) you know (1) I've made my bed sometimes (.) I've just gotta sleep in it (.) But I certainly don't um (.) and I'm not proud of/ kind of the things I did (.) but I (.) they happened (.) you know (.) and I'm not that person anymore (.) so to speak (1) But I-so I had to say to my boy you know (.) I say to him (.) "Well I wanna be the best example I can be (.) but unfortunately I/ like/ I can't" (.) Like (.) I try

Cause you know I/I do/ there's things (.) m-most /I'd say most things I get right (.) but I still swear (.) and (.) you know in a fit of anger with working or something (.) I might swear (.) or I might (.) I don't know (.) not kick the dog but the equivalent of (.) you know (.) um (1) And/and perhaps/ perhaps I don't always come across in the most gentle

(.) sincere way (.) You know when I'm angry about the politicians I'll call them all kinds of things (.) you know (*hhh.*) So (.) but I/ but I sort of said to him (.) you know (.) And I also said to him "you know I've got a pretty checkered past so I don't want to preach" (.) but I/I'm aware of that (.) but I/I say to him "I/I have to tell you the things you shouldn't be doing (.) and the best way to tell you would be through my actions" *hhh.* *hhh.* I said "Unfortunately (.) they're not always gonna be appropriate" you know (.) "And perhaps my past is gonna kind of come up somewhere and you're gonna say "Well how dare he say...?" And I said "I know that so (1) But I'm not that person but I can/all I can say to you is this (.) that sometimes (.) just sometimes boy (.) you're going to have to do as I say (.) and just not as I do (*ja*) (.) I can't I just/ I'm/ I'm battling with a lotta stuff" (1)

And he says (.) and he smiles (.) and he says "No, I know dad" *hhh.* So *hhh.* so that's kind of/you know we have a/there's a lot of honesty from me (.) to him (.) and a lot of/ I think sometimes he manages me (*mm*) you know um (.) just because he's/ he's sensitive (.) so he kind of/ he's kind of probably worked out/ worked me out a little bit and decided "Well (.) you know I know how to (.) how to kind of/ when dad's this way (.) or that way" and he just (.) because he/ is like (.) *ja* (.) anyway (.) that's (.) and so (.) *ja* I-he's a great kid (.) he's a great kid and um (.) I'm very grateful (.) um (.) for him (.) *ja*

In the first paragraph, Jake firmly disclaims ever being disappointed in his son. On reflection, Jake accounts for this by identifying with the position of the disappointing son. The phrase 'Neil never does that to me' suggests that Jake retains responsibility and guilt as the disappointing son. In contrast, Neil is positioned as a 'great kid' in a relationship that is devoid of disappointment on Jake's part ('it's been great hey').

The risk of being disappointing offsets the happy conclusion of the first paragraph ('um but, I also have to kind of') as Jake sets about qualifying the kind of father he is able to be. Jake positions himself as the contrite man, although he vacillates between a position of guilt ('I've made my bed sometimes') and redemption ('I'm not that person anymore'; 'like, I try'). Nevertheless, Jake argues that, because of his disappointing past, he has had to forgo being a mentor ('the best example') to his son ('I had to say to my boy'). Jake goes on to account for his disqualification by indexing a series of innocuous shortcomings ('I might swear') and a less explicit, perhaps more shameful past: ('I'm not proud of the things I did'). It is Jake's past self, it

seems, which most unsettles Jake's ability to take up the mentor position. Jake imagines his son hearing something disappointing about his father, coming to know Jake as a bad man, and then rejecting his father's guidance ('Well, how dare he say...?'). The phrase 'I know that, so' indicates that Jake is braced against the possibility that he will be seen as a disappointment by his son.

The net effect of Jake's unsettled position as a man ('I'm not that person'; 'I'm battling with a lotta stuff') is that he is unable to hold onto the mentoring position. Jake settles, rather precariously, on the arrangement that 'sometimes, just sometimes boy, you're going to have to do as I say and just not as I do'. However, Jake immediately dismantles this 'father as mentor' position, and instead constructs an arrangement where the son 'manages' the father who is 'battling with a lotta stuff'. It is in fact the 'sensitive' son, who is parental, who 'just smiles' and who 'knows...when dad's this way or that way'. The son recognizes Jake and, rather movingly, is accepting of, rather than disappointed in his father. Jake is left 'grateful' to a son who is able to give him this understanding and acceptance. Here it may be argued that Jake turns to his son as a source of guidance, so inverting the mentor relationship constructed by other participants.

It is evident then, that of all the participants, Jake has the least conviction in his version of masculinity and fathering and this uncertainty means that he holds the task of mentoring at arms' length ('do as I say, and just not as I do'). In the extract below Jake chooses, for his 'best moment', to depict a moment of 'just' being loved by his son. It is a moving stretch of talk, where Jake first evokes and then is moved by his attachment to his son. Jake then goes on, in the second paragraph, to construct a 'father as disciplinarian' position which seems to be destabilised by his own experiences of punitive fathering:

Um, I definitely/my best moment/ or well/ a number of them is just um (.) it wasn't even s/ I don't think it was even his achievements (.) you know Neil was very fortunate (.) he got um/ he won um/ um/um scholarships to both X and Y schools (shoo(.) Wow) So (.) I was so proud (.) you know (.) um (1) But I have to say probably my (2) just my best moment has/ has been when he's kind of (.) just probably (3) I think just probably affirmed me as a father hey (.) you know when he's (2) ja (.) shoo (3) *We love these guys hey.* (3) Ja (.) I think just (.) mhm (.) just when he's like walked up to me at school (2) um

(.) in front of everyone and just (11) shoo sorry! (*not at all*) (4) So um (.) that probably (4) (sighs) (8) ja I think that probably meant the most to me (.) um (.) as a father (8)

A::nd um (5) things I've probably (2) things I've probably enjoyed the least (5) is where I probably have had to discipline him (.) um (2) cause on some levels I could just play all day (.) you know (4). But um/ that's/ um/ I/I kind of/ that's I had on occasions to/ I've never (.) I've never spanked my children/ I'm not suggesting that that's not appropriate/ but I just/ I just know that it was the way I was brought up (.) and um I:: um (.) again I've been very fortunate because Michelle's taken/ I have disciplined/ I've been that final voice, but um

Via the phrase 'it wasn't even his achievements', Jake alerts his listener to his departure from the taken-for-granted father script of getting the son to achieve. Then with the phrase 'But I have to say', Jake makes his point: his 'best moment' has been when his son has 'affirmed' him as a father. In a sense, this may be seen as a reiteration of other fathers' 'best moments', where the father is recognized and affirmed as the mentor. However, repetition of the word 'just' indicates that Jake's best moment differs from the orthodox, activity or achievement focused best moment that Jake could have selected. It's the non – instrumental, 'just' being loved that Jake wishes to highlight. Jake's use of the pronouns 'my' and 'me' emphasize that Jake is the recipient in this intersubjective exchange ('when he's walked up to me') such that it is the father who receives affirmation from the son, which contrasts from the routine mentoring script. The phrase 'in front of everyone' serves the dual purpose of creating an audience for this moment of affirmation, as well as signifying a moment of public affection that runs contrary to the kind of masculinity that Jake has known.

In the second paragraph, Jake points to the task of discipline as his worst moment. It is evident that Jake has difficulty claiming the orthodox position of being 'that final voice'. In the first sentence we see two 'I' positions', the first being the 'I' that must ('have had to') take up this father position and the second being an 'I' that 'could just play all day'. This second 'I' seems compatible with the 'I' who is 'battling with a lotta stuff' in the opening extract above, in that neither is able to confidently take up the father position. The number of false starts suggests that this stretch of talk is breached by unconscious anxieties regarding Jake's identification with his punitive father. Jake 'knows the way I was brought up' and this fractures his ability to be that

‘final voice’. Emphases on the words ‘had’ and ‘have’, as well as his disclaimer ‘I’m not suggesting that that’s not appropriate’ suggest that Jake is defending against this as something of an omission on his part.

As interviewer, I was struck by Jake’s humility and vulnerability. Jake was not the confident father, certain in his ways and in the ways his son should go. Instead, Jake was the ‘battling’ man who has rejected his former doing of masculinity leaving him uncertain of himself as a man and as a father. As a father who is ‘battling with a lotta stuff’, Jake is without the status of the mentor father who ‘knows that feeling’ (Quinton) or who enjoys being mirrored by an admiring son who ‘just looked at me’ (John). Nonetheless, from this uncertain father position, Jake is able to admire his different son and to enjoy the affirmation of their attachment.

However, it is also evident that Jake references his past in order to account for his incomplete uptake of two primary father functions: mentoring and discipline. Furthermore, Jake references his past in order to account for his position as a father who is ‘never’ disappointed in his son. The possibility exists that Jake’s disavowal of these two functions (discipline and mentoring) protects him against disappointment and the rupturing of a relationship that has been so restoring for Jake. This points to the dilemma articulated by Craig above, where ‘just’ focusing on the relationship, and allowing the son to pursue his ways, is in some ways synonymous with not being the father.

8.2. Summary

In the above extracts it is evident that participants invest an array of hopes into mentoring their sons. These include the following:

- Who my son ‘could be’ if he followed my guidance
- Who I could be if I were allowed to be the mentor father
- The relationship my son and I could enjoy through mentoring
- How mentoring my son could ‘correct’ my disappointments in the ways that I was fathered.

It is evident that mentoring is founded on the assumption of similarity. Mentoring has to do with both masculinity and ‘bonding’, and encountering a different or disappointing son disrupts both

of these projects. When mentoring works, fathers are able to enjoy being close to their similar sons through shared purposes that also have the effect of shoring up acceptable versions of masculinity for both father and son. Successful mentoring means that men are able to be good, supportive fathers as they help their sons achieve sporting excellence or acceptable competencies.

Samuels' (1986) concept of 'gender certainty' has been used to suggest that, in the face of difference and disappointment, participants vacillate between positions of 'certainty' and 'uncertainty' as fathers. From the uncertain position, participants take up accepting and recognizing responses to their son's negations. However, from the 'certain' position, Quinton does not see difference in his son whilst John is left fighting his different son 'all the time'.

Craig's extract indicates the difficulty of forgoing mentoring. In its absence, Craig is left in a position of distinct uncertainty as the father. As opposed to constructing a new certainty in the place of mentoring, Craig responds to disappointment by 'waiting'. Thus Craig's 'journey of mourning' remains somehow incomplete as he continues to tolerate distance from his negating son. Craig's 'best moment' narrative is energized by the hope that he will survive in his children's minds as the mentor father, thus maintaining connection despite distance.

Jake's extracts support the finding that investments in mentoring are allied to convictions or certainties regarding masculinity. However, Jake's interview also suggests that fathering is destabilized when it is devoid of its orthodox functions (in this case mentoring and discipline) as, in their absence, Jake 'could just play all day'.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the mentor position is central to traditional constructions of fathering. However, the father-as-mentor position has also been central to discourses of new fathering, where mentor fathers are seen as 'good' because they are involved in their children's lives, and because they teach their children necessary skills (Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik, 2012). A key distinction, however, would be that the new father does not replicate hegemonic masculinity in this process. However, as Dermott (2008) notes, a lack of clarity exists regarding what it means to be an 'involved' father. The findings of this chapter suggest that the mentoring position may coincide with distinct 'versions of the world' (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) and that, if these aren't realized the mentor position can actually work against

‘new fathering’ notions of warmth and acceptance. Most of the participants were invested in their positions as mentors or teachers of their sons but emotional closeness seemed to depend on how responsive their sons were. Interestingly, the above extracts reveal just how dependent fathers are on their sons’ recognition of them as mentor fathers and John’s extracts endorse Benjamin’s (1988) observation that the “search for recognition can become a power struggle” between father and unresponsive son (p. 28).

For Butler (2005), recognition of otherness rests on the difficult process of self and other scrutiny, and an appreciation that we can never fully know ourselves. For Butler, acknowledging the opacity of the self is a necessary foundation for ethical appreciation of the other. Ironically then, perhaps it is precisely when the father *lacks* confidence in his vision, his self-identity and sense of coherence that he is best positioned to recognize his son. But how is he to carry out the father function if he entertains such doubt? Fathering sons who are different from what the father expects seems to present this very challenge. In order to pull the son towards a world of difference the father is required to forego his own certainties and yet remain present and supportive.

CHAPTER NINE: PUSHING

As indicated in the previous themes, many participants' performances of fathering are structured by mentoring discourses which foreground shared activities, similarity of attitude and intent, and bonding through paternal guidance. Consequently, for this sample of men fathering frequently has to do with 'getting' or 'teaching' sons to take up particular ways with fathers expressing frustration and disappointment when their sons won't comply. In response, participants negotiate the task of influencing their sons towards acceptable pursuits and habits. Regarding this notion of influence, as already evident in Craig's extracts in the previous theme, participants commonly evoked the notion of a 'line' between pushing and encouraging, and this 'line' is the focus of the current theme.

Managing the line between pushing and encouraging foregrounds the issue of power, specifically in terms of how participants respond to their sons' differences or perceived shortcomings. Employing a psychosocial, 'binocular' perspective (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2005) makes it possible to view power from both a social constructionist perspective and a relational psychoanalytic perspective. More specifically, it is possible to consider how the injunctions of hegemonic masculinity intersect with the relational ethics of recognition, as articulated by Benjamin (1988; 1995; 1998), as well as Klein's concept of the depressive position (Hollway, 2007).

In their interviews, fathers articulate 'dominant acceptability norms' (Blackbeard and Lindegger, 2007) regarding how their sons should behave as males, but it is very difficult for fathers to say what they do or what they should do about their sons' deviations from these norms. In part, this difficulty may be attributed to the discursive demands of the interview; that fathers want to present themselves as good, caring fathers. From a relational psychoanalytic perspective, attending to the ways fathers speak about 'pushing' reveals how difficult it is for fathers to recognize their different sons and how easily the balance of mutual recognition collapses into intersubjective aggression and/or domination.

The issue of intersubjective aggression, whether real or fantasized, was a prevailing but interpersonally charged part of disappointment talk, often requiring careful management by both

speaker and hearer. When fathers spoke about, or alluded to, their own hostility in the face of disappointment, I became tense, partly because the topic carries the potential for shame, but also because I had the sense that the interview had turned towards something central to this research project: the difficulty of recognizing the agency and authorship of the disappointing other.

For Benjamin (1988; 1995) recognition and shared understanding result from surviving 'destruction', a term introduced by Winnicott (1969, as cited in Benjamin, 1995) to describe the subject's efforts to 'destroy' the frustrating object. It is the other's ability to survive destruction that gives rise to recognition: fresh contact with the other who is able to exist independent of the self. As Benjamin (1995) puts it, "in the mental act of negating or obliterating the object, which may be expressed in the real effort to attack the other, we find out where the real other survives" (p. 39). Thus, assertion or aggression is understood as implicit to recognition in that the other is discovered through surviving one's impulse to dominate.

It also evident that the 'line' negotiated by this sample of fathers is constituted by a desire/damage dilemma that is compatible with Klein's formulations regarding paranoid-schizoid functioning and the depressive position. Klein's framework helps to account for the intense frustration fathers express regarding their different and disappointing sons as well as the dilemma posed by these frustrations. Whilst participants want their sons to take up acceptable ways and experience significant frustration when their sons don't comply, they also fear damaging their sons because they love them. In the face of frustration and disappointment, the father may struggle to integrate loving and destructive feelings towards his son, and to accept him as a source of both gratification and pain (Frosh, 2012). Klein's framework introduces the ethics of the depressive position (Hollway, 2007) where the father may worry that his rage, either real or fantasized, has damaged his son, giving rise to feelings of guilt and grief. According to Klein (1955), moving to the depressive position facilitates reparation, which involves the "processes by which the ego feels it undoes harm done in phantasy, restores, preserves and revives objects" (p. 133). Reparation involves taking responsibility for one's destructive capacities together with the acknowledgement that good and bad exist in the same object, thus prompting the drive to 'make good' (Frosh, 2012).

For the purposes of this study, Klein's formulations of paranoid-schizoid and depressive functions seem to complement the distinctions Benjamin (1988) makes between recognition and

domination as modes of relating to the other. Benjamin (ibid.) shows how disappointment sits at the juncture between recognition and reactive efforts to dominate the other, but Klein's formulations provide a perhaps more vivid account of the intense and conflicting reactions to the disappointing other, such as hatred, hostility, guilt and love. Then again, Benjamin (1988) shows how recognition and domination are deeply implicated in the politics of gender and gender formation, which makes her work especially appropriate for an analysis of paternal assertions towards the different son.

9.1. Analysis of Data

The following subthemes convey how participants negotiate the task of talking about their assertions as fathers of sons. As many of the analyses show, accounting for one's assertions requires one to point to the good reasons for one's actions and resolutions. Intentions and desires need to be discursively managed such that one is not positioned as shamefully self-seeking in the gratification of personal agendas or ambitions. Thus the overall tone of these extracts leans towards the defensive, where 'destructiveness' in the face of disappointment is managed in various ways.

9.1.1. Other parents

Within the discourse of 'pushing', participants commonly position themselves as good fathers by distinguishing themselves from 'other parents' who cross the line of good parenting because they 'push' their sons too much. This discursive maneuver has the effect of positioning participants as appropriately restrained, 'good fathers', who give pre-eminence to their sons' agendas. It is argued that Klein's concept of paranoid-schizoid functioning adds a psychoanalytically-informed dimension to this discursive reading such that the discursive maneuver of indexing 'pushy parents' may be read as a defense against participants' anxieties regarding their own desire to 'push' their sons.

Angus

An example of this discursive maneuver is found in the extract below. During the course of his talk, Angus transitions to a highly invested position of antagonism towards pushy parents who are then denigrated for their presumptions of status:

I'm quite/ I'm quite conscious/ um (.) uh (.) ja um (.) I'm very conscious of the fact that I will not push my children in any particular direction (.) ok (.) as in/ ah (.) I don't like it when I hear parents say (.) you know (.) "You must do science because (.) you know (.) granddad was a doctor and I am a doctor and therefore" – you know that's/ you know that to me is just absolute bloody garbage (.) you know- so what if the ch/ what if you've got five generations of doctors in your family (.) let the friggin kid be what he wants to be (.) you know (.) don't (.) start prescribing your life view on him or your thing (.) or your career you want him/um (.)

In the opening sentence, it is evident that Angus shifts towards a resolute investment in the non-pushy position ('I'm very conscious'; 'I will not'). Following this investment, Angus turns towards his antithesis: status oriented pushy parents. For Angus, these parents push because of their status ('I am a doctor and therefore'). It is this link between status and pushing that Angus attacks in the remainder of this extract. In his imagined rejoinder, Angus attacks these parents claim to status ('so what...five generations of doctors) and he concludes by constructing a situation where he is scolding the parents who, in their new position of culpability and shame, make no reply ('don't start prescribing your life view on him').

As indicated in chapter two, paranoid-schizoid functioning is based on two primary defenses, splitting and projection (Frosh, 2012), where destructive feelings are contained first by being split from loving feelings (the schizoid element) and second by projecting these destructive feelings onto others or the outside world (the paranoid element). The paranoid-schizoid position may be understood as a way of functioning which occurs throughout life, and is often implicated in processes of idealization and denigration (Frosh, 2012), where ideas and feelings are disowned, expelled from the mind and projected into available objects (Frosh & Baraitser, 2003).

In the above extract it may be argued that Angus manages his own anxieties regarding status, together with the concomitant impulse to 'push', by projecting these onto other 'parents' who are then denigrated as objects of scorn. This strategy of managing 'pushing' by pointing away from the self towards other errant parents is also found in some of the extracts below and Angus's extract is proposed as an exemplar of this pattern.

9.1.2. Pushing, encouraging, and the intrinsic /extrinsic frame

As indicated, most participants expressed a distinct sense of dilemma regarding how they should respond to their sons' disappointing ways. Fathers typically defended against the implication that they were 'pushing' their sons, and pushing was constructed as a shameful and damaging version of parenting. Instead, participants positioned themselves as challenging or, better yet, encouraging their sons. These findings are consistent with those of Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik (2012) who found that, in order to portray themselves as involved and morally 'good', fathers attempted to find a balance between performance oriented and caring fatherhood.

How does this sample manage their assertions in the face of disappointment? As will be seen, the 'line' maintained between 'pushing' and 'encouraging' is policed by shame and anxiety concerning damage, and most participants carefully position themselves on the right side of this line. For several participants, being on the right side of the line involves positioning oneself as a restrained father, and defending against the shame of indulging in personal desire at the expense of one's son. In some cases, hegemonic or aspirational goals are managed by making these intrinsic to the son, such that the father is positioned as promoting the integrity of the son as a separate being.

Douglas

In the extract below, Douglas positions himself as the responsible father who must get his son ready for the outside world. However, it is evident that Douglas is mindful of his son's young age, and that he needs to defend against the implication that he is harming his son by prematurely pushing him towards hegemonic and extrinsic norms:

Um (.) the concerns more out of (.) I think he/he needs to start/you need to start getting him (.) making him am-ambitious to a certain extent even at this age (.) So (1) um: (.) ja (.) if he/if he::'s gonna pull a thing apart say "that's fine (.) put it back together" (.) so give him that challenge don't just let him just/ you know mhm (1) And I think from that will come (.) sort of/ it will probably make him more responsible? Um:: (.) you know- little things like you know he didn't/wouldn't tie his shoe laces (.) I said to him "Ok then you must run barefoot because there's going to be no-one there to help you to (.) You seven years old you must learn to tie your shoelaces" (.) Um (.) and I said "It's a

challenge (1) Learn how to tie your shoelaces/ when you go to cross country you can run in shoes (.) And I'll buy you new takkies when you learn to do your shoelaces" (.) Little /little things like that there (.) it/it might sound like you're driving or pushing but they need to be/even at this age they need to be semi independent (...) so I think it's a thing more about challenging him (.) to/to be responsible and to be as good as he can be

Here Douglas takes up the position of the hegemonic father, who instills masculinity norms in his son, such as ambition, independence and toughness ('ok then you must run barefoot'). Use of words such as 'getting', 'making' and 'don't just let him just' position the father as interventionist, with a taken-for-granted responsibility to direct the son's ways. However, Douglas is aware that this position is morally questionable ('it might sound like') and so he uses moderating language to make his interventions seem less harsh and more recognizing of his son's young age ('to a certain extent'; 'semi independent'). Also, Douglas positions himself as 'challenging' rather than 'driving or pushing' his son, because he wants to be seen as a supportive rather than a domineering father. The word 'challenging' preserves the son's agency, whereas the words 'driving' and 'pushing' only index the father's agency.

However, the interaction depicted in the shoe tying vignette is one where the father does dominate the son. Douglas demands and then promises to reward independence in his son. The words 'then you must run barefoot because there's going to be no-one there to help you' position Douglas as rejecting of his son who 'wouldn't' tie his shoelaces. There is the sense that when the son refuses to meet Douglas's expectations, Douglas becomes hostile towards his son's physical self ('then you must run barefoot'). The message Douglas conveys is that he is poised to not care for his son if he strays from the hegemonic ideal of independence. However, should the son comply, he is promised the benefits of Douglas's financial power ('I'll buy you new takkies'). Hearn (2004) points to the ability "to dominate or influence others through reward or punishment" as a common instance of hegemony (p. 52).

Repetition of the phrase 'even at this age' indicates that Douglas's hegemonic expectations exist in tension with an awareness of his son's young age, and Douglas's desire to be seen as a caring father. Thus the above excerpt may also be seen as an attempt to perform fathering within the context of an ideological dilemma. On the one hand Douglas wants to be a caring father who does not 'push' or 'drive' when his son disappoints, but on the other hand Douglas wants his son

to comply with the hegemonic ideal. Douglas resolves this dilemma by settling on the notion that he is ‘challenging’ his son. Through this discursive move, Douglas is able to reassert his position as a good father, since ‘challenging’ is associated with helping his son to ‘be responsible’ and ‘to be as good as he can be’.

The phrase ‘as good as he can be’ is an example of how fathers construct an ethical version of pushing where the father’s assertions are apparently deployed in the services of the son, promoting him but not attempting to change him. In a similar vein, several participants position themselves as fathers who accept and promote their sons’ ‘strengths’. This type of accepting position may be seen as one of the ways fathers construct an ethical response to disappointment; the argument being that one can push and still be a good mentor father as long as one focuses on the strengths that are intrinsic to the son. This may be contrasted with Douglas’s earlier phrase, ‘making him ambitious’, where the father insists on a quality that is not intrinsic to the son. Thus being ‘ambitious’ is constructed as a hegemonic ‘aspirational goal’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1999) which Douglas needs to ‘get’ his son to embrace. It may be argued then, that one of the ways that this sample of men manages the dilemma of ‘pushing’ is by working within an extrinsic/intrinsic framework in their constructions of paternal influence.

Nick

In the extract below Nick also deploys an extrinsic/intrinsic frame in order to construct his stance regarding the pushing/encouraging dilemma. Here, Nick constructs a narrative where pushing and encouraging merge because ‘competitiveness’ is made intrinsic to the son. Nick uses this narrative to depict successful fathering, in that he manages to negotiate the line between pushing and encouraging *and* his son takes up Nick’s ‘version of the world’ (Wetherell & Edley, 1999):

I think that (.) the tricky part of parenting is to/to get that mix right, you know (.) between encouraging and pushing them (*ja*) to draw the line (*ja*) you know (.) what is where (*ja*). Because obviously we all want our children to do well (.) and we-we’re proud when they do (*ja*). Um:: You know I don’t publically push him (.) um (.) I do encourage him (.) and I do try and do things with him (.) and try and show him through experience that um (.) certain practices lead to success and certain practices don’t lead to success (*ja*) (1) So for instance I:: you know (.) if I was (.) I used to run time trial with him once a week (...)

And um:: from that (.) he gained a lot of fitness as/and as a result he did very well in the cross country season (*hm!*) at school (*hm!*) (.) which then (.) you know he was able to see the benefits of training from (.) and which now he understands and which I don't have to say anything to him (.) he knows and understands the benefits of training (.) um:: and you know there were times where he would have said "No I don't feel like running time trial" and I/I would say 'No (.) come run (.) you don't have to race it – just run at your own pace' (.) But his natural competitive nature would take over and he's end up pushing himself (*mm*) (.) So/but I knew I had to just get him there in order for it to happen (*mm*) you know (.) and that (.) once he was there he would enjoy the experience (*ja* (.) *mm*) of participating so (.) And I think (.) you know (.) a lot of parents or people might see that as being- being pushy (.) but I think (.) that's where a parent needs to get involved (*mm*) because children often don't/they/they like to do well (.) but they don't realize that in order to do well - you've actually got to put some work into it (*mm, mm*) (.) So if you can get them to put the work in without them even realizing they're putting the work in (.) then that's great (1) I mean if you can make it fun for them (*mm*)

Nick begins by framing his challenge ('the tricky part of parenting'), where 'we all want our children to do well', but 'pushing' is not allowed. Nick makes achievement every parent's concern ('obviously') and my repetition of the word 'ja' indicates that Nick has successfully established the context for the rest of his argument. Nick then goes on to construct his position on the line between pushing and encouraging. Nick's use of the word 'publically' raises the notion that his assertions remain private: that they are unfit for public display. Nick is, however, able to publically position himself within the ambit of encouragement ('I do encourage him') and from this position Nick is able to mentor his son, doing things with him and showing him 'through experience'. This model of fathering – the encouraging mentor – is both publically acceptable and effective, as the son assimilates 'certain practices' which 'lead to success'.

Nick then goes on to construct a narrative that serves as an 'instance' of this approach to the pushing/encouraging dilemma. Again, the narrative depicts orthodox mentoring through activity, which leads to achievement ('he did very well in the cross country season'). From this experience, the son takes up his father's view of the world – he is 'able to see' and 'now he

understands'. The father's task is complete as now Nick does not 'have to say anything' to his son.

On reflection, Nick then adds a dimension of complexity to the story, which rather undermines the seamlessness of the above process. There are instances where the son differs from the father and Nick responds by asserting his ways. However, these instances do not constitute 'pushing' because the son has a natural competitive nature' such that the son ends up pushing himself'. Therefore Nick uses an extrinsic/intrinsic frame to avoid being the pushy father, because he makes pushing and competitiveness intrinsic into his son. This has the effect of preserving the son as agent and dissolving the father's assertions. All ('just') Nick does, is to get his son 'there' and then his son spontaneously acts in acceptable ways ('in order for it to happen'). Furthermore, Nick's assertions are of service to his son, because his son also experiences enjoyment.

Perhaps because he is skirting the risk of being positioned as 'pushy', Nick reiterates his defense. For Nick, the good parent 'needs to get involved' because children 'like to do well' – this is something that *they* want. However, children don't 'realize' what Nick knows as the father. Thus Nick marries his knowledge, or his ways to his son's wants and this exempts him from pushing. Nick concludes this extract by constructing a fathering that underscores the duality implied through his earlier use of the word 'publically'. Nick proposes an approach where the father's ways are kept private from the son, although he repairs the apparent duplicity of this position by underscoring his son's enjoyment. In summary, Nick solves the pushing/encouraging dilemma by using the hegemonic assumption that running and competitiveness are inherent to the son – they constitute his nature and they bring him enjoyment, and this legitimizes Nick's encouragement/pushing. Using a psychoanalytic register, it may be argued that Nick is engaged in projective identification, where aspects of his own personality are externalized into the mind of his son (Frosh, 2012). This would mean that, in the process of encouraging the son, the reality of the son as an independent other is obscured rather than recognized.

John

In the extract below, John is asked to comment on parenting differences between himself and his wife. However, in formulating my question, I use words such as 'stretching' and 'pushing', and

John contests these words because they position him as a ‘pushy’ father. John responds by positioning himself as ‘encouraging’ on the basis that he supports his son’s intrinsic ‘strengths’:

Mm (.) and when it comes to stretching him and uh: (.) encouraging him to use his talents (.) pushing him in that way (.) is there something different that you bring (.) uh (.) compared to Sarah?

Geesh hey Rob (.) I don’t know that I’m that good at that yet (1) You know I’m still learning how to-how to do that you know (.) I kind of feel bad for uh/ the first child (.) ‘cause you learn a lot from your first child and then you/you take that and (.) you carry that over to your second and your third child (.) you know (.) So you/you/ you make a lot of mistakes with your first kid (.) And um:: I think that the other ones benefit from that (.) um:: But ugh (.) you know (.) to try an-and stretch him you know (4) no I don’t/I/I give him challenges or (.) um:: (6) no (3) no I think I just try and give him encouragement (mm)

You know I’ll tell you (.) I’ll tell you what we are not is (.) you know we’ve got other families and parents who give extra lessons in this and extra this and extra that and really put a lot of pressure on their son (.) You know (.) ugh (.) I think it’s important to know what their strengths are (.) and (.) to a degree (.) support him in those ways (.) He’s happy being in the B team in Cricket (.) He doesn’t wanna be in the A team for Cricket (.) And I don’t wanna (.) you know (.) over the top you know (.) try and make him be something that he’s not

As indicated, although my question was aimed at father-mother differences, the words I use provoke John into constructing an acceptable father position regarding the issue of pushing, and the extent to which John must accept who his son is, and who he is not.

John begins by making something of a confession: that he has not been ‘that good’ at negotiating the line between pushing and encouragement. However, John dilutes his confession by positioning himself as an improving father who is ‘still learning’. This phrase instills a sense of optimism into John’s confession and helps to deflect the shame of being a pushy and hence harmful father. Because he is improving, John is able to defer judgment. Also, the sentence ‘I kind of feel bad for the first child’ minimizes the harm that John may have caused his son and

thus helps John to avoid shame. Firstly, the phrase ‘kind of’ implies that John does not have to feel too bad because he hasn’t harmed his son in any substantial way. Secondly, the detachment of the term ‘first child’ diminishes the son’s subjectivity as the person who may have experienced the harm, making the notion of harm more palatable for both speaker and listener.

The expression ‘But ugh’ marks a change in focus as John now directly addresses the notion of his dominance. The lengthy pauses in John’s speech imply that he is working hard to position himself at this stage in the talk, signaling the dilemma and risk involved in taking up a position in ‘pushing talk’. As can be seen, John moves away from ‘stretching’ onto giving ‘challenges’ as these terms approximate ‘pushing’. John then settles on ‘encouragement’ which denotes a sense of relational intimacy and, as above, preserves the son’s agency.

Then, like Angus in the opening extract above, John goes on to firmly disassociate himself from ‘other families and parents’ who ‘really put a lot of pressure on their son’. Repetition of the word ‘extra’ positions these ‘other parents’ as ‘over the top’ and worthy of scorn. John’s self-identity is defined in opposition to this where, as the good father, John takes up a ‘focus on their strengths’ discourse which foregrounds respect for his son’s preferences. Again, it is proposed that John manages his anxiety regarding ‘pushing’ by splitting this off from himself and projecting it on to other parents who are then denigrated for their unfettered pursuit of status.

In contrast, John is the restrained father, who delimits himself to supporting his son, and only ‘to a degree’. As the good, restrained father, John gives precedence to his son’s happiness and preferences (‘he doesn’t wanna be in the A team’). In the last sentence John explains what he is not, and this is the father who spurns the son’s selfhood and tries to ‘make’ him take up the father’s ways. The phrase ‘over the top’ introduces ambivalence into John’s position in that fathering seems to be about restraining rather than relinquishing paternal assertion, or ‘making’.

The extract below directly follows on from the extract above and it is evident that John proceeds to revise his initial opposition to pushing. Like Nick, John constructs a narrative in order to account for his position on pushing and this narrative is paradoxical in the sense that, whilst John is careful to assert who his son is, his ‘personality’, John also constructs a taken-for-granted rationale for getting his son to be different:

Um:: but like you say (.) in stretching him you know (.) culturally (.) you wanna make sure that he has (.) that he's well rounded (.) So agh (.) and one of the things that we're actually encouraging him to do is that he's actually (.) he hates the limelight (.) he's/that's his personality he doesn't like the limelight/ he doesn't like to be (.) you know (.) the center of the joke or anything like that (1) And so um:: one of the things that we've/ that/ that we've encouraged him to do (.) he's got a beautiful voice uh:: which needs to be developed and/and taken forward (.) and so we've encouraged him to enter the school's competition (.) which he's totally uncomfortable with (.) uh:: you know and/ and last year was his first time out (.) and you could see his body language (.) like/he/he had his arms in front of himself and he's holding his mic like this (.) and he/ didn't have much stage presence at all (.)

But you know what (.) we just said "just get up and do it" (.) And I tell you what Rob, if I had tried to- to- get him to do dance moves and /and go over the top (.) and try an-get everything right (.) he would have pulled the plug (1) and he would have said "Nah- forget it (.) I'm done" You know (.) so for a/a/a little soul like that (.) you have to realize (.) just to get him on stage is pushing him enough (.) and/ and that's/ that's his/ that's the beginning (.) (*Yes, mm*)The rest he needs to kind of- you know (.) unfold himself (*yes*)

An/ and this year/ and he said he wasn't going to do it again (.) he's already chosen his songs for this year (.) And um:: and so/ u/ this year I think I might take it to the next level and say "Right (.) let's-let's practice a little bit more (.) um: (.) let's maybe do something" (.) the next level (.) you know (2) But with Sean you've gotta give it to him in little bites (*right, right*)

John begins by returning to the word 'stretching' which I introduced in the construction of my question. This has the effect of bringing John and me into apparent agreement: the father *does* actually have to intervene with his son. John goes on to make the argument that, as a good father he wants to 'make sure' that his son is 'well rounded'. Well roundedness is proposed as a virtue which justifies John's shift towards a more interventionist version of fathering. John then alternates between detailing his son's subjectivity and constructing good reasons for taking his son 'forward'. Words and phrases such as 'hates'; 'doesn't like' and 'totally uncomfortable' make the subjectivity of the son seem very clear. However, the conjunction 'and so' lends taken-

for-granted logic to John's decision to override his son's preferences ('and so we've encouraged him to enter the school sing off'). This logic is undergirded by the taken-for-granted reasoning of the sentence 'he's got a beautiful voice, which needs to be taken forward and developed'.

In the second paragraph, John points to the intersubjective limits to his ability to assert himself as the father. If John tries to 'get him to go over the top', the son will pull 'the plug' on John's project and all will be lost. Here, the phrase 'over the top' refers to an idealized success where John's desires and hopes are let loose. This fantasy may be contrasted with John's earlier phrase: 'I don't wanna, over the top, try and make him be something that he's not' where John is the restrained father who is more reconciled to disappointment. Thus John embodies contradictory 'wants' regarding going 'over the top'. At one level, this reveals the ideological dilemma (Wetherell and Edley, 1999) involved in pushing talk, where acceptance discourse collides with implicit hegemonic masculinity injunctions regarding hierarchy and success. However, at another level, John's text signals the intensity of the intersubjective space between father and son, and how difficult it is for the father to restrain desire. John's response is to position himself strategically in order to maximize what he can get his son to do without rupturing his relationship with his son and losing his whole project.

Consequently, John constructs a hybridized, but fragmented position as father. In part, John is the compassionate, accepting father who is mindful of his son's vulnerability ('little soul') and who allows his son sovereignty over his future ('unfold himself'). However, this accepting position seems to float on the surface of John's foundational and more compelling hegemonic logic: it is 'the start' to getting his son to adopt more acceptable ways. John will not be disappointed, and his abiding hope re-emerges in the phrase 'this year', which gives John another opportunity to 'take it to the next level. John's metaphor of giving 'it to him in little bites' invokes a primal sense of the ways the son is asked to eat his father's ways, without actually noticing that this is happening.

For Benjamin, the process of recognition requires that one hold on to a position in which the other is related to but not appropriated (Frosh, 2010). The above extracts highlight the durability of John's hopes and that, whilst he is careful not to position himself as 'over the top', John is steadfast in getting his son to appropriate his ways. The phrase 'little soul' implies John's guilt at pushing his son as the vulnerable other. However, John's hopes are resistant to the shame of

being seen as ‘pushy’, the threat of damage, and the apparent clarity of the son’s preferences. He will not be disappointed in any final way.

9.1.3. Defending the damaging father

Perhaps obviously, acknowledging damage is no easy assignment, particularly in the context of the research interview. How does one position oneself as a good father whilst talking about the damage one has caused one’s son? In addition to viewing the task of acknowledging damage as a discursive demand, there is a psychoanalytically informed interest in analyzing ‘damage talk’ as a marker of the complexity of the father-son attachment. As has been shown, most participants invest in the mentor position, where fathering has to do with getting the son to take up successful habits and attitudes. However, inasmuch as participants want to ‘get’ their sons to comply with their ‘versions of the world’, participants also fear damaging their sons or their relationships with their sons. How then, do participants acknowledge or defend against their destructive propensities and the anxiety that, through ‘pushing’ they may damage their sons whom they love? This subtheme focuses on the ways participants defend against the notion of the damaging father.

Nick

In the extract below, Nick constructs a biographical narrative to account for his taking a stand against ‘pushing’. In Nick’s narrative, the pushy father transgresses the line because he fails to restrain himself in the face of disappointment, and instead shames his son for falling short of his father’s expectations:

Um (.) so you know (.) I’ve tried to (.) with Dylan (.) is just to encourage more (.) versus (.) pushing because (.) you know (.) I know if my dad used to watch (.) for instance (.) Rugby (.) after the game he’d say things like “Why didn’t you tackle that guy (.) and why didn’t you tackle that guy?” you know (.) “You must run faster” and things like that (.) and it’s not a case of (.) you know “That was a good try you scored there” or “That was a good pass you made there” (.) You know it was all the negative aspects I’ve/ I / I’ve/ and don’t get me wrong (.) it never aff/ I don’t believe it ever affected me (.) but I’ve just tried to be more positive with my son (mm) say “Great tackle, great break great - (.) maybe you can just practice a little bit more with your passing” and things like that

without trying to criticize him (*ja*) for the mistakes he makes (.) ‘cause we all make mistakes (.) so (.) Um:: but I still have a good relationship with my dad (.) you know I see him often and we very relaxed in each other’s company (.) so umm

The phrase ‘I don’t believe it ever affected me’ distances Nick from being positioned as vulnerable, but the phrase also signals that Nick is mindful of the notion of father damage, albeit from a defended position (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Evidence for the notion that this is a defended position may be found in the difficulty Nick has in transitioning from the phrase ‘it was all the negative aspects’ to his position as one who has not been ‘affected’. In addition, the phrase ‘‘cause we all make mistakes’ signals Nick’s identification with his son and it is on the basis of this identification that Nick discards his father’s critical style. However, Nick then repairs his disidentification from the father by pointing to the fact that he and his father ‘still have a good relationship’ which again suggests that he is defending against the anxiety of taking a critical and rejecting stance towards his father.

Nick’s preferred father position protects his son from damage through a blending of affirmation and direction (‘great break-maybe you can just practice a little bit more with your passing’). It is interesting to note that giving advice remains part of Glen’s new father position. This is in keeping with the findings of Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik (2012) where fathers attempted to negotiate a ‘thin line’ between showing support for their children and getting their children to improve their performances. The authors note that keeping the balance between success and support was not easy for some of their participants, who struggled to restrain their own competitive natures and desires to “push their children to excel in sports” (p.16).

Quinton

In the extract below Quinton, like many of the other fathers, identifies with the ‘hard work brings success’ ethos, and he wants to get his son to train harder in order to do well. However, Quinton is careful to position himself as the father who chooses not to shame his son for falling short of his expectations, and he wants his listener to understand that he has ‘never gone down that route’. However, Quinton’s construction also makes it clear that his choice requires ongoing negotiation on his part; that, as the good father, he has to consistently manage his private sentiments:

We've encouraged them (.) and when it's exams and that sort of thing at school (.) we've always said "Well have you done your learning? (*ja*) Have you done some preparation?" (*ja*). But we've never set about (.) ever saying 'Ok well, you see! You didn't really do very much learning and therefore you didn't do" hh=*mm* (.) We've never/ we've never gone that route (*ja*) (1) Um (.) I think on the sports field I've (1) I've always encouraged them (.) to perhaps (.) be prepared to work a little bit harder than they do. Um (.) and (.) h/have/have sort of like at the beginning of the season (.) have sort of thought of saying "Well now you see (.) if you'd (.) done a bit more fitness (.) you'd be a bit fitter hhh" (*oh ok*) But we've never gone that route (.) you know I've always h I've always managed to restrain myself from sort of saying/ because I look at it and I think "Well hang on Quinton you're forty six (.) You know (.) you've got the benefit of a great deal of hindsight (*oh ok*) (.) When you were fourteen (.) did you have these things in perspective (.) or were you just jolling as well?" (*ja*) you know (.) Um, so (.) *ja* I mean it's crossed my mind (.) but we've never gone down the route of "Ah well (.) if you'd worked harder you would have got eighty five percent" you know (.) or "If you'd trained a bit you would have won that ma-" "No I've never gone down that route

Initially, Quinton stands apart from reproachful parents who, in the wake of disappointment, criticize their child ('you see, you didn't really do much learning and therefore you didn't do...'). The emphasized words 'never' and 'ever' indicate that Quinton is determined to position himself against such harmful parenting. Quinton does imply that there is something different 'on the sports field' where Quinton seems more inclined to take up an assertive father position. The change in pronoun, from 'we' to 'I' signals that Quinton is more personally invested in the sport arena, although use of the words 'perhaps' and 'a little bit' protect Quinton from seeming entirely unrestrained. At this point Quinton steps even further away from being the unrestrained father: now he's only 'thought' of giving voice to his disappointment via criticism. Quinton's laughter implies that the statement 'well now, you see, if you'd done a bit more fitness...' is exposing of him: that being the critical father comes with a nakedness of desire that needs to be clothed by laughter.

Quinton then says that he's 'managed to restrain' himself which shows how disappointment provokes a struggle in Quinton, in that he needs to manage a spontaneous desire to push his son

towards achievement. Quinton extends this notion of managing the self, by going on to take up a critical position on his unrestrained self. Repeated emphasis on the pronoun ‘you’ constructs the notion that Quinton is scolding his unrestrained and critical self. Following the trend identified in chapter six, Quinton bases his accepting position on likeness between himself and his son: the younger Quinton was also ‘just jolling’ and this similarity paves the way for understanding and acceptance. Towards the end of this extract Quinton returns to the ‘we’ perspective which points to the notion that the challenge of ‘restraining’ himself is private and perhaps exclusive to him as the father of a sporty son.

Quinton continues, in the extract below, to reflect on the issue of restraining the self. Quinton constructs a brief vignette of discord between himself and his son, where his son has a hostile reaction to Quinton’s ‘encouragement’. A striking feature of this extract is Quinton’s vacillation between acknowledging and downplaying the effects of his assertions on his son:

You know I think maybe from time to time/ uh (.) I don’t have one example (.) you sort of say something which (.) your child perceives as being embarrassing um and then they find that to be quite (.) quite uncomfortable um (.) I think of occasions where (.) you know (.) you perhaps do that as a/a parent (.) you sometimes um on the side of the hockey field or something like that/ or the Cricket field and/ you know I will encourage him in a particular way (.) and Russell will say to me afterwards ‘Dad why don’t you shut up on the side of the field’ hhh um (.) you know (.) And you can see that I think that it’s funny and/but you can see that actually it’s not something that-that he enjoys

Quinton’s approach to the above vignette (‘maybe’; ‘I don’t have one example’) serves to minimize its significance to his listener. Quinton continues to use trivializing language (‘you perhaps as a parent’; ‘sometimes’) which indexes the incident as a virtual non-event. This minimizing perspective continues through the extract, culminating in the self-position that is able to laugh at the story (‘and you can see that I think that it’s funny’). However Quinton vacillates between the minimizing ‘I’ position and a more reflective ‘you’ position that is mindful of his son’s perspective: ‘you can see that I think that it’s funny ... but you can see that actually it’s not something that he enjoys’. As indicated, Quinton leads from the minimizing position, and his laughter, together with the phrase ‘you know’ serve as invitations to his listener to join him in his levity regarding these infrequent (‘from time to time’) lapses in restraint. Thus it is argued that

Quinton is defending against the notion that he does push his son and that this is a source of discord in their relationship. Furthermore, the phrase ‘I will encourage him in a particular way’ forms part of Quinton’s minimizing position and therefore shows how encouragement, in this instance, constitutes a denial of the son’s reality and the father’s propensity to assert his ways. The phrase ‘it’s not something that he enjoys’ resonates with Billig’s (1999) notion of repression, where the presence of something shameful (in this case the son’s hurt at being criticized and pushed by the father) is circumnavigated by language.

John

In the extract below, John manages the issue of criticizing his son by constructing a father position that makes being ‘tough’ synonymous with the ethical act of keeping his son ‘safe’. Again, this extract illustrates Finn and Henwood’s (2009) observation that self-identifications as the ‘responsible father’ may shore up a hegemonic masculinity that naturalizes the status and power of fathers. This process seems evident in the following extract, where the son acquiesces to his father’s framing of their unequal relationship:

You know (.) when I’m tough on Sean I say to him “and why am I tough on you?” He just goes “it’s your job dad” (.) you know hhh. And I say “that’s right (.) What’s my job?” “To keep me safe dad” hhh “that’s right” hhh. You know (.) so we have that kind of agreement (*mm*) that he knows that that’s what I’m doing (.) is that I’m just looking out for him (.) I’m just-that’s it – that’s my job for now

Here, John accounts for his dominant position by presenting it as a responsibility; a ‘job’ that he is obliged to perform as the good father who is ‘just looking out’ for his son. By foregrounding responsibility John’s desires are obscured, which serves as a denial that John has any investment in molding his son in a particular direction. Instead he is ‘just’ doing his ‘job’. John’s ambitions for his son are couched in the language of care and duty.

Furthermore, John constructs being ‘tough’ as the basis for shared understanding with his son. Through the use of ventriloquation, John constructs an apparent unity of mind between father and son, where they have ‘that kind of agreement’ and ‘he knows that that’s what I’m doing’. Hence, the father’s view holds hegemonic sway, in that the son agrees to yield to his father’s ways under the taken-for-granted assumption that it is for his own good.

John's laughter, together with the phrase 'that's right' indicates his *enjoyment* (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2003) of the above father position. In Benjamin's (1995) terms, it may be argued that John is enjoying the gratification of omnipotence, where the reality of the other mind is subtly denied, as John conveniently finds his own mind in his acquiescent son. Thus, the 'agreement' John speaks of may be seen as an instance of ethical violence (Butler, 2005), in that John colonizes his son's mind in the service of his own coherence in the tough, responsible father position.

Angus

In similar vein to John, Angus defends against the notion of damage by taking up the 'father as moral authority' position. However, as is evident in the extracts below, Angus deviates from other participants in that he provides a rather graphic account of an incident where he chose to beat his son, to 'teach him a serious lesson'. Angus's detailed account appears to serve two contradictory ends: accounting for Angus's choices within moral authority/ schoolmaster discourse and, less overtly, giving voice to a distressed and remorseful Angus who asks 'did I really do that to my son?' After Angus's interview I recorded the following observations:

Angus's interview has stirred up so much emotion in me. I feel shocked and saddened by his account of disciplining his son. I know that I have identified with his son in his fear and shame: the trauma of being subjugated and hurt by the loved other. Angus's talk brings me close to the harshness in male authority that I have always found chilling. But I find that I am also moved by Angus's distress regarding the awful clash between his deliberate violence and his love for his son.

Thus it is proposed that, in part, both Angus and I were shocked by his actions as the 'moral authority'. As various theorists have observed, traditional discourses of fatherhood naturalize the father's recourse to violence (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2006; Breckenridge, 1998; Benjamin, 1995). According to Breckenridge (cited in Morrell et al. 2012), the use of what he terms 'controlled violence' in raising both white and black boys is central to South African hegemonic masculinity.

Nonetheless, the previous chapter shows that most of the participants want to be different from their own fathers. However, as Seidler (2006) notes, fathers may be "shocked to find themselves

responding as their fathers did to them...disappointed when they hear themselves getting angry and screaming at a child for misbehaving” (p. 92). Seidler’s (ibid.) observations point to the ambivalences involved in being the ‘moral authority’. This ambivalence is evident in the extracts which follow, where Angus vacillates between a position of hegemonic certainty and a position of anxiety and self-doubt, from where he looks on at his moral authority self and wonders “did I do that to my son?”

In the excerpt below, Angus begins from the position of moral authority: it is his duty, as father, to discipline his disappointing son and he tells his wife what he has decided to do. However, having carried out the act, Angus is left having to negotiate unexpected and significant distress regarding the damage his actions may have caused to his son and to his relationship with his son:

So I said to her “Next time it happens (.) there’s going to be a severe consequence for him that he’ll never forget as long as he lives” (.) you know (1) And you know he had a (.) he had a little raised welt for a day or so (.) so I’m comfortable in my own mind: shoo, I’m sorry it’s going on so long Rob, but in a way it’s quite – it’s almost a relief because I’ve never told anyone outside of my family (.) um (.) and in a way it’s a relief to kind of um share it (.) You know (.) so there was a bit of a raised welt there and it was kind of red for a day and then it went away (.) you know (.) and so I’m comfortable that I-I did no lasting physical damage (.) obviously (.) Um, what gnaws at me (.) less now (.) ‘cause kids are resilient you know (.) and I have no doubt that my son loves me to bits (.) a – despite that (.) um (.) but what did gnaw at me for a while was whether I had permanently damaged some aspect of my relationship with my son through that (*mm*)

The word ‘severe’ positions Angus as the hegemonic father who has a taken-for-granted recourse to violence, but it is also evident that Angus defends against the notion that he has caused damage to his son. Through phrases such as ‘little raised welt’; ‘for a day or so’ and ‘a bit of a raised welt’, Angus reassures himself and his listener as these phrases emphasize that Angus has caused minimal physical damage. However, these same observations also reveal how closely Angus has monitored the effects of his violence, which signifies Angus’s lack of assurance in his ‘moral authority’ position.

Having reassured himself and listener that the extent of the physical damage was minimal, Angus turns to what ‘gnaws at’ him, and this is the fear that his actions have damaged his relationship with his son. The phrase ‘gnaws at’ indicates that Angus’s position as moral authority is undercut by the anxiety that he has damaged his relationship with his son. Angus defends against this anxiety by drawing on a reassuring aphorism: ‘kids are resilient’, and with the aside ‘you know’, Angus invites his listener to affirm his optimistic perspective. Angus then uses a metaphor (‘loves me to bits’) to assert that his bond with his son has survived the incident, and Angus places emphasis on this (‘no doubt’). It may be argued that Angus’s adamant claims regarding his son’s love for him points away from an unconscious fear of his son’s hatred. It is certainly evident that Angus remains uneasy regarding the extent of damage caused to his son and to their relationship. Angus changes tenses, from present to past (‘what gnaws at me’; ‘what did gnaw at me’), to construct an apparent resolution however, Angus’s emphasis on the phrase ‘permanently damaged’ implies that his doubts prevail. Consequently it is argued that Angus’s position as the ‘severe’ father is destabilized by an anxiety regarding his relationship with his son.

Whilst the above extract addresses the notion of damage caused to the son, the following extract highlights the ways this incident has affected Angus himself. For the most part, Angus constructs this extract as a summary, which helps to achieve a position of distance from the troubling event. However, the mix of tenses, from past to present, again indicate that Angus vacillates between different father positions, and that he continues to struggle to be reconciled with what he has done:

And I (.) as I said earlier (.) I (.) I’m/ I’m comfortable and I’m not comfortable (.) I believe I did the right thing (.) but I have to say (.) jus (.) I hope I never have to do something like that again (.) I did not enjoy it hey (.) It/it actually (.) uh (.) ‘traumatized’ is not a word I really like hey (.) but it really upset me hey (.) For a couple of months afterwards, I used to lie and think about it in bed at night and think you know (.) “Did I really do that to my son?” And um (.) it’s taken me a while to come to terms with it hey (.) It’s taken me a while to actually get to the point where it doesn’t - it still distresses me when I think about it like in relating it-it to you now (.) it still distresses me hugely (.) but it-it’s taken me a while to get to the point where it doesn’t distress me (.) kind of every

couple of days where it preys on my mind and I think ‘Jus (.) did I really do that to my (.) to my son?’

It was hard for you hey? With my son? Jus Rob (.) it was hard hey (.) And also (.) I really am (.) I’m (.) I’m shoo:: I didn’t think it would affect me as much as it did (.) I really didn’t (1) Um: (.) but (.) after the event (.) it actually affected me quite badly for/for quite a number of months (.) you know (.) Not to the point where I kind of wanted to go and beg for forgiveness from him (.) because I think that would defeat the object um and I won’t do it (.) But (.) but where I just in myself was kind of crying and saying ‘Jus (.) did you really have to resort to that? Was that the right decision?’ I don’t know (.) but I don’t think Sarah thinks it was the right decision (.) She agreed to it (.) um (.) but I think (.) when we heard that child screaming with pain (.) that sting of a leather belt hhh um: (.) which is like the whip of a cane you know (.) it’s exactly like a flippin’ cane

With the phrase ‘I’m comfortable and I’m not comfortable’ Angus introduces his split perspective. From the ‘comfortable’ perspective Angus is the hegemonic ‘moral authority’ who ‘did the right thing’. Indeed, as the moral authority Angus hopes that he never has to ‘do something like that again’, which implies the notion that Angus was carrying out a difficult but necessary fatherly duty. Like other participants, Angus defends against the charge of damage by constructing his actions as those of a responsible father who has every right to be disappointed in his son. But from a less adamant and more vulnerable perspective, Angus is the highly unsettled father, struggling to come to terms with what he has done to his child. Angus introduces the word ‘traumatized’ to convey his subjectivity, although he constructs the word as an approximation only – ‘it’s not a word’ that Angus likes perhaps because it conveys an excess of emotionality and vulnerability. Nevertheless, Angus repeats the phrase ‘it’s taken me a while’ to emphasize the durability and extent of Angus’s distress and Angus also confides that his distress continues to reverberate in the present (‘like in relating it to you now’). The phrase ‘‘did I really do that to my son’ introduces a new split perspective, where Angus as the narrator can scarcely believe what the violent ‘I’ has done. This split lacks the ‘comfortable’ moral authority position. Instead Angus, the loving father who recognizes his son’s subjectivity, struggles to integrate what his violent self has done.

In the next paragraph, Angus continues to vacillate between hegemonic authority and recognizing his son as the other whom he loves. Through my prompt ('it was hard for you hey') I invite Angus to take up a position of vulnerability – as the father who can be affected by his son. In response, it is evident that it is difficult for Angus to settle on a position as the father ('I really am (.) I'm (.) I'm shoo::'). From a position of invulnerable hegemonic masculinity, Angus indicates that he has been surprised by his distress ('I really didn't'), although he then proceeds to emphasize its intensity and duration ('quite badly for quite a number of months'). Then Angus returns to the moral authority position. The phrase 'that would defeat the object' reasserts the moral logic justifying Angus's actions: that as the good father, he must correct his disappointing son. The phrase, 'beg for forgiveness', indicates that the moral authority position brings status whilst the word 'beg' sees Angus turning against his own distress with contempt. Consequently, Angus stands firm in the logic of his hegemonic authority (and I won't do it'). This means that Angus's distress remains private ('just in myself') and that, despite the fact that both he and his son are 'crying', Angus won't join his son as a vulnerable equal. Instead Angus is the certain father, which enables him to take up a position of violence against the other. The position is warranted through certainty.

Angus ends this extract by projecting his anguish onto his wife. Whereas father and mother begin in agreement regarding his actions, her mind is changed at the sound of her 'child screaming with pain'. The pronoun 'we' indicates that Angus also heard his son's screams but he projects his own loss of confidence onto his wife. Instead, Angus's laughter following the phrase 'that sting of a leather belt' serves to minimize the event and to bring it into the realm of the ordinary or routine. Comparisons with 'a cane' have the same effect, and Angus and I went on to talk about our own experiences of being caned at school.

It may be argued then, that the position of 'moral authority' occludes processes of mourning such that whilst Angus is concerned about the notion of damage, he does not take up a position of reparation with his son. Instead, there is a turning away from his son's and his own vulnerability, towards hegemonic severity. In the brief extract below, Angus's use of paralanguage indicates his identification with his son's experience of the incident: that Angus recognizes what he has done. However, Angus vacillates between recognizing his son's pain and defending against this recognition by taking up the moral authority position:

And Rob- and I hit this oke four times hey and aaaa (.) my goodness (.) ssss (.) shooo,
and I hit him hard hey (.) I hit him hard (.) I wanted to hurt him - I wanted to get a lesson
across to him.

The phrase ‘this oke’ places the interaction in the world of men. This beating is a specifically male event where a boy’s subjectivity is muted by the colloquialism ‘oke’. The phrase ‘four times’ signifies the deliberateness of Angus’s actions, and also calls up the discourse of caning, where the number of strokes is always central. Caning discourse summons up the image of an all-powerful male authority, dispassionately adjudicating the number of times he is to hit the submissive boy. Seidler (2006) argues that men turn against vulnerability by adopting “an instrumental (functional) relationship with their bodies” and to “deflect these emotions into anger and violence, which affirms their male identities” (p. 117). In the above extracts Angus performs a version of masculinity that is based on traditional schoolmaster discourse (‘exactly like a flippin cane’). Angus’s laugh, towards the end of the second last extract, is obligatory in the doing of caning discourse, which requires a turning away from vulnerability and a turning towards an instrumental, detached relationship to the body.

However, Angus’s non-verbal expressions (aaaa, ssss, shoo’) signify that Angus is deeply affected by his own actions and that he identifies with and shares his son’s anguish. The expression ‘aaaa’, in particular, seems to signify Angus’s visceral identification with his son’s pain and anguish. Twice Angus says ‘I hit him hard’ which signifies that Angus is mindful of his destructive capacity. However, this destructive capacity is justified by the moral authority position (‘I wanted to get a lesson across to him’) such that Angus does not move towards reparative remorse because ‘that would defeat the object’.

9.1.4. Acknowledging damage

As already indicated, according to Klein’s framework, acknowledging the damage that one has caused to the loved other is crucial to the transition into the depressive position. Acknowledging damage includes a self-reflective awareness of one’s destructive capacities and also enables the individual to move towards reparation, which is based on “the recognition of psychic reality” (Segal, 1973, p. 75) and the desire to make good what is potentially damaged (Frosh, 2012). The extracts which follow illustrate how acknowledging damage contributes to a position of remorse

and how, for some of the participants, this coincides with the desire to make good from a ‘new father’ position.

Nick

In the extract below, Nick describes an incident that makes more direct references to the notion of damage and Nick’s culpability as the hegemonic father. However, Nick’s narrative also follows an optimistic or reparative plot, where both father and son ‘came out better because of it’:

There was an incident where he would /uh/ he/ he (.) I:/ I don’t know if/ I was probably partly to blame? When he first started in Grade (.) 1 or Grade 0 I’m not too sure which year it was in (.) there was a boy (.) who was pushing him around all the time and I (.) I said “Well don’t let him push you around (.) if he pushes you around (.) just punch him” (.) And anyway hhh. he ended up/ he ended up sort of (.) I don’t know what happened – but the boy ended up punching him in the eye (.) and he was/ came home and he lay on his bed the whole day and I could see he was totally devastated hhh (*mm*) by the experience (.) And so/ you know that (.) Ugh it was a good lesson for me and (.) you know (.) I mean we both/ I realized then well (.) maybe (.) um encouraging him to punch back maybe was not such a good idea hh and I think he also realized that maybe (.) that wasn’t the way to resolve issues (*ja*) especially with bigger boys (*shoo*) hhh. Ja, So *ja* that was probably the worst.

Ja (.) *that must have been quite sore for you hey.*

Ja (.) it was (.) it was hard (.) You know and also it’s hard not to get involved as a parent you know (.) to stay back (1) you know (.) your first reaction is to wanna go and (.) (*klap the guy*) *ja* (.) or you know (.) take the guy’s dad out (*hh ja*) But (.) you know (.) you just don’t do that (*ja*) you’ve actually/ you’ve just gotta keep perspective (*ja, shoo*) (.) Ja (.) the lesson was learnt (.) by both of us I think (.) so *ja* (.) we all came out better for it (1) Um (.) you know (.) I (.) it’s strange when you (.) you know as a child (.) you aren’t

aware of your (.) parents' emotions (.) but as a parent (.) you're acutely aware of your child's emotions (*ja*).

As his worst moment, Nick recounts an incident where, as the hegemonic father, he encourages his son to take up orthodox masculinity by 'punching', only to find that his son gets damaged in the process. Nick begins his narrative by positioning himself as 'probably partly to blame'. However, as his narrative unfolds, Nick is clearer about his culpability, albeit from the position of 'lesson learnt'. This implies the difficulty of acknowledging the damage one has caused and that culpability may be easier to articulate from a post-restoration position. The difficulty of acknowledging damage is also signified by the fact that Nick frames his recognition of his son's distress with laughter. Nonetheless, the phrase 'I could see he was totally devastated' indicates that Nick recognizes his son's 'experience' and that Nick feels considerable remorse. Consequently ('And so') Nick restores himself as the father who has been changed by this 'good lesson'. Nick's new father position also sees father and son sharing the same revised perspective regarding acceptable ways of resolving 'issues'.

I ask Nick to reflect further on his experience of this incident and he responds by constructing himself as the new father who restrains that part of himself that would want to 'take the guy's dad out' in order to avoid the shame of his son's defeat. This part is constructed as Nick's 'first reaction' which implies that being the father involves Nick detaching himself from orthodox masculinity. Nick concludes this extract by positioning himself as a 'parent' who is 'acutely aware' of his son's emotions and this acute awareness seems central to the 'lesson' that Nick has learnt. Recognizing his son as other, and acknowledging the damage that his 'first reaction' has caused, moves Nick to a new father position. This new father position involves moving away from omnipotence towards the depressive position where, in the face of frustration, 'you've just gotta keep perspective'. There is the sense then, that Nick owns his destructive thoughts, which is a hallmark of the depressive position (Frosh & Baraitser, 2003) and that as a consequence he is able to think about his own thinking – to 'keep perspective' as the 'parent'.

Brendan

In terms of acknowledging damage, Brendan was something of an exception in that he was quick to point to an incident concerning damage and to position himself as the culpable, damaging

father. In fact this incident constituted one of the central themes of Brendan's interview as he used it to account for his new father position as the father who focuses on keeping his sons 'safe'. However, in the extracts which follow it is evident that whilst acknowledging damage has shifted Brendan as father, Brendan continues to position himself as the orthodox 'very competitive' man. In fact, regarding his relationship with his son, Brendan's sustained investment in orthodox masculinity appears to make it difficult for him to transition from a position of guilt and remorse towards full restoration via reparation.

Within Brendan's opening response to my request to tell me about his son, Brendan indexes father-damage by constructing a narrative where he gives vent to his disappointment, only to find that he is deeply unsettled by the damage that his venting has inflicted on his son:

I mean we had this (.) we used to do go- carting and he's a very talented driver (.) he really is (1) And (.) I just lost it with him the one day at the go- carting track (.) you know he said "No dad (.) everybody wins" (.) And I marched him off to the podium and said "Have a look. You had fourteen in your race (.) it goes one (.) two and three (.) It doesn't go four five and six and all the way through (.) And the biggest one is number one (1) So (.) you have one winner and the rest are all losers" (.) You know (.) um (.) I got him/ he did another heat/ he finished fourth and he was in tears - at the end of the race he was - you know (.) and I thought "What have I done here? You know (.) I've actually killed this little boy!" (.) you know (.) um (1) I think that's been the mistake/ that's the thing that has bugged me even though it happened a few years ago hhh. And it's bugged me (.) you know (.) in a very (.) very big way that (.) I myself am very competitive (.) you know (.) I have to win (.) you know (.) second place is first place loser

Brendan orients his listener to the narrative by asserting that his son is 'very talented'. As indicated in theme two, reference to the son's potential serves to account for the intensity of the father's disappointment ('and I just lost it'). Despite being capable, his son does not share his father's competitive attitude and therefore he does not give Brendan what he wants. Consequently, Brendan is fiercely disappointed in his underperforming son and he aggressively attacks the son's subjectivity ('no dad, everybody wins') wanting to supplant it. In his rage Brendan asserts hierarchy and shames his son by positioning him as one of the 'losers'.

However, Brendan's repair to the phrase 'I got him – he did another heat' indicates Brendan's discomfort at taking up the dominant, pushy father position.

Following the narrative trail, at the point of his son's 'tears', Brendan pulls back from the dominant position and looks back at himself in horror ('What have I done here?'). Klein's depressive framework seems to aptly account for the word 'killed', which constitutes Brendan's anxious recognition of the intrapsychic effects of his hatred – the primal urge to destroy the disappointing other. This, in turn, gives rise to intense guilt over the damage he has caused to the loved object. Brendan's use of the phrase 'little boy' highlights Brendan's renewed recognition of his son as the loved and vulnerable other, which enhances Brendan's guilt. Again this seems consistent with Klein (1948) who proposed the following: "the feeling that the harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses I take to be the essence of guilt" (as cited in Hollway, 2007, p.47). At the conclusion of this extract it is evident that Brendan constructs his guilty position as prevailing rather than reconciled, which suggests that Brendan is not confident that he has been able to repair the damage he has done to his son.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) describe 'heroic positions' as instantiations of hegemonic masculinity, where "the production of self appears to be highly *invested*" (p. 342). According to the authors, investment is recognizable as a valued and emotionally charged self-presentation, lacking reflexivity and where there is a high "coincidence between self and some heroic masculine persona". In the above extract, we see Brendan take up a reflexive and critical perspective on his self as competitive father: an identity position that he has moved away from, via a new father position that carries awareness of damage. However, Brendan ends the extract by investing in the position of 'very competitive' man and, as is evident in the extracts which follow, this investment appears to contribute to the fact that Brendan constructs his guilt as sustained.

Towards the end of his interview, Brendan returns to the above incident, this time prompted by the interview question regarding his 'worst moment' as father. Again, whilst it is evident that Brendan is remorseful, Brendan remains in a deeply unsettled, guilty father position, based on the notion that both his son and his relationship with his son have been irrevocably damaged:

Yoo (.) um (4) worst moment would be (.) probably be that incident which I mentioned earlier (1) when I said there's only one winner (.) everybody else loses (1) That was the worst thing I have ever done (.) And it still bugs me (.) and that happened three years ago (.) That still bugs me (.) There's only one winner (.) no-one else counts (.) you know (.) um (2) ja (1) That to me was the worst thing (.) I think I shattered his little world (.) 'cause he was quite chuffed (.) you know (.) having finished fourth and then I went-and then I went (1) yoo Ja (.) That bugs me (.) And I will not do that to Chris (.) You know with Chris (.) the bicycle's there- boom-he's rather play on his J-board (.) that's fine You know (.) that was the worst thing which I have ever done to Nigel (.) and I don't think he's forgiven me (.) And that bugs me (.) I don't think he's forgiven me for saying that (.) Because I think then I labeled him a loser (.) you know (.) and that bugs me (.) And I don't think I could ever fix that (.) I just think it has stayed with him (.) you know (.) he can't play C's (.) he's gotta play A's or B's he's ok (.) you know (.) I think that's his little mindset and I think that's what's happened (.) That was my fault – whew – biggest stuff up I've ever made in his little life (.) It was just my own competitiveness which just came out (.) and I took it out on a little six year old (.) Which was just wrong (.) You know (.) so much so, that watching him play sport (.) I tend to stand away from other fathers (.) I don't want to interfere (.) Another dad I know at half time he goes into the huddle as well (.) And you just want to go “Ah no (.) no”.

The above passage serves as something of a confessional, where Brendan recycles the motor cross incident as ‘the worst thing I have ever done’. Brendan emphasizes the enduring nature of his guilt (‘that bugs me’) based on the fact that he has destroyed his son’s innocence (‘shattered his little world’) such that Brendan can’t ‘ever fix’ what he has done. Whilst Brendan can change the way he fathers his younger son, by taking up the accepting position, something permanent has happened to his oldest son. The phrase ‘then I labeled him a loser’ suggests that the designation of ‘loser’ still has currency for Brendan *and* that Nigel has incorporated this currency into his own ‘little mindset’. Therefore Brendan depicts a transferring of hegemonic assumptions between father and son that introduces the son to the predicament of shame associated with hegemonic masculinity (Lindegger and Quayle, 2009). Ironically then, although Brendan articulates significant remorse for his actions, Brendan and Nigel now share the same ‘mindset’. Neither father nor son can tolerate the shame of ‘second place’ or playing for the ‘C’s’.

Brendan's inability to 'fix' what has happened, or to broach reparation with his son is troubling. Why can't Brendan transcend his shame and guilt? In part, this may be explained by Brendan's identification with hegemonic masculinity, which seems to prevent him from renouncing the 'winner-loser' hierarchy. The phrase 'it was just my own competitiveness which came out' indicates that competitiveness is only a part of Brendan but his investment ('my own') in this position makes it difficult for Brendan to sustain a 'new father' position devoid of competitiveness. Brendan stands 'away from other fathers' not because he differs from the norm, but because he doesn't trust his ability to restrain himself as the hegemonic competitive father. Hence, Brendan embodies no new version of masculinity that could serve as a way out of the 'loser-winner' framework. This is not to suggest that Brendan is not deeply troubled by the notion that he has hurt his son, rather that Brendan doesn't construct a self-position that would enable Brendan and his son to transcend the winner-loser binary. This process may be contrasted with Nick's extract above where father and son are reconciled through a shared investment in a new version of masculinity that renounces a hierarchy-based masculinity that would 'just punch him' or 'take the guys dad out'.

Brendan concludes this extract by distinguishing himself from 'another dad' who is consumed by his investment in his son's performance such that he joins his son 'in the huddle'. In contrast to this father, Brendan is the restrained father who does not want 'to interfere'. This indicates that, as with Angus and John above, Brendan defends against his impulse to push and control his son through splitting and projection such that the other dad ('he') becomes the derogated carrier of competitive pushing. Again the implication is that Brendan vacillates between acknowledging and defending against his destructive capacities, which appears to prevent him from moving beyond the position of the guilty father.

The third iteration of this incident comes in Brendan's response to the standard interview question regarding his 'worst moment' as father to Nigel. In his response below, it is evident that Brendan positions himself as the 'disappointment', and through the course of the extract Brendan adopts a split perspective on himself, as like Angus above, he looks on with dismay at his destructive self:

But as I said (.) my biggest disappointment was (.) yoo: "If you don't win (.) you're a loser" (.) ooh (.) that was (.) as a father that was the worst thing/ this little six year old

was just shattered (.) I was shattered (2) And the scary thing is (1) I may not be able to make up for it (2) the damage is done (*hm*) A/and it dawned on me (1) while it was happening (.) And I couldn't stop myself (.) I was upset with myself afterwards (.) I remember getting home and telling Margaret "I need to drink (.) and I need to drink big/big time (.) I have just stuffed up my son for life" You know um i/ it was almost similar to when my dad turned around one day and said "You're not my son anymore" (*mm*) (.) It was like (.) that kind of moment (.) Ja (.) I felt I had done that to Nigel (.) So you know (.) ja (.) so that's been my biggest disappointment (*yoo*) (.) Realizing what I had done to a little six year old (.) You know (.) they're little boys and they must have fun (.) you know (.) I must keep them safe (.) that's the big thing (.) I must keep them safe

In the wake of Brendan's outburst, both he and his son are 'shattered'. This shared perspective contrasts with the previous extract where Nigel takes up his father's competitive 'mindset'. In this instance Brendan identifies with his son as the vulnerable 'little six year old' where both father and son are left feeling damaged by Brendan's hegemonic assertions. Again Brendan constructs the damage as irretrievable ('the damage is done') such that he remains in caught the guilty position ('I may not be able to make up for it'). As indicated above, Brendan goes on to construct a split self-perspective, where a more reflective self fails to contain a destructive self ('I couldn't stop myself') such that the reflective self is disappointed in the destructive self ('I was upset with myself afterwards'). This accounts for Brendan's uptake of a position of shame and self-loathing ('I have just stuffed up my son') and his self-destructive response ('I need to drink big time'). Brendan's emphasis on the word 'my' signal proprietorship and cues his association of this incident with his experience of being disowned (and by implication 'stuffed up') by his own father. Brendan realizes that he has replicated his childhood script, where the father rejects the son who won't take up the father's ways. Brendan then constructs his new father position, which is based on recognizing his sons as 'little boys' who, since they are only children 'must have fun'. Thus Brendan abandons mentoring and positions himself as protector of his children, tasked with keeping his boys 'safe'. There is the sense then that Brendan is mindful of hegemonic masculinity as damaging and the need to protect his sons from it, even if this means that he stands 'away' as an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity.

Reflecting back on the above three excerpts it is evident that Brendan frequently uses the word ‘little’ and the phrase ‘six year old’ to underscore his son’s vulnerability and innocence. In part, this may be read as a strategy, common to this sample, of referencing time as a way of managing the mentoring/disappointment dilemma, where fathers are able to preserve hope by postponing mentoring on the basis of their sons’ immaturity. However, using a psychoanalytic lens it may be argued that Brendan is split by his identifications with both the innocent child and the abusive father, which coincide with two sides of himself as the father. Consequently, remaining guilty serves as a kind of ‘corral’ for Brendan’s identifications with the abusive father, so ensuring that he will not enact his violent self. Elsewhere, Brendan says the following regarding his experiences of his father:

I’ve always wanted to be the father which my dad wasn’t (2) I remember sort of getting hidings from my father (.) you know (.) and then (.) after a while (.) just not ac/accepting it. You know my dad was an alcoholic (.) he used to come home (.) and (.) you know (.) “Stop drinking” you know (.) when I was in about grade ten (.) But/but prior to that (.) he’d come home (.) and he’d hit my mom (.) and he’d hit me (.) you know (.) because I would step in and side with my mom (.) you know (.) and then he’d have a go at me (.) But I was a child you know

In this extract Brendan is the abused child who stands opposed to his violent father. Brendan begins by asserting his resolve to follow a corrective script in his own fathering. Brendan then turns to his childhood self and his repeated use of the phrase ‘you know’ indicates that Brendan wants his listener to join him in empathizing with his childhood self. Brendan positions this childhood self as part defiant (“Stop drinking!”; ‘I would step in’) and part innocent and vulnerable (‘I was a child you know’). Returning to the three previous extracts, it is posited that Brendan remains in the guilty position because he is caught between unconscious identifications with his powerful but destructive father (‘stop drinking!’; ‘I need to drink big’) and idealized identifications with the ‘little boy’ who must be kept ‘safe’.

The following field notes serve as a point of triangulation on the above observations:

I am struck by a sense of Brendan’s vulnerability, even when he made claims as a competitive, ‘cowboys don’t cry’ kind of man. I felt like there was quite a bit of emotionality ‘underneath’ or

within Brendan's talk and I found myself feeling quite protective towards him. There was an odd disparity between his gentle manner and some very hegemonic, stereotypical talk.

The above field notes suggest something of a split in Brendan's performance. At one level he wanted me to see him as a 'man's man', excellent at sport and driven to achieve. However, Brendan also signaled a vulnerability that seemed to undo his performance of hegemonic masculinity and to leave him at something of a loss as a man and father. In turn, as the interview progressed, I began to feel tender, or 'fatherly', towards Brendan. There is the sense then that Brendan did not know what to do with his vulnerability, and that at an unconscious level, he gave it to me to 'look after'.

From a psychosocial perspective, it may be argued that Brendan's guilty position is sustained by his unintegrated investments in orthodox 'competitive' masculinity as well as his contradictory identifications with abusive fathering and the vulnerable 'little boy' who must be kept 'safe' from this selfsame father. Brendan's self-presentations are split by these identifications and consequently the injured 'little boy' remains inconsolable.

9.2. Summary

Regarding their actions and resolutions in the face of disappointment, participants were wary of positioning themselves as excessively assertive, and many used the word 'pushing' to designate this excess. Rather, participants tended to position themselves as 'encouraging'. As indicated, several participants used an intrinsic/extrinsic frame in order to account for their positions as encouraging fathers. In essence this framework was used to foreground the son's authorship and agency whilst pointing away from fathers' assertions and agendas. For example John says 'I don't want to go and make him, you know, something that he's not', thus taking up a position that approximates the ethics of Benjamin's (1988) concept of recognition.

Participants such as Nick, Quinton and Douglas show how positioning fathering as 'encouraging' enables the father to be the mentor, free from the shame of 'pushing'. In contrast, 'pushy' parents are derogated for foisting their own agendas and ambitions onto their sons. The Kleinian concepts of splitting and projection have been used to argue that, via this process, participants defend against their own desires for status and success by projecting these onto other 'pushy' parents, who are then held up as exemplars of 'bad parenting'.

The issue of agency is significant to this research project, since Benjamin's (1988; 1995) concept of recognition hinges on acknowledging the agency and authorship of the other. Anderson (2009) argues that new or 'inclusive masculinity' sees men being supportive of their children regardless of their performances, emphasizing encouragement and confidence building over accomplishment. However, as the above analyses reveal, in many instances 'encouragement' appears seamlessly intertwined with intersubjective coercion and that being the 'encouraging' father may constitute a denial of one's agenda and one's dominance of the other. This is perhaps in keeping with Connell's (2005) observations regarding the ways issues of dominance are legitimated or elided through moral reasoning, in that fathers employ the discourse of encouragement and support to justify their hegemonic assertions. The above finding also seems to illustrate Hearn's (2004) comment regarding the subtlety of the hegemonic, its "elusiveness and the difficulty of reducing it to a set of fixed positions and practices" (p. 59).

Participants also justified their assertions by taking up mentoring positions, where good fathering involves directing the son towards acceptable or successful behavior. For example, Douglas suggests that 'you need to make them ambitious'; Nick is able to get his son to 'see' the benefits of training, and John makes the taken – for – granted claim that his son's ability to sing 'needs to be taken forward'. This is in keeping with previous studies that identify the prevailing concern amongst middle-class parents that their children learn skills and achieve so that they will be prepared for adulthood (Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010; Kremer-Sadlik & Gutierrez, 2013).

However, perhaps any analysis of father power will also encounter variations of paternal oppression (Pease, 2000). This seems evident in John self-positioning, where it is his 'job' to be 'tough' on his son, such that little or no scope is left for the son as an equivalent center of experience. Certainly, as interviewer, I experienced the intimidating aspects of father power during Angus's depiction of the 'severe consequence'. In this instance, it is evident that Angus's investment in the moral authority position brings a hegemonic certainty to his discourse which counterbalances and mitigates the obvious distress this incident has caused, both to his family and to himself. This may be contrasted with Nick's reflections on damage, where he displays flexibility in his self-positioning such that he and his son are able to reunite through a new and shared masculinity. Towards the end of his extract, Nick positions himself as a caring parent

(acutely aware of your child's emotions). This may be read as an instantiation of Diamond's (2004) notion of 'genital fathering' which is characterized by a flexible masculinity, containing both active and receptive functions. In Angus's case, receptivity is projected onto the mother.

Klein's theorizing of paranoid-schizoid functioning and the depressive position has been used as a framework for analyzing the dilemma fathers face where, on the one hand fathers want to mentor their sons towards acceptable masculinity, whilst on the other fathers fear damaging their sons whom they love. The above extracts show that acknowledging damage is a complex assignment, as participants vacillate between awareness of their ability to damage and rationalizing pushing as acceptable (e.g. Nick and John), or minimizing and denying the effects of their actions on their sons (e.g. Quinton and Angus). The depressive position involves acknowledging one's capacity to harm the loved other, giving rise to guilt and remorse (Frosh, 2012). It is evident that Quinton ('always managed to restrain myself'), John ('I am still learning') and Angus ('that would defeat the object') illustrate how participants defend against guilt.

As indicated, Brendan certainly positions himself as guilty although Brendan's investment in orthodox competitive masculinity appears to work against reparation. As indicated in chapter two, Trowell (2005) proposes that during fatherhood, men re-experience conscious and unconscious identifications and connections. Mitchell (2000) suggested that guilt may be understood as "reflective of very real and inevitable betrayals generated by conflicting loyalties to multiple significant others and multiple versions of oneself" (p. 123). It has been argued above that Brendan's position as the guilty father is sustained by a psychosocial amalgam of orthodox masculinity discourses and unconscious, guilt-inducing identifications with his oppressive father.

CHAPTER TEN: WOMEN'S WAYS

This chapter focuses on the ways participants position the mother in the process of accounting for their responses, as fathers, to the different or disappointing son. As indicated in chapter two, social constructionists argue that gender identification is always relational (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and that gender hierarchies are established by differentiating and distancing from whatever is constructed as 'feminine' (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Consequently, this chapter addresses the ways participants 'do' gender/ fathering via the constructing of differences and similarities within the father-mother-son triad.

As already noted, orthodox conceptions of fathering distinguish between maternal and paternal functions, where the father's function is to intervene between mother and son, to set limits, to represent the outside world, and perhaps most importantly, to direct the son towards his masculinity. In this process, father and son identify with each other as similar ("you are like me"). Previous research indicates that men tend to be more involved in parenting when they have sons and that this involvement extends into the son's adult years (White, 1994; Nydegger & Mitteness, 1991). This supports the notion that being the father of a son offers particular father functions that may differentiate fathering from mothering.

Research also shows that men commonly parent through goal-directed pursuits, in particular sport, and that parenting through activities tends to be indexed as 'good' involved fathering, amongst middle-class parents (Coakley, 2006; Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012). Thus it may be argued that, when it is uncomplicated by difference, 'mentoring' sons has the dual effect of establishing a warrantable father position and shoring up acceptable versions of masculinity. Through shared engagement in goal-directed pursuits, father and son perform masculinity which includes difference from the feminine/maternal.

Of course, this research project focuses on participants' experiences, actions and resolutions when, due to difference, participants are unable to automatically take up the mentor position. This theme focuses on the ways participants position the mother when the mentor-mentee relationship is frustrated by difference between father and son.

It seems appropriate here to recall the distinctions psychoanalytic theorists make between repudiating and renouncing the feminine (Benjamin, 1995; Hollway, 2006; Diamond, 2005). As indicated earlier, repudiation is seen as a rigid mode of differentiation, comprising a splitting of masculine and feminine and a defensive rejection of the feminine as ‘not me’. In contrast, renunciation results when the son retains positive identifications with the mother even as he turns towards and identifies with his father. Both feminine and masculine identifications co-exist, obviating the need for such defenses as repudiation, distance and control. Renunciation therefore gives rise to a more flexible acceptance of difference, a difference that is able to exist in tension with likeness, and the ability to recognize the other in ourselves.

As indicated in chapter two, the father’s own conscious and unconscious gender identifications have important implications for his ability to recognize his son’s differences (Diamond, 2004; Samuels, 1989). Diamond (ibid.) describes ‘genital fathering’ which is based on a flexible masculine identity which enables the son to integrate maternal/feminine identifications even as he turns towards the father. The concept of genital fathering implies that the father himself has not repudiated femininity and this makes it possible for him to identify with the maternal/feminine in himself and his son. Hollway (2007) makes this point when she argues that fathers, who routinely take on maternal functions as acceptable aspects of their masculinity, help their sons to assimilate maternal identifications into their emerging gender identities.

As regards being ‘like the mother’, ‘new fathering’ positions the father as a caring, emotionally involved co-parent, who actively takes on domestic responsibilities and participates in family life (Burgess, 1997; Craig, 2006; Dermott, 2008). Such conceptualizations of the ‘new father’ ideal appear to flatten out the notion of difference between mothers and fathers, with both being subsumed under the generalized banner of ‘parent’. In contrast, fathering that is informed by hegemonic masculinity is likely to promote traditional father functions and denigrate maternal functions, since hegemonic masculinity is typically constructed around the subjugation of women (Lindegger & Quayle, 2009).

By focusing on the ways participants position the mother, this chapter gives particular attention to that ways participants construct themselves as similar to or different from the mother. It is assumed that these constructions of similarity or difference inform the ways participants ‘do’

masculinity/fathering as well as participants' resolutions and reactions to their disappointing sons.

10.1. Analysis of Data

The following subthemes indicate the varying ways that participants constructed the father-mother-son triangle. Particular attention has been given to the ways the issue of similarity and difference informs these constructions.

10.1.1. Mentor father on the inside, mother on the outside

Theme three has shown how participants look to mentoring as a meaningful way of being the father, facilitating intimacy between father and son and, in many of the cases, shoring up acceptable versions of masculinity. This particular subtheme illustrates how participants position the mother within what may be termed 'successful mentoring discourses', where father and son identify with each other through shared activities. In the extracts below it is evident that the mother is positioned as external to these 'successful mentoring' constructions. It is also evident that positioning the mother as external may include subordinating her as 'other'.

Brendan

In the following narrative, Brendan makes the expectation of fathering a son synonymous with expectations that he will mentor his son. As the expectant father, Brendan is mobilized by the prospect of being able to teach his son through activities and he fantasizes the birth of a childlike friendship that excludes the mother. As indicated, Brendan positions the mother as external to the father-son relationship with the function of breaching Brendan's idealized union with his son. In this sense the mother represents disappointment:

It was actually quite funny (.) When we found out Margie was pregnant (.) Dr. X was the-our gynae um (.) and the way he approached it was actually quite nice (.) he said "I need to know if this is a (.) 'Oh yes' or an 'Oops' pregnancy" (1) We said "No it's a 'oh yes' (.) He said "Great (.) I love those" (.) And he said "Brandon (.) you will come to every appointment, because this (.) is your child as well" (.) you know (.) and that was nice (.) you know (.) so that's where it started (.) It was/and then I'll never forget (.) he said "Do you guys want to know the sex?" And I said "Yes please" (.) and he said "Why?" And I

said “No (.) I need to know if I have to buy a (.) pink saddle or a blue saddle for the pee wee fifty (.) which is a little motor bike (*hh*) or if I buy one spectator ticket or two spectator tickets to Craven Week” *hhh*. And he looked at me and he said “It’s a-you know (.) it’s a little girl” (.) I sulked for two days (.) I didn’t chat to Margie h. in the car on the way home (.) I was most upset (.) And then the next appointment I told Margie “No I’m not going” (.) you know (.) she can go (.) And then he said “Well (.) where’s Brendan?” you know (.) Margie said “No (.) he was so disappointed (.) he badly wanted a boy”(.) And then he said “No, please tell him I was joking (.) I knew exactly what he/ what he wanted (.) I was joking (.) It is a little boy”(.) You know (.) so (.)

Ja (.) no (.) agh (.) it was/ it was exciting (.) I started pricing motor bikes (.) and (.) like bicycles (.) and boys’ toys and things like that (.) And (.) Margie had to keep reminding me that “He’s not your little friend (.) he’s your son” (*hm*) You know (.) um (.) my expectations were (.) doing things with him (.) growing with him (.) if that makes sense (.) that’s all I wanted to do

Overall, Brendan is the teller of a humorous anecdote, somewhat against himself as the young and over-invested father. Brendan’s humour is based on his ability to alternate his position on the material under discussion, such that he can take up the perspectives of the paternal, knowing doctor, and the excited, ‘boyish’ expectant father. As the expectant father, Brendan fantasizes about teaching his son, and taking him away on gendered pursuits. Brendan emphasizes his anticipation of the closeness that he will be able to enjoy with his son (‘doing things with him’). By contrast, Margie is positioned as more detached. It is Brendan who carries the urgency regarding the sex of his child (‘And I said “Yes please”’), who is ‘most upset’ and who ‘badly’ wants a boy. Margie is positioned as existing outside of Brendan’s father sentiment and as constraining of his investment (‘Margie had to keep reminding me’). Instead, Margie shares a parent-level exchange with the doctor, and both call the juvenile Brendan back into fathering. However, there is the sense that the paternal doctor is sympathetic towards Brendan whereas Margie is separate and represents disappointment and restraint. Regarding the men in this narrative, one part of Brendan is highly invested in joining his son in the world of boyhood, ‘growing with him’, whilst Brendan’s ‘other part’ identifies with the paternal, mentor doctor, who looks on the earnest first-time father with a knowing, understanding smile.

The prospect of having a daughter leaves Brendan 'so disappointed'. Brendan withdraws ('I sulked for two days') and he turns against his wife ('I didn't talk to Margie on the way home'). There is the sense that, in the midst of his disappointment, Brendan simultaneously rejects his unborn daughter and blames his wife ('I told Margie "no I'm not coming" you know, she can go'). Brendan does not imagine that he can enjoy a similar attachment to the feminine and so he pushes his wife towards a dyadic relationship with the child that excludes him.

But then, the rejuvenated prospect of having a son and 'doing things with him' re-galvanizes a boyish anticipation in Brendan. As with Douglas, in chapter six, there is an affinity between father and son that goes beyond parent to child, because the father's own childhood needs are gratified through his relationship with his son. The sentence 'And Margie had to keep reminding me, "he's not your little friend, he's your son' positions Margie as the responsible parent who preserves an awareness of the son as a child rather than a friend. Margie disrupts Brendan's fantasy, and calls him to be a parent. For Brendan, being a parent comes at a price: he must relinquish or disappoint his early hopes for union through sameness. Thus it may be argued that, in this extract, Brendan is disappointed twice over by the feminine. As both the father of a daughter, and as a maternal-style parent, Brendan is constrained from giving vent to the spontaneous energy that derives from his idealized identifications with a fantasized 'like' son ('doing things with him (.) growing with him').

Douglas

As indicated in chapter six, Douglas constructs himself as a father who is not disappointed in his son, instead, he is 'lucky' because his son is a 'real little boy'. In the extract below, Douglas expands on this theme, with the claim that his expectations are met because his son is 'a proper little boy'. As part of his construction, Douglas formulates a father-son-mother triad that seems to illustrate the notion of 'repudiating the feminine' (Benjamin, 1988; Diamond, 2004) in the process of identifying with the hegemonic, gender-certain father:

Ja I/ I/ I sort of expected (.) I definitely had expectations (.) and I don't know how I would have dealt with it had he been different you know (1) I expected him to be a little-a proper little boy (.) you know (1) When I say proper (.) I/ I don't intend it (.) I/ I'm not trying to say that there's a stereotype of boys (.) but you expect boys to play in mud and

boys to always be dirty and (.) um (.) not to say that that's always the case um (1) Had it been different I don't know how I would have dealt with it (.) but you know just every time something's gets done where he's cut half of one of Anne's bushes down you know (.) she shouts at him and I call him round the corner and give him a chocolate hhh hhh. Because it's sort of what I used to do so I expect (.) I sort of expect that that's my experience of what a boy should do

In the above extract, Douglas defends against the charge of stereotyping ('I'm not trying to say that there's a stereotype'; 'not to say that's always the case') even as he goes about detailing the definite 'expectations' he holds for his son. By claiming 'I don't know how I would have coped had he been different', Douglas positions both himself and his son as 'proper' males. Douglas is able to cope because he and his son are the same: they are 'like subjects'. Furthermore, there is the sense that Douglas's own sense of self is dependent on his son's simulation of the hegemonic ideal; that he would face some sort of disintegration of the 'I' if his son wasn't a 'proper little boy'.

Douglas's brief vignette regarding 'Anne's bushes' captures how, as the father, he shapes his son towards a hegemonic masculinity that incorporates colluding against the mother and derogating the feminine/maternal voice. Douglas constructs the metaphor of giving his son a chocolate to signify paternal pleasure and approval. Through this act Douglas invites his son to choose the father (masculinity) and to repudiate the mother (femininity), simultaneously making a link between performances of masculinity and denigration of the feminine. The maternal perspective is constructed as a difference that father and son conspire against in their performance of masculinity.

There is something imperious about the phrase 'so I expect', with the emphasis falling on the word 'expect', which Douglas immediately goes on to soften: 'I sort of expect'. But Douglas is performing an exalted version of masculinity: an 'I' that induces approving laughter from me as his audience. Our shared laughter indicates, again, that I joined with Douglas in this performance of hegemonic masculinity. As indicated in chapter six, humour or shared laughter was a significant aspect of my intersubjective exchange with Douglas. I laughed with Douglas as a way of joining him in a particular performance of masculinity and in this case the performance includes contempt towards the feminine/maternal.

Many of the above dynamics are recycled in the following extract. In this instance, care and concern for the safety of the son are constructed as maternal concerns and then denigrated as instances of excessive feminine emotionality:

I think she's-she's quite cautious as a mum (.) You know (.) when/when/ we do things as a father and son you know (.) she'll often say "Be careful!" (.) you know (.) "Why are you doing this (.) w/why you doing that?" and um (.) You know (.) you can see that/ that photo there with the kite (.) where he was getting ripped up into the air (*oh yes yes*) getting ripped up into the air (.) in the gust (.) (*ja*) on the beach (*wow*) and Anne was terrified that he was gonna now (.) her son was gonna go up and never be seen again (*hhh. hh*) and um (1) you know that to him was the highlight of his holiday (.) flying that adult kite (*shew*) (.) so (.)

But on the home front (.) um (.) *ja* (.) I think she pushes little things like "tidy up" and things probably more than I do (.) because if/if/if he doesn't do it then she's got to do it (.) and the same applies to the girls (.) *Ja*, I think she's (.) probably more (.) of the/the sort of the/the/the home owner (.) or home disciplinarian as such (.) whereas I just kind of float hey (.) You know I also pull my weight and try to do my thing (.) but um (.) *ja* (.) she definitely rules the roost here (.) but when we/ when/when we get out and go away and things like that (.) you know that's sort of my turf that (.) And I think we've got a good balance sort of (.) letting the kids know exactly where they stand (*mm*) You know (.) if she's got an issue with him and is shouting at him (.) I will (.) I will get in (*mm*) (.) because he:: he/ when I shout at him (.) he knows that it's for real (.) because I only do it when he's sort of pushed the boundaries (*ja*).

Douglas begins this extract by making caution a characteristic of the mother-son relationship. In contrast, Douglas and his son are both united and defined through shared action ('where we do things as a father and a son'). Activity defines Douglas's father position. In contrast, the mother is positioned outside of father and son activity, unable to understand 'why' father and son are engaging with risk. Douglas then constructs a story to emphasize his difference from the mother regarding risk and care. Douglas is the orthodox father who gets his son to use an 'adult kite' which 'ripped' his son 'up into the air' whilst the mother is passive, powerless and 'terrified' that she is never going to see her son again.

This story seems replete with oedipal imagery. The son is ‘ripped’ away from the mother through an act of ‘adult’ masculine force, and in the process the son identifies with the father (‘that for him was the highlight of his holiday’). Caution and fear are projected onto the mother who is denigrated for her vulnerability. This reflects Hearn’s (2004) observation that ‘not caring’ is a defining feature of being a man. So, again, our shared laughter illustrates how the act of feminizing care is an opportunity for Douglas and me to unite as hegemonic men.

Douglas goes on to construct a family structure where the subjectivity of the mother is rendered domestic and trivial (‘she pushes little things’). As regards the home, Douglas ‘just floats’: he is without obvious domestic responsibilities. Realizing that ‘just floating’ places him on questionable ground, Douglas repairs his position through the new claim ‘I also pull my weight’. Nevertheless, Douglas relegates home ruler-ship to the mother, because he is invested in more glamorous pursuits outside of domesticity (‘when we get out’). This is Douglas’s ‘turf’.

Then, Douglas goes on to draw a distinction between mother and father power. Although Douglas says that the mother ‘rules the roost’ at home, when Douglas shouts, his son knows that ‘it’s serious’. Thus Douglas positions himself as orthodox law-giver where the mother’s power is subordinate to that of the father’s. Adhering to orthodoxy, Douglas represents reality to his son (‘it’s for real) and he sets limits on the son’s interactions with the mother (‘When he’s sort of pushed the boundaries’). In positioning himself as the father who introduces his son to what is ‘real’ Douglas implicitly positions the mother as incapable of doing the same. Consequently it may be argued that, in both extracts, Douglas makes the reality of the mother irrelevant to his son. The maternal perspective is trivialized and it lacks currency in the father-son relationship. The mother ‘shouts’ but Douglas gives his son ‘a chocolate’ because he has been like his father.

Both Brendan and Douglas’s extracts show how father-son attachment through sameness coincides with an excluding of and, in Douglas’s case, a repudiating of the mother/ feminine. As indicated in chapter eight, identification between the son and the father’s childhood self is central to this father-son attachment. Brendan’s extracts show that this boy to boy identification gives rise to idealized fantasies of exclusive intimacy through activity (‘growing with him’) whilst Douglas’s extracts show that this identification constructs a shared reality that excludes and derogates the feminine (‘Because it’s sort of what I used to do’). With this side of the

identificatory pole intact, the father is able to mentor his son towards a masculinity that includes the father's fantasies and that (as Brendan and Douglas show) excludes the mother.

Brendan and Douglas's extracts endorse Chodorow's (1999) observation that parents reference their own childhoods in order to understand their same-sex children and previous research that finds that men claim particular responsibilities as fathers of sons (White, 1994). In addition, according to Connell's (2005) masculinities framework, the above extracts may be seen as instances of 'complicity' with hegemonic masculinity, in that gender hierarchy is entrenched rather than overturned, even though Brendan and Douglas position themselves as active and involved fathers.

10.1.2. Mother on the inside, disappointed father on the outside

Whereas Douglas and Brendan construct a father-son relationship based on identification with sameness to the exclusion of the mother, the following extracts reveal how this arrangement changes when difference and disappointment lie between father and son.

Craig

As indicated in chapter nine, in the face of disappointment, much of Craig's interview goes towards constructing a position of acceptance and restraint regarding his son's differences. Craig frames his experience as a 'journey of mourning' that has led towards Craig choosing to 'stand back' from his different son. In the extract below it is evident that Craig contrasts his relationship with his son with the 'messy' 'boundarylessness' of the mother-son relationship:

So thinking about that would you say that umm that uhh you have a particular uhh function as a father that would differ from Sarah?

I/I think increasingly so hey (.) and I think that is part of the dynamic because Sarah and I parent very (.) very differently hey (.) so I might sort of compensate for her in some ways as she does for me um: but I'll/ I/ I would say uh (.) my/my current approach with Michael is just to kind of be that uhh parental gaze hey (.) uh:: and if I can make it more gender specific (.) that paternal gaze (1) I just almost feel my job's to pitch (.) watch and if he then if he invites me (.) then I'll participate up to the point where he wants me and

then he'll fire me and I will go and watch again hey (.) um but I seem to be doing a lot of watching of late I must say(.) shoo

Quite a restrained place to be

Ja:: hey (.) uh (.) very restrained (.) Or being a sort of a-an appreciative audience when I am invited in an' he wants me to have a look at (.) you know (.) a drawing or how he's like (.) changed the pond around (.) or how he's (.) you know (.) managed to catch a beetle or something stupid you know (.) (*An-And*) Michael

And in that way it differs from Sarah- Sarah's role or the way that she does things (ja) So for instance Michael's going down the wrong road as far as you can think (.) but you will be restrained and Sarah's role will be different?

Ja Sarah will freaking hey (.) Sarah will be kukking on him and cajoling him and reprimanding him um but in her particular style that is not I don't think traumatic for the kids at all hey (.) I think that they quite like scrapping with her (.) They have lots of arguments (.) um sometimes I think (.) can get a bit disrespectful (.) I/ I hear coming out of my own mouth "hey treat your mom with respect" far more often than I would like to have to say um (.) but there again I think I have also realized that I can't mediate for/ for Sarah and Michael (.) I've just got to let them have their messy relationship so I think with me there is lots of restraint and respect and with Sarah there's uhh a lot of mess and um boundarylessness (.) but it's also a good experience for him hey (.) he knows he is- he's deeply loved by Sarah hey (.) Ja. (.)

Craig begins by making his restraint a counterbalance to his wife's parenting style ('I might sort of compensate'). Craig goes on to reiterate his position of distance and restraint, where the son is given agency (if he invites me'; 'he'll fire me') whilst Craig is conscientiously restrained and passive ('I'll participate up to the point where he wants me'). Through the phrases 'just to kind of' and 'I just almost feel' Craig positions himself as a father who accepts his son's negations. But these phrases also suggest that Craig is occupying a father position that is somehow incomplete, as signified by his repetition of the word 'just'. This implies that, in the face of disappointment, Craig constructs an attenuated version of fathering. When compared to the father-son bond constructed by Douglas and Brandon above, what appears to be missing is the

gratification of identificatory love, where father and son identify with each other and the son follows his father into the father's world. In Craig's case, in response to his son's negations, he chooses to watch and wait. The conjunction 'but' followed by the words 'I seem to be doing a lot of watching of late, I must say, shoo' indicates that, as a father position, 'doing a lot of watching' is both frustrating and limiting for Craig, and raises the notion that he wants more as the father.

Craig then supplements his 'very restrained' position with that of being 'an appreciative audience'. Here, the 'I' is consciously performing a parenting function that has to do with recognizing his son's intentions and interests: contacting his mind. The phrase 'or something stupid' signals that Craig is adjusting his attention towards his son's world and that this activity is not personally gratifying for Craig. The phrase may also be read as a disclaimer as 'appreciating' how his son has 'managed to catch a beetle' does not represent an obviously masculine version of fathering that can be shared with his listener, without some qualification. Nonetheless, there is no sense of the boy to boy identification evident in the previous subtheme.

The emphasized 'Michael!' follows after Craig has articulated his son's ways and conveys a mixture of enjoyment and vexation. This seems to illustrate Benjamin's (1995, p. 35) point that recognition entails the pleasure of "contacting the child's mind", but that this requires encountering the difficult paradox "that "you" who are "mine" are also different, new, outside of me" (1988, p.15).

Craig constructs a quite different relational order between mother and son. Sarah openly expresses her frustrations with her son – she 'freaks' and 'kuks' but this is not 'traumatic at all' for the child. This is because Craig constructs child and wife as equal in power, where the children 'quite like scrapping with her'. In turn, Craig positions himself outside of this 'messy' mother-son relationship and assigns himself the power of the law-giver position ("Hey! Treat your mother with respect!"). The phrase 'far more often than I would like to have to say' makes this function necessary, giving coherence to Craig as the father.

On reflection, Craig then undercuts his orthodox law-giver position based on the observation that he 'can't mediate for Sarah and Michael'. Thus, Craig re-positions himself as the restrained and in a sense powerless father who is external to the mother-son relationship. The words 'messy', 'mess', and 'boundarylessness' serve as both a criticism of the mother-son bond and as a means

of contrasting father-son distance with mother-son intimacy. Craig's position is based on 'lots of restraint and respect' whereas Sarah and Michael share an emotional immediacy that is characterized by an implicit knowledge ('he knows that he is deeply loved'). Here Craig's mother-son-father construction is exactly opposite to non-disappointed fathers such as Douglas. In Douglas's case, he is the one who enjoys an implicit knowledge and emotional immediacy with his son whilst the mother is the outsider with the task of mediating the father-son bond ('Be careful').

In the previous subtheme, both Douglas and Brendan construct the notion of implicit knowing, or intimacy between father and son, based on boy to boy sameness. In Craig's case, he remains in the parent or 'paternal' position, whereas it is the mother who shares a child-child bond with the son. In Craig's case, when he is 'invited', he 'participates': he is the respectful outsider, who waits to be invited into his son's world. Here, Craig's position could be read as an orthodox father position where, like Douglas above, the working father relegates every-day domestic concerns to the mother. But again, the 'I' in the phrase 'I seem to be doing a lot of watching' is an 'I' that has to work to tolerate disappointment. In this vein, the phrase 'he knows that he is deeply loved by Sarah' may be read as Craig accessing the intensity of his own attachment to his son via the maternal perspective. To this extent it may be argued that Craig envies the 'boundarylessness' of the mother-son bond and that Craig's 'restrained' position functions as a defense against disappointment.

Scott

Scott distinguishes between the mother-son and father-son relationships in ways that parallel Craig's above constructions. Like Craig, Scott constructs the mother—son relationship as overtly emotional whereas he describes his relationship with his son in more distant, cerebral terms ('at a thinking level'). Mother and son 'bicker a lot', and there is 'an understanding' between them that Scott feels unable to share:

Look (.) I would say (.) I would say there were patches where it was a bit stressful (.) where I had more trouble accepting (.) things (1) I remember Mary saying a long time ago (1) well in many ways Mary does understand him better (1) I'm still not (.) uh:: (2)

she can sense his moods and things like that better/ better than I can (.) Um (.) and what he wants to do and what he's going to do

Scott begins by making 'being disappointed' something of the past ('there were patches'; 'I had more trouble accepting things'). Scott then introduces the mother ('Mary') who served as a bridge of understanding between him and his different son ('I remember Mary saying'). Scott links this maternal function (bridging) to the notion that Mary 'does understand' their different son. Scott then shifts to the present tense which makes this triadic arrangement a constant: Mary continues to 'understand' their son better than Scott ('I'm still not'). Mary is capable of contacting her son's mind and facilitating his agency ('what he wants to do'; 'what he's going to do') which she then presents to the father who, by implication, is not capable of the same.

Two conversational turns later, I ask Scott to reflect further on the differences between what he and Mary 'bring' to their son. Initially Scott balks at the question, perhaps because of its generality. However, when I clarify that the question has to do with 'understanding' the different son, Scott takes up the topic. Like Craig above, it is evident that, in the face of difference and disappointment, Scott constructs a pared-down version of fathering which he contrasts with the 'deeper' mother-son relationship:

On that note (.) you have uh (.) just mentioned a bit of Mary's take in understanding of Chris and you were saying (.) you know (.) there is something different that you and Mary bring (.) you know (.) as mother and father of Chris? Do you want to say anything more about that or?

It's difficult to (4) um: that's =or that she understands him in a different way or something?= Yes, there is something different there. (1) There is a (3) there is a (2) there is a/an understanding between them that (.) they bicker - they bicker a lot (.) Mary and Chris (.) um (.) particularly for you know (.) it's almost like Chris is quite often a red rag to a bull with Mary you know (.) Sometimes I think you know (.) 'why not' you know (.) 'the boy just asked this' you know (.) "Don't - " hhh. She just flares up (.) So definitely they/ they bicker (.) um (.) um (.) but (3) there is also a:: almost (.) uh (.) a deeper (.) I still think in a sense my/my (3) connectionings/ connection with Chris and (2) um (.) pleasure in his company is quite a lot at a sort of a thinking level (.) whereas with Mary

it's almost a/ little bit/ of / it's a level or two deeper (.) Um (.) somehow they are more alike than he and I are alike (3) I:: I don't know what (.) that's just (.) I think (.) I think (.) I um (2) um, uh, (2) I think (1) and again it doesn't/ ja (.) I wouldn't mind understanding and connecting with him more like that (1) But I'm reasonably (2) I just don't feel equal (.) I just don't have that (.) exactly that connection um (.) And I also think that um (1) um (.) uh (.) what I've got is almost enough (.) you know hhh I don't know (.) it's like he's got a connection with his mother that I don't quite have and I pr/ might not be capable of it (.) uh (.) what I am capable of um (1) is um (.) is/is quite good (*mm*) hhh. In a sense (.) I don't know (.) time will tell (.) But it feels good enough at the moment

Here Scott positions himself as outsider to the mother-son bond, which Scott characterizes as both emotional and close (they bicker a lot; a level or two deeper'). Through ventriloquation, Scott works up a version of himself as the orthodox third, with the potential to sponsor differentiation within the mother-son dyad. ("well why not", you know, "the boy just asked this" you know'). However, the phrase 'Sometimes I think' positions Scott as restraining this potential: he thinks but does not intervene – he identifies with his son's mind, but he does not pull the different son towards himself. Key to this triadic arrangement is that the mother and son are 'somehow... more alike' than father and son. Following the logic of intimacy with similarity, Scott argues that, in the absence of 'aliveness', he is unable to share the quality of connection that mother and son, who are alike, share ('I just don't feel equal').

Scott's relationship with his son lacks the spontaneity of sameness and instead functions at a 'thinking level'. According to Benjamin (2004), recognizing that the other has a "separate yet similar mind" is a crucial component of attachment responses and should therefore be seen "as ultimately a pleasure and not merely a chore" (pp. 5-6). In Scott's case, there is 'pleasure' in his 'thinking level' 'connection' with his son but it is also evident that tolerating disappointment underpins Scott's position and that intersubjective work is involved. Thus for Scott, there seems to be more chore than pleasure involved. This is evident in the following utterance 'And again it doesn't/ ja I wouldn't mind understanding and connecting with him more like that'. Here Scott vacillates between an accepting position and a disappointed position as the father. In the phrase 'But I'm reasonably' Scott's emphasis on the word 'reasonably' indicates that his position involves conflating disappointment and acceptance. On reflection, Scott says 'I just don't feel

equal', which is presented as an explanation for his attenuated connection with his son. The phrase 'I wouldn't mind understanding him, connecting with him more like that' positions the mother-child bond as an ideal that Scott is unable to simulate. Mary makes it possible for Scott to see a 'deeper' way of relating to his different son that is constructed as desirable but ultimately inaccessible.

Throughout this extract, the number of false starts and pauses indicate that it is not easy for Scott to construct a coherent position for himself as the father of a son who is closer to the mother. In constructing his relationship with his son, Scott makes continued use of qualifiers ('almost enough'; 'quite good'; 'In a sense') which maintain the mix of disappointment and acceptance identified above. Scott's laughter, together with the phrases 'time will tell' and 'it feels good enough at the moment' indicate that Scott remains anxious about his connection with his different son. Scott's father position remains somewhat restive and troubled by difference. At one level, Scott is pleased with what he has 'got' – there's a sense of ownership there. But there is also a hint of resignation or even sadness in Scott's resolution. To an extent, like Craig above, Scott stands alone as the father.

However, in the extracts below, Scott's father position is bolstered by claims to an 'aggression' that the mother does not possess. In this instance, Scott's capacity to summon up aggression is constructed as 'good fathering' in that he is able to meet and direct his son's own aggression. In this process, father and son identify with each other through masculinity, to the exclusion of the mother. Consequently, father-son identification through 'aggression' gives coherence to Scott's position and rearranges the mother-son-father triad constructed in the previous extract:

I would come back from work (.) and the boys don't have TV or computers on Sundays (.) because we want them to develop a relationship with the real world and with real people hhh (.) so they don't have that (.) And he would have been obnoxious to Mary to the extent that Mary would be in tears and (.) beside herself (.) and definitely on two occasions when I came back it was like into a/ a really intense (.) fraught situation (.) And it was like he was sp/ wanting conflict (.) just/ just spoiling (.) for conflict (.) And we'd get very worked up (.) and I would sort of say "Right (.) you do this and do th/" And I would sort of say "Right (.) you want to have an argument about this thing (.) You'd better be sure of yourself because however far you want to take it (.) I'll take it (.) If you

want to fight – I'm here (.) So if it's something important to you (.) we'll have a fight"
(...)

And it was striking (.) striking (.) striking (.) It was like he was building up to a crescendo (.) and at/ when he got/ when he was matched in this emotional boiling point (.) something just said "Right (.) that's enough (.) and stop" (.) And both Mary and I and we/ you know it was really tense (.) she had obviously been in tears and things before (.) and/ and had not been able to/ to/ I don't know (.) I don't think she had the innate aggression to (.) 'cause I was aggressive (.) you know (.) it was-it was aggression (.) And I don't think she had that (.) She would sort of dissolve into tears (.) And it s/ has struck me (.) and it continues to strike me (.) you know, if I hadn't been there (sighs) (2) I think he would have/ it would have/ time would have passed and something would have happened, but I don't think it would have gone away (.) and I imagine he would possibly have gone out and/ and some other similar situation um (1) or later that day done something really delinquent you know (.) But for some reason (.) he met his match (...)
And that's where I sort of thought (.) you know (.) you have/ you have families without a father (.) I/ I could just see Mary (.) and I think not many women could have come up with that aggression at that time (*mm, mm*) I don't know (.) maybe I'm reading too much into it but it was striking (.) striking (.) striking (*mm*) 'cause it really took aggression on my part it was r/ hhh I don't-ja

But I had/ it was something that I had (.) you know because (.) over a while had been happening / there had been things (.) and I sort of thought to myself (.) "Now listen (.) what is the problem? If he really has got a point (2) then let him take it to the limit (.) And then maybe I'll be proved wrong and then maybe I'll have to back down (.) But there's so much emotion that I'm not (.) and I'm not just going to back down (.) If I think I'm right then I'm not just going to back down" (*mm*) hhh. So I'd sort of thought it out and I said "Now (.) as I say (.) I'll take it as far as you like (.) if it's not important (.) then let's just (.) let's just stop (*mm, mm*) (.) But If it is (.) now's your time" hhh. I don't know (.) I haven't heard other people saying it like that (.) But it was you know (.) Mary was just-Mary-we sat back-it was like "Gee well World War II was easy" geesh= hhhh= yoo.

In the opening lines, Scott sets the scene: his computer-loving son is set on challenging the parental edict (‘spoiling for a fight’). As the orthodox, breadwinning father, Scott comes back to a ‘fraught’ domestic scene and, in contrast to the previous extract, it is Scott who ‘matches’ his son whereas Mary is constructed as unable (‘not many women could have come up with that aggression at that time’). Father and son find likeness through access to aggression, which Scott constructs as an exclusively masculine ability. Consequently, in this narrative, Scott occupies a more coherent father position; he is the law-giving father who intervenes into the mother-son relationship, and who helps his son to manage his aggressive assertions (‘If I hadn’t been there...I don’t think it would have gone away’). Scott helps his son to embody his assertions, to take them to the ‘limit’, without being destructive (‘stab’; ‘delinquent’). Scott’s use of power, of ‘aggression’, is rendered ethical because he constructs it as an attitude he takes on in order to meet his son’s desire (‘If you want to fight – I’m here’). Scott identifies with and meets the aggressive self-state of the son (‘cause it really took aggression on my part’), whilst at the same time suggesting that the mother would not be capable of such a function. Repetition and emphasis on the word ‘striking’ denotes the density of meaning that this incident has for Scott. There is the sense that Scott is surprised by the impact the incident has in rearranging the father-son-mother triangle. The phrase ‘you have some families without a father’ indicates that this incident entrenches Scott’s position as the father in that, without him, his son would be at risk and his family would be incomplete.

A ‘striking’ aspect of Scott’s narrative is the self-reflective and reciprocal manner in which Scott takes up the aggressive position. Scott is the father who intends to meet or encounter, rather than to dominate his son (‘maybe I’ll be proved wrong’). If recognition is understood as a state of “constant tension between recognizing the other and asserting the self” (Benjamin, 1995, p. 38), then Scott’s talk seems to exemplify this. With the phrase ‘if I think I’m right, then I’m not just going to back down’ Scott holds onto his assertions, but the words ‘think’ and ‘just’ imply flexibility and the possibility of ‘stepping down’. And then, the phrase ‘if he really has got a point’ construct the son as an equivalent center of being with his own mind, which Scott looks to encourage (‘now’s your time!’). Benjamin (2004) argues that surrendering to a principle “refers us to recognition – being able to sustain connectedness to the other’s mind while accepting his separateness and difference” (p. 8). Scott’s extract seems to represent this kind of ‘surrender’ in

that, as the father, Scott seeks out his son's mind ('if it's not important, then let's just stop.... But if it is, now's your time').

Scott continues, in the extract below, to reflect on the intersubjective effects of this emotionally charged father-son encounter. Here, Scott specifically links his ability to meet his son's aggression to an improvement in their relationship, where father and son 'know each other's measure a bit':

Now that's where I see (.) that I got respect for him (.) because he can take it up/ he can turn up the pitch (.) Uh Trevor (.) in a sense/ that might be a different worry (.) He's not prepared to take it to (.) he's a different kid (.) No (.) I'm not worried about him (.) It's just different (*ja*) (.) There's not that sort of (.) fever pitch of emotion that's going to develop (.) He's a determined kid (.) very lovable (.) eager to please (.) but he's got his own (.) his own um (.) you know (.) mind (.) he does have his own mind (.) so I'm not particularly concerned (.) Huh uh (.) but as you can see hhh (.) it was a roller coaster for me (.) And very interesting (.) Very interesting (.) Because (2) the:: the results at the end don't make me think that I did something wrong (*mm* (.) *mm*) You know (.) because we've got on (.) we have (.) it hasn't um (.) In a way we're better you know (.) We know each other's measure a bit you know (*right, right*).

The first consequence identified by Scott is that he 'got respect' for his son. Scott then goes on to consider his younger son who is 'very lovable, eager to please', which begs the question as to whether or not he has 'his own mind'. This aside reveals that Scott associates his position of 'respect' with the experience of encountering a negating other, in that his younger son is 'very lovable, eager to please *but* he's got his own mind'. Being 'lovable' and 'eager to please' isn't automatically linked to having one's 'own mind'. The word 'determined', together with Scott's reaffirmation, 'he does have his own mind', serve as another illustration of the way participants manage the anxiety of intersubjective dominance (or pushing) by foregrounding the agency of the compliant son.

Scott then repeats the phrase 'very interesting', which echoes his use of the term 'striking'. Again, Scott is highlighting the notion that this incident has changed his relationship with his son

for the 'better'. The phrase 'we know each other's measure' constructs father and son as equivalent, bonded by a newly discovered and shared 'knowing' that excludes the mother.

The position of 'respect' towards the negating son shares some similarities with Craig's self-positioning in chapter eight, where Craig has 'gotta have an adult respect' for a son who refuses to comply with a mentor-mentee arrangement. Both fathers, by dint of their son's negations, have come to recognize that their sons have their own minds. The phrases 'I got respect for him' and 'gotta have' construct the move towards respect as something that both fathers take up as a consequence of their sons' resolve. Respect, in these instances, represents a form of intersubjective resolution in the face of disappointment; an ethical meeting point with difference.

Nevertheless, what distinguishes Scott from Craig is that in Scott's account he joins his son in an intersubjective dance of assertion and negation, whereas Craig withholds his assertions, and thus his version of 'adult respect' incorporates isolation as the father. Scott is less restrained. His aggression is constructed as a necessary father function outside the purview and capability of the mother. Scott meets his son through aggression, they are 'better'; they have contacted each other's minds. According to Benjamin (1995), the "joy of intersubjective attunement is: This *Other* can share my feeling" (p. 35, italics in the original). In Scott's case above, father and son attune through a shared feeling that is constructed as self-defining ('measure') and exclusively masculine.

In summary, both Craig and Scott display care for their sons and they conscientiously avoid positions of intersubjective dominance. However, neither father feels equal to the mother in terms of emotional intimacy with their different sons. In this sense Scott and Craig stand outside of the mother-son dyad, which is at odds with the new father ideal of egalitarianism and shared emotional involvement. Both Craig and Scott assign specific functions to themselves as fathers of different sons. They form part of a triadic arrangement where they are set apart from the mother because of their paternal power, the emotionality of the mother, and the closeness of the mother-son bond. In Craig's case, power constrains him from 'freaking' and 'cajoling' like the mother. Instead, he watches and waits to be invited. In Scott's case, power enables him to perform an exclusive father function where he is able to meet or 'match' his aggressively differing son.

10.1.3. Mother as mediator between father and disappointing son

This subtheme focuses on the ways participants position the mother as a moderator between themselves and their different or disappointing sons. In the extracts below, it is evident that participants vacillate between aligning and distancing themselves from the maternal position and how the maternal position operates as a constraint on crude hegemonic masculinity.

Brian

In the extract below, Brian responds to disappointment by vacillating between hegemonic and accepting, new father positions regarding his son's preferences. Key to this vacillation is the position of the mother which Brian takes up and relinquishes as he constructs an overall strategy to get his son to comply with the hegemonic ideal:

And-um Brian (.) in terms of um (.) worries or concerns for William (.) um:: as his father (.) any that you carry?

Ja (.) that he's/he:'s not as competitive and driven as he/ I/ I think he's coasting (.) I think he could be doing a lot better than he/he is (.) Uh:: (2) ja you know especially on/on the sporting side I think he almost deliberately (1) uh:: doesn't you know (.) and as much as I've tried to get him to (.) you know he's quite strong minded about that sometimes and (.) um::

We've discussed it (.) Rachel and I (.) and we've sort of said you know it would be foolish to go and push him (.) you know if he doesn't want to do it (.) just explain you know the reasons why h/he should maybe be trying harder but don't (.) don't force it you know (.) ja (.) don't force the issue with him (.) Uh:: whether that's worked or not (.) I'm not too sure (.) ja (.) But that is my/ that is my/ my main concern with him (.) is that he – he - I don't think that he pushes himself at all (.) He/he cruises (.) Ja

And in that (.) have you found as a father along the way (.) that you've had to confront or face disappointment at times?

(2) Well (.) I sup/ ja (.) to be brutally honest/ I suppose yes (.) you know (.) because Shane has been such a high achiever (.) you know he:: especially on the sports field (.)

you/ obviously (.) you know it is a little bit disappointing (.) to be brutally honest (1) Ja
(.) you know (.) the younger one is/ I think could/could do a lot better and (.)

But then again I certainly don't hold that against him (.) y/you know um: (.) just one of
those things you know and as you said (.) we're not going to push him (.) If he/he/ you
know he must/ I/ my sort of theory from my side is he must first (.) enjoy it you know (.)
and if he's (.) you know it something (.) like we tried to get him to b/he's quite a
re:asonable sort of a swimmer and we tried to (.) get him to get involved in that sort of
thing (.) or (.) you know we've tried to get him involved in stuff that (.) where Shane
wasn't good (.) or/ or didn't feature so much (.) you know um (.) uh (.) ja (1) And (.)
sometimes it's worked (.) sometimes it hasn't (.) ja. Uh::

(.) Ja he spends//he's very close to his girl cousins (.) they were born like six days apart
so, u:m (.) they/they talk and get on and talk a lot and get on helluva/helluva well
together

Brian opens this extract by positioning his son as morally culpable: his son is 'coasting' and worse still, he is doing so 'almost deliberately'. By constructing his son's ways as a form of moral failure, Brian is able to justify his efforts to get his son to change. However, Brian positions himself as frustrated and rather hopeless in this regard ('as much as I've tried'). Thus, Brian and his son are in an intractable stand-off, where the son is positioned as 'quite strong minded' in his resistance to his father's hegemonic imperative to be 'competitive and driven'.

In the first paragraph, Brian speaks from the 'I' position, to the exclusion of the mother. However, in the second paragraph, as Brian constructs a resolution to his disappointment, Brian aligns himself with the mother ('we've discussed it, Rachel and I'). Through this discursive move, Brian adopts a more caring perspective which says 'it would be foolish to go and push him'. The phrase 'if he doesn't want to' makes the son's subjectivity the moral basis for the shared parental decision not to push: recognition of what the child 'wants'. According to this shared parenting perspective, the new anti-hegemonic imperative is 'don't force it'. Indeed, Brian's initial father position (as much as I've tried to get him to') is recast as 'foolish'.

However, Brian then distances himself from this shared mother-father perspective and, in an aside, wonders 'whether that's worked or not'. Thus it is evident that Brian retains personal

paternal misgivings that are not shared with the mother, as evidenced by his shift from the pronouns ‘we’ to ‘I’ and ‘my’. This implies that Brian associates yielding to his son’s subjectivity, his ‘wants’ with the maternal perspective, but that he retains misgivings as the orthodox mentor father. Thus, although Brian’s wife plays a moderating role in the extract above, Brian’s hegemonic strategy prevails.

I introduce the option of being disappointed and, in accepting this position, Brian gives vent to an antipathetic orientation towards his disappointing son (‘the younger one could do a lot better’). Brian says that he is being ‘brutally honest’, which signals that Brian is disclosing personal sentiments that exist outside of the shared parenting position, and that these sentiments carry the potential to disrupt triadic harmony. Brian then emphatically denies that he holds any antagonism towards his son, and he takes up an accepting position instead (‘but then again, I certainly don’t hold that against him’). Again, the phrase ‘and as you said, we’re not going to push him’ indicates that Brian moves away from being ‘brutally honest’ by adopting his wife’s perspective (‘we’re’). However, the phrase ‘just one of those things’ indicates the presence of disappointment underlying Brian’s accepting position. The phrase operates as a summation: it is an attempt by Brian to find a position of acceptance in the face of active disappointment.

Brian goes on to articulate his ‘theory’ which he makes exclusive to himself as the father (from my side’), wherein his son’s enjoyment is constructed as a precursor to the achievements that Brian wants (‘he must first enjoy it you know’). According to Saville-Young (personal communication), associations made between content may be read as ‘breaches’ in the text, where unconscious anxieties rupture the coherence of the speaker’s discourse. In this light it is noted that Brian shifts from a position of disappointment (‘sometimes it hasn’t’) to the observation that his different son is ‘very close to his girl cousins’. This narrative disjuncture suggests that Brian makes unconscious links between a son who fails to achieve (in his terms) and closeness to femininity (‘they talk and get on and talk a lot and get on...well together’).

In summary, it may be argued that, to the extent that Brian is like the mother as an accepting encouraging father, Brian takes up the new father position. However, it is also evident that Brian vacillates between this shared, accepting position and a more orthodox, hegemonically oriented father position. Thus Brian’s extract displays the ‘hybridized mix’ of hegemonic and new father discourse found in previous research (Finn & Henwood, 2009). It is evident that Brian’s ‘new

father' position coincides with a movement towards the mother position, but it is also evident that this new father position is constructed as temporary and subordinate to Brian's hegemonic project. Brian's 'theory', his aside, and his musing over the efficacy of the caring position all suggest that, as the father, he remains invested in getting his son to turn towards the masculine world of competitive sport. Brian associates his son's non-performance to femininity and this is something that he does not accept as a sustained, long term way of being. In this sense Brian does not move towards a post-disappointment acceptance. Instead, he retains an impulse to 'brutally' sever the mother-son bond, and get his son to follow his ways.

John

The extract below forms part of John's discourse regarding the morality of 'pushing', analyzed in the previous chapter. As with Brian's extract above, John's wife plays a potentially important moderating role between father and different son. By taking up the maternal perspective, John recognizes who his son is ('one of the top kids in Maths') mother amplifies the father's ability to recognize his different and disappointing son and to consider his potential to cause harm to his son. However, it is also evident that, as is the case with Brian above, John vacillates between an accepting position and a more orthodox father position that operates from taken-for-granted imperative to 'stretch' his son towards success:

I don't wanna (.) you know (.) over the top (.) you know (.) try and make him be something that he's not (.) Um (.) he's (.) and Sarah said that (.) you know (.) we're very lucky to have – that he's so academically inclined (.) I mean (.) he's one of the top kids in maths (.) and he's – you know he gets accolades from his teachers all the time (.) and we just "Ok let's don't break this" you know hhh. "Let's support him in this" (*ja absolutely*) (.) Um (.) but like you say (.) in stretching him (.) you know (.) culturally you wanna make sure that he has (.) that he's well rounded

As the good, caring father, John positions himself as occupying a mid-point between trying to 'make' his son 'be something' and accepting what 'he's not'. The phrase 'be something' signals John's hopes for who his son could be, whilst the phrase 'he's not' signals the disappointment of these hopes, by confronting and accepting what the son is not. John sustains his midpoint (hope

in the face of disappointment) by not being ‘over the top’ which, as indicated in chapter nine, prevents John from taking up the depressive position in respect to his son’s differences.

Then, just as John is extending his reflection on what his son is ‘not’, he introduces the maternal perspective. With the conjunction ‘and’ John shifts from disappointment towards gratitude by taking up the mother’s perspective (‘we’re very lucky’). John’s wife calls him to see what he already has in his son. From this shared first person perspective (‘we’re’), John constructs two key resolutions: ‘let’s don’t break this’, which serves as a warning against paternal damage and ‘let’s support him in this’, which serves as a call to acknowledge and foster the son’s agency. These two resolutions introduce the ethics of recognition into the talk, prompting quick endorsement from me (*ja absolutely*). Neither John nor I want to fall foul of the morality of the maternal, caring position.

John then shifts back to an assertive father position based on a contrary morality: getting the son to achieve. John emphasizes the words ‘culturally’ and ‘well rounded’ in order to account for his assertive position, as these words introduce the discourse of responsible middle class parenting, where the good parent helps his child to achieve (Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010; Kremer-Sadlik & Gutierrez, 2013).

The above two extracts indicate how, in the face of difference and disappointment, Brian and John vacillate between acceptance and assertion and how the uptake of the accepting position coincides with an alignment with the maternal position. To the extent that Brian and John align themselves with the mother under the banner of acceptance and care, they are ‘new fathers’. However, this move exists in tension with a hegemonic injunction to get their sons to conform to an ideal that has to do with socially sanctioned achievement. Consequently, alignment with the maternal position may be seen as a strategy to cope with disappointment, although this is clearly an ambivalent alignment. Neither Brian nor John relinquishes the assertive father position, and as Brian’s extract indicates, this position sees the father standing alone in his disappointment. The way Brian vacillates between personal disappointment and alignment with the mother is revealed in the following excerpt, where Brian pulls back from his reflections on his younger sons’ potential and redirects his discourse towards acceptance talk:

Ja (.) you know (.) the younger one is/ I think could/could do a lot better and (.)

But then again I certainly don't hold that against him (.) y/you know umm (.) just one of those things you know and as you said (.) we're not going to push him

Here we see Brian vacillating between desire and disappointment ('could do a lot better'; 'just one of those things'), and it is evident that the tension between the two orientations is managed through a provisional alignment with the maternal position ('we're not going to push him'). The phrase 'I certainly don't hold that against him' signals reconciliation and acceptance, but it is a post-disappointment father position that exists in tension with the promise of the previous phrase: 'the younger one could do a lot better'.

Mitchell (2000) makes the point that notions of past, present and future "create a subjective sense of connection, a narrative scaffolding for organizing experiences" (p. 47). It is argued that, in the above extracts, both participants use the notion of time to give coherence to their positions as fathers. For both John and Brian, the mother has access to a current and immediate response to difference and disappointment. Brian's wife suggests that they focus on their son's strengths, while John's wife advocates appreciating who their son already is. However, as fathers who stand apart from their wives, Brian is oriented to the future: he wonders whether his wife's strategy 'will work'. He is poised to intervene. In John's case, acceptance discourse (and alignment with the mother) is framed by father talk, where the 'I' is invested in getting the son to achieve. The phrases 'make him be' and 'make sure that he has' are future oriented which (as is the case with Brian) constructs the notion that the future belongs to the father. In both cases, allocating the future to the father has the effect of suspending disappointment because there is the sense that the father will have his way. Consequently, alignment with the mother and the accepting position is provisional and ambivalent.

10.1.4. Assimilating the maternal

In the above subthemes it is evident that, as fathers, participants stand apart from the mother in distinguishable ways. In the first subtheme, participants enjoy sharing similarity with their sons, to the exclusion of the mother. In the second subtheme, participants of different sons position themselves outside of the close, mother-son bond. In the third subtheme, participants position the mother as a broker between themselves and their disappointing sons, and vacillate between a joint accepting position and an assertive father position. What distinguishes the current subtheme

is that participants preserve and promote their attachments to their different sons by assimilating the maternal perspective, which has the effect of amplifying their self-constructions as fathers. However, Nick and Jake display distinctive ways of assimilating the maternal. In Nick's case, the maternal/feminine 'side' is assimilated into his version of acceptable masculinity whereas Jake relinquishes his version of masculinity and uses the maternal as a 'bridge' to a new version of masculinity.

Nick

In the extract below, Nick begins by constructing a triadic arrangement where mother and father parent different 'sides' of their son. For the most part, this construction carries an optimistic tone: he and his wife are working together as good parents and harmony prevails. However, as Nick's narrative unfolds it is evident that his son's identifications with the feminine have troubling implications for the way his son may 'end up':

I'll tell you what else is on my mind (.) Nick (.) is wondering whether you've-whether you and Caron have different roles-so you as a dad might have a specific role for Dylan in this way?

Mm (.) mm (.) yes (.) I believe we do (.) and I think that's what's nice for Dylan (.) is that his skills (.) talents actually suit Caron and I (.) because Caron knowing Drama and music (.) can help (.) Dylan (.) and encourage him with regard to his/his um (.) singing and um Drama (.) and his um (.) cultural side of his personality (.) whereas I can help and encourage him on the sporting side (1) And then academically (.) our interests are very similar in that/ on that analytical side of things and scientific and analytical and mathematical - him and I are quite/ very similar (.) And/ and Caron is more on the Arts and um (.) whereas you know (.) he also has that side of his personality (.) So (.) I think our um (.) particular skill (.) sort of set (.) uh (.) set of skills (.) that Caron and I possess whatever they may be (.) actually complement Dylan (1) You know (.) so (.) for me (.) you know/ my when (.) you know (.) to play Cricket and to go running (.) cycling and swimming (.) all the rest (.) it suits my personality (.) So if he's keen to do that (.) I'm there you know (.) If he wants to play the piano (.) well I can't help him with that (.) you know hhh so (.) you know (.) that's Caron's baby

Nick begins by taking up my invitation to assign different ‘roles’ to himself and the mother. Nick splits ‘sides’ of his son along gendered lines, which he and the mother ‘encourage’. As the father, Nick is ‘there’ when his son wants to play sport. However, his son becomes his wife’s ‘baby’ when he ‘wants to play the piano’. For Nick, this part of his son represents otherness – he places it outside of himself as the father. Instead, Nick identifies with normative hegemonic male attributes (scientific, analytical, mathematical, Cricket) and he comes close to his son when his son is ‘keen to do that’. In these orthodox masculine ways, Nick and his son ‘are very similar’ which, as indicated in chapter six, connotes identification and intimacy between father and son. Nick’s laughter in the last line signals that his masculine ‘I’ has no part in piano playing; the notion is portrayed as ridiculous, akin to the notion that he could breastfeed his son (‘that’s Caron’s baby’).

By splitting his son in this way, Nick constructs a context of reassuring balance, normality and domestic harmony. Nick himself is distinguished from the feminine and he can enjoy being ‘there’ with his son when the two are engaged in acceptably gendered pursuits. It is ‘nice’ that Nick and his wife are able to parent two distinct sides of their son. However, as the following extract shows, the feminized part of his son holds the potential for significant disappointment:

Um (.) I was a bit worried about the (.) the whole Drama thing (.) you know (.) cause (.) to be quite honest with you (.) I don’t wanna – I don’t want to have a gay son hh. And because he’s quite talented in Drama (.) um (.) I-I said - I said to Caron (.) you know “I don’t want Dylan to go and end up at the school under the influence of (.) a gay male Drama teacher and that influence his future (.) because that happens (*hm*) so let’s be realistic (...) so that worries me a bit in the future regarding his choice of high school, because um I think a young child (.) especially a boy who is talented in that sphere (.) there gonna b/there are those vultures out there and they prey on them (.) That worries me a bit (.) but (.) you know he seems to be well balanced so I don’t think it’s going to be an issue (.) Um: I think if that does happen I think he would handle it (.) be able to rebut any approaches or anything like that (*mm*) (.) So ja (.) that’s (.) might not be a well-founded fear (hh) but it’s a fear that a father has (.) I think (.) you know

Nick begins by constructing his concern as both minimal and reconciled: he ‘was a bit worried about the whole Drama thing’. Nick then shifts to the present tense and, like Brian above, gives

vent to what is constructed as a personal but usually restrained sentiment: ‘to be quite honest I don’t wanna have a gay son’. Nick’s laughter at this point signifies that this admission is exposing for him: that it is a risky conversational move. Nick then positions Caron as a mediator between himself and his son in this regard (‘I said to Caron’). This replicates the ways other participants position the female/mother as a mediator between themselves and unwanted or disappointing aspects of their sons. Nick then constructs gayness as being outside of his son; that ‘being talented in that sphere’ leaves him vulnerable to the external influences of a ‘gay male Drama teacher’ or ‘vultures out there’ that could ‘prey on’ his son. This allows Nick to move closer to his son as the protector, shielding his son from an external threat of alarming otherness.

Nick goes on to reassure himself that his son is ‘well balanced’ and that he will be able to ‘rebut’ gayness. The phrase ‘well balanced’ links back to Nick’s constructions in the previous paragraph: because Nick is attached to, and can identify with a ‘side’ of his son, his son has enough masculinity to allay Nick’s fears. Therefore, Nick doesn’t need to consider gayness as being part of his son – this is not a ‘well-founded’ fear. Nick goes on to normalize his fear as ‘a fear that a father has, I think, you know’: this fear is the purview of the father as distinct from the mother, who Nick positions as a mediator between himself and the world of ‘Drama’.

In the extract that follows, Nick more directly addresses the fear that his son could ‘end up being gay’. Like other participants Nick draws on the discourse of time when turning to the issue of disappointment: Nick thinks about where his son’s proclivity for the Arts ‘will lead’; a future orientation that keeps hope and disappointment in the balance. In Nick’s speculations below, he broaches the possibility of an ultimately disappointing future:

Just strikes me though (.) as-as a father (.) um (.) you know (.) just seeing (.) you know how precious he is to you and um this part of him (.) this ability of his (.) in a sense (.) on the one hand (.) really loving that about him (.) and on the other hand worrying about just=where will it lead hh= is what you’re saying

Ja (.) no it is (.) it is (.) you know I think (.) I mean (.) let’s be honest (.) a lot of child/um not children/ people who follow the Arts (.) end up (.) mainly (.) mainly because the Arts seem to attract for whatever reason (.) a lot of-or maybe it’s because of the nature of it and the sensitivity of the people involved and the rest of it (.) you end up with a lot of

alternative (.) sexually alternative people in those fields (*mm*) So ja (.) that is (.) you know (.) ja (.) a fear

Um (.) you know (.) if he ended up as Elton John (.) I'd probably still be proud of him (.) um hhh. So ja sure (.) it is a fear (.) but at the end of the day (.) they (.) they gonna do what they wanna do (*ja*) and if that end/ does ultimately end up as his choice (.) well (.) I suppose I'll just have to live with it hey (*ja*) (.) I'm not (.) you know (.) I'm not saying um:: he must now give up that talent or passion for the (.) possibility that that might happen, *ja*= not at all = *ja*, *I understand*.

I begin the above extract by working up the notion of Nick's ambivalence 'as a father' to 'this part' of his son. Nick joins me by inserting the phrase 'where it will lead', which orientates the discourse towards the potential future of being gay. Again, with the phrase 'let's be honest' Nick indexes the confidential or private nature of his fear: 'you end up with a lot of sexually alternative people in those fields'. Nick changes the word 'children' to 'people', which has the effect of distancing the discourse from the immediate discomfort of speculating on his son's sexual identity. Nick goes on to speculate on gayness, as to whether it is intrinsic or due to extrinsic influence. Repetition of the phrase 'end up' makes the identity of 'being gay' a potentially disappointing conclusion to the son's development, where the father's hopes are extinguished.

In the first paragraph, Nick is the father who wants to protect his son from gayness. In the second paragraph, Nick shifts to a new father position ('at the end of the day') based on acceptance and incorporation of his son's different 'side'. Nick jokes by selecting Elton John as the apotheosis of disastrous otherness, and tells his listener that he'd 'probably still be proud'. Thus Nick imagines his son as the radical other, and positions himself, with some ambivalence, as the father who remains attached to his different son. Being 'proud' may be seen as a type of antidote to, or perhaps defense against, disappointment. It is a position of both approval and fatherly proprietorship, where Nick finds in himself a father position that protects his attachment to his son. Nick makes his attachment to his son preminent over the fear of difference: 'So ja, sure, it is a fear, but at the end of the day'.

Nick goes on to foreground his son's agency; that 'they gonna do what they wanna do'. The pronoun 'they' may be read as conveying independence: that his son is an emerging other over whom Nick has limited control, but the same pronoun may also be read as a way of distancing the son as gay. However, the phrase 'his choice' foregrounds the personhood and agency of his son as an independent subject over whom the father has little or no control. Recognition of this sees Nick construct an amplified father position that will 'live with it'. Ongoing connectedness to the disappointing and 'other' son is more important than the loss of his son. The phrase 'live with it' to some extent undoes Nick's earlier talk, where gayness was constructed as a dreaded dead-end. Nick now constructs a father-son relationship that survives his son's assertions, although as with Scott this relationship lacks the enjoyment that sameness brings. In the wake of this imagined and somewhat tenuous resolution, Nick then turns to the present and positions himself as the father who accepts his son's 'talent or passion' and contains his misgivings. It is perhaps questionable whether Nick's resolution as the accepting father is authentic or defensive, but Nick's position as the 'proud' father does seem to represent an attempt to span the divide of radical difference.

Directly after the above extract, I ask Nick to reflect on his 'best moment' as a father, and he goes on to construct a story where his son's differences are bridged via an amalgamation of identification with sameness and incorporation of otherness:

Best moment (.) I think (.) uh:: quite strangely I actually encouraged him to get involved with piano (.) um: (.) because I think it's some/ it's a skill that I always wished that I had acquired (.) so I've always encouraged him to get involved in that (.) And then the singing side came along as quite a bit of a surprise (.) I mean we weren't even aware that he could sing until he appeared in his first play (*hm*) and we became aware of it (.) and subsequently he's done/ at his school they have a talent show (.) which is Grades four to seven and they have to sing two songs and then they're judged on-on that (.) so (.) strangely enough (.) you know he's done/ achieved (.) good things on the sports field and (.) academically but my (.) my proudest moment was probably when he/ last year he sang um: in the talent show and (.) um: sang beautifully - pitch perfect and note perfect (.) and um: came second overall (*wow*) out of all the Grade Four to Grade Sevens (*goodness me*) and ja and so for me that was probably the proudest moment/ strangely (.) you know (.)

not/not being somebody who was ever involved in – in the Arts (.) I/ I found that/ because it took a lot of courage to stand up there and to sing (*yes yes*) (.) and then to pull it off - because a lot of the other guys who stood up and - and had good voices and sang well – were/ were nervous and so didn't nail it (.) but he just nailed it - absolutely pitch perfect- and (.) So that was probably my-my proudest moment (.) ja

Whereas Nick has previously assigned piano playing to the mother-son bond ('that's Caron's baby'), in this extract Nick identifies with this 'side' of his son. Nick alerts his listener to this shift in self-presentation through the phrases 'quite strangely' and 'I actually', and Nick accounts for himself by referring to piano playing as a 'skill that I always wish that I'd acquired'. This phrase makes piano playing 'masculine'; it is a 'skill' that the father can recognize. Furthermore, the phrase works as a taken-for-granted argument for getting the son to complete what remains incomplete in the father: Nick always wished to play the piano and 'so' Nick 'always encouraged him to get involved in that'. As with other mentor fathers in this sample, playing the piano becomes part of Nick's implicit fathering project.

However, the 'singing side' is distinct from Nick's project – this part of his son 'came along as a surprise'. Nick recycles the word 'strangely' because he wants to explain why he has chosen his son's singing – this 'surprise' – as his 'proudest moment'. Nick accounts for his pride by emphasizing that his son came 'second overall' despite competing against a number of older boys ('Grade four to Grade seven'). But in particular, Nick sees, or recognizes his son's 'courage' and, because it denotes masculinity, this is something with which the father can identify. Nick uses competitive sports terminology to convey his son's state of mind ('pull it off'; 'he just nailed it') and contrasts his son's winning ways with 'a lot of the other guys' who 'were nervous' and didn't nail it. In this way Nick subordinates the other guys for being overly emotional whilst his son approximates the hegemonic ideal. Thus Nick is able to signify this moment as his 'proudest'. To some extent, the strangeness of it is made less threatening 'because' the singing son remains in the province of masculinity through his courage. What the son did (singing) may be other and non-masculine, but how he did it is constructed as decidedly masculine.

However, it is argued that the above account is not only about Nick constructing his son's ways in masculine, competitive terms, so facilitating father-son identification. Through repetition of

the word ‘strangely’, Nick highlights his own movement towards an unexpected, new position as the father, where he finds himself realized in his son’s otherness. In playing the piano, the son fulfils a wish that Nick abandoned (skill that I always wish that I had acquired’). Additionally, in turning to his ‘best moment’ Nick discards ‘good things on the sports field’ and instead finds himself admiring a son who ‘sang beautifully – pitch perfect and note perfect’. Consequently, Nick incorporates the maternal/feminine ‘side’, which perhaps breaks down the complementary maternal/paternal structure established earlier. However, it may be argued that Nick still treats his son as a clone and that, like Douglas in chapter six, the feminine/maternal is rendered acceptable by constructing it as a version of acceptable (and therefore similar) masculinity. Therefore, in assimilating the mother’s ‘side’, Nick does not become like the mother. Rather, he reconstructs the son’s maternal/feminine identifications as acceptably masculine.

Jake

One of the features of Jake’s interview was his receptivity towards the maternal in tandem with a repudiation of destructive hegemonic masculinity. As already indicated, during the course of his interview, Jake tended to position himself as the uncertain, self – critical father who is ‘managed’ by both wife and son. Like other participants, Jake positions his different son as sharing an affiliation with the feminine (see chapter six), but in Jake’s case the son’s differences are constructed as representing a new and better version of masculinity to which Jake himself aspires.

In the extract below, Jake constructs his move towards a corrective script as father (Byng-Hall, 1995) which, in Jake’s case, involves promoting the maternal perspective and relinquishing ‘bad’ masculinity/ fathering:

I knew there were a whole lot of things I just wasn’t going to do (.) you know (.) I was never going to beat my child (.) you know (.) I was never going to uh (.) um (.) just hurt him, manipulate him (.) I was never going to (.) you know (.) what’s it (.) like/ like emotional blackmail (.) because we went through all of that crap you know um (.) just a whole lot of things that I wasn’t going to do (.) and those were/ really just came out of my relationship and experience with my dad

So (.) I kind of knew all the things I wasn't going to do (.) but I didn't know all the things I was going to do (.) so um, in a lot of ways um (.) uh:: I kind of was a/ a pretty naïve parent (.) because all the things that - that my dad had used to manage me were things that I was going throw out (*ja*) (.) Um (.) and I just didn't have (.) I actually didn't have any real skills um (.) so (.) um (.) for m/ it was/ I was very fortunate to actually have met and married Judith (.) Because she has a (2) ag she just has a (.) um (.) a real gentleness? And (.) um (.) and I was able to be honest with her and kind of share with her (.) so I didn't have to be (.) uh (1) too much of a man (.) if you like (.) m/my version of what a man was (.) when I was a kid (.) you know (1) So I was able to kind of go to her (.) and say "Well (.) hey doll, what about this hey (.) how do we sort this out?" you know (.) and she "No (.) no (.) well just (.) you just sometimes you just gotta let them da da da" (.) I said "Oh (.) ok" (.) Because sometimes I'd be quite intense (.) you know (.) "The kids crying" you know (.) "Ah ah ah (.) What's wrong?" you know or/ and anyway but/ so she kind of helped me through all of that um (.) and I think that's just the mother's instinct hey (.) you know (.) and why it's so important for a marr/ a/ a family to have a mom and a dad (.) I mean she was just incredible.

In the first few sentences, repetition of the words 'never' and 'wasn't going to do' place emphasis on Jake's stance against abusive fathering ('manipulate', 'hurt', 'beat' or 'emotionally blackmail'). But this leaves Jake without 'any real skills' as the father. In turning away from hegemonic masculinity, Jake is left 'naïve', not knowing, and childlike. Jake defers to Judith because she has the 'maternal instinct' and he is vulnerable with her because her 'gentleness' allows him to voice his anxieties. Jake is 'able to be honest with her' and he can relinquish hegemonic masculinity ('I didn't have to be too much of a man').

Jake does not position himself as Judith's equal as a parent ('she kind of helped me through all of that') and, contrary to other participants, Jake positions himself as more emotional ('because I'd be quite intense') and less powerful ("Oh, ok") than the mother. Jake positions Judith as a reassuring presence who enables him to understand his son during times of distress ('the kid's crying'; 'what's wrong?'; 'sometimes you just gotta let them da da da'). In this sense the mother is a bridge between father and son. The phrase 'she was incredible' contradicts the distinction constructed by some of the above participants (e.g. Brian and Douglas), where the maternal

contribution is trivialized in comparison to the more glamorous, important and powerful paternal contribution. Instead, Judith, is positioned as a model for Jake.

In the story below, Jake draws comparisons between himself and his wife regarding the ‘discovery’ that their son ‘had ADHD’. Jake constructs Judith as actively engaged with ‘the problem’, which protects Jake from his own anxiety and the disappointment of having a son with a problem:

So anyway (.) we discovered that he had ADHD (.) so him and Judith have a great relationship because Judith’s (.) I’m more the (.) “I wanna get from there to there in one step (.) and one leap?” (.) Judith understands all the little bits of the process (.) you know (.) and so (.) and so sh/ I mean (.) I’d be lost without her - I’d be in a mess without Judith (.) if this had been a problem in our life (.) you know (.) just because (.) of perhaps who I am/ and quite often fathers (.) well for me (.) I don’t know all fathers (.) but certainly (.) you don’t always wanna hear that there’s a problem (*sure*) (.) So, um/ but (.) I must say that I was very receptive (.) but I just don’t know that I would have hel/ been able to help her with the problem –and she used to take him to Durban to that like um (.) I don’t even know what they called them-‘Treatment’ (*oh* (.) *yes ok*) I think it was (.) so she used to (.) once a week (.) for a whole year (.) you know they trekked off to Durban and - and ja

And he’s kind of come through it and he’s good (.) I mean (.) I don’t know what the difference is (.) but it/ it/ it certainly made an even bigger difference/ impact on his life as a/ as an individual and for/ for school (.) you know.

The conjunction ‘so’ makes a link between mother and son’s ‘great relationship’ and the discovery of ADHD which implies that, with the advent of the problem, the mother-son relationship becomes central. Further, the phrase ‘Judith understands all the little bits’ makes the mother carry the burden of understanding, whilst Jake disqualifies himself by identifying with the impulse to find quick resolution as opposed to tolerating the fact that something is wrong (‘I wanna get from there to there in one leap’). This division of understanding is underscored by the phrase ‘I don’t know even know what they called them – Treatment’: the father is protected from difficult knowledge by the engaged mother. The phrases ‘once a week’; ‘for a whole year’ and ‘she trekked’ celebrate the durability of the maternal contribution whereas Jake positions himself

as unable ('I'd be lost without her'; 'I'd be in a mess without her') and denialist ('you don't always want to hear that there's a problem'). Thus, Jake, as with other participants, positions the mother as more understanding of potentially disappointing aspects of the son.

In the last two sentences, Jake constructs a positive conclusion to the story ('he's good'). However, Jake continues to stand at one remove from the problem. In this instance, Jake's lack of knowledge enables him to take up the position of the skeptic: 'I don't know what the difference is'. It appears that, in line with the findings of Singh (2003), Jake struggles to accept the validity of the diagnosis. Jake concludes the story by constructing his son's treatment as an enhancer ('it certainly made an even bigger difference') rather than as something required to correct an internal defect in his son. The intactness of the son is preserved for the father, whilst the problem of ADHD is displaced onto the mother-son bond. Jake copes with the disappointment of ADHD by constructing it as feminine knowledge, outside the purview of his interview with another man.

In the above two extracts the mother is positioned as a mediator between the father and his son's difficulties which, to some extent, replicates the pattern followed by other participants above. However, what distinguishes Jake's discourse is that the mother is positioned as an authority, whereas in many of the above extracts the authority of the mother is undercut if not openly discredited. Connell (2005) makes the point that it "is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority)" (p. 77). Through phrases such as 'I'd be lost without her' and 'you don't always wanna hear that there's a problem' Jake undercuts his own authority as the father. Judith is positioned as an emotional constant, reassuring and guiding Jake in his parenting, as well as shielding him from anxiety and disappointment.

In the extract below, Jake positions Judith as a (silent) point of reference in his struggles regarding the 'perplexing' possibility of his different son being gay. It is evident that, in dialogue with the mother, Jake dismantles hegemonic masculinity and takes up a father position that prioritizes and protects his attachment to his son:

The only real other thing that I was concerned about/ I just said to Judith/ because I don't understand homosexuality- I mean I don't know how it happens/ I've got people telling

me (.) “You’re born with it” and people telling me that “It’s not scriptural” and then/ I said to/ I was speaking to someone the other weekend (.) I said “Listen (.) what happens if you born a hermaphrodite?” you know what I mean? “You were bo-where do you belong in the church?” you know “what choices are you allowed to make?” You know (.) So (.) there’s still a whole lot of perplexing things about it (.) you know (.) and I/ anyway/ but I said to Judith “How do you know if your child’s a homosexual?” you know (.) and it kind of worried me for a while (.) I s/ I used to pray about it a lot (.) but I/ I just thought “How am I going to cope with that?” (.) you know

And/ and I just said to Judith one day (.) “You know what hey (.) I just don’t know how to deal with it because (.) I would just (.) I would still love him” (1) and I just (.) I wouldn’t know how to kind of (.) deal with what other people have to deal with (.) and yet I don’t agree with it (.) So I was like really perplexed (.) and I just/ all I could kind of resolve for myself was that/ in the end was that (.) “Ok, it’s cool (.) I’ll just love him (.) Even if he is gay (.) it’s (.) it’s kind of cool hhh. you know (.) we’ll just have to find a way to figure this out and help if we can” you know”

As the man, Jake is the ‘I’ who ‘doesn’t understand homosexuality’ and therefore (‘because’) he turns to his wife (‘I just said to Judith’). As with the previous extract, Jake projects understanding of difference onto his wife, whilst Jake’s naïve position is part of his masculine performance – the man who does not understand difference. Jake situates himself within a socio-moral predicament (‘I’ve got people’) and, through repeated use of the phrase ‘you know’ he elicits listener support for his plight. Throughout, Judith is positioned as an abiding presence; a confidante to Jake’s relational wrangling: how does he, from a position of orthodox masculinity, ‘cope’ with a gay son? Jake’s wife provides him with an intimate forum within which he can work to a resolution.

Implicit to Jake’s orthodox position is rejection of otherness. However, Jake confides to his wife that this is not possible ‘because ‘I would still love him’. This resolution, the ‘I’ that would still love the son, prevails over the more binary, hegemonic ‘I’ position evident in the phrases ‘how am I going to cope with that?’ and ‘yet I don’t agree with it’. Like Nick above, Jake constructs his resolution as a relinquishing of sorts (‘in the end’). Both fathers arrive at a position of discovered love and paternal restraint (‘I’ll just love him’; ‘I’ll just have to live with it’) in the

face of radical difference. However, it seems that Nicks discourse is more homophobic than Jake's. Whereas Nick aligns himself with a hegemonic masculinity that subordinates gay masculinity ('people who follow the Arts'; 'sexually alternative people'), Jake attempts to understand and defend the subjectivity of the other. Furthermore, whereas Nick's discourse is shaped by the 'fear' that his son could be gay, Jake's discourse is shaped by protectiveness and love for his son. It seems that there are elements of Kleinian mourning in Jake's talk, where paranoid/schizoid processes ('yet I don't agree with it') are contained as the integrity of the son as the loved other is restored ('I'll just love him (.) even if he is gay').

For Jake, the shift from 'it's cool' to 'it's kind of cool', together with his rueful laugh, indicates the ambivalence of his accepting position; that the disappointed hegemonic male is contained somewhere in the mix. Then, in the final sentence, the shift from 'I' to 'we' signifies that Jake's accepting position involves an alignment with his wife as parents who recognize and promote their son as an independent center of consciousness ('we'll just have to figure this out and help if we can').

As indicated above, a central theme of Jake's interview was his positioning of himself as a man in transition, from hegemonic masculinity to some new, albeit undefined form of masculinity that he sees emerging in his different son. As a part of his accounting for this transition, Jake constructed the following biographical narrative, which sees him reversing his identifications, from his father to his mother:

I lived with my mom in the beginning (.) which act/ which was/ um (.) which I enjoyed (.) but I missed despite whatever the/ my differences with my dad I/ hey/ I missed him terribly (.) and my dad was quite a (1) I only realized this later and I've kind of come to forgive my mom now (.) and starting to understand and realize that she was actually a very good person (.) um (.) and um (.) but my dad (.) um (.) we stayed with my mom (.) and then my mom (.) my mom (.) uh (.) she (.) just got tired of the fights (.) my dad was in courts all the time dragging her through parental – you know suing for custody and it just went on and on and I think he just broke her down (.) just to the point where she just couldn't fight anymore (.) and anyway he got us back (.) in his care (1) And I must say I wasn't that concerned about that because I just missed him so much (.) I just thought "Dad's great" you know (.) And that's what I remember as a little boy (.) and that's why I

think even now is part of my life (.) I just remember/ I mean my dad (.) he was just the most awful bloody oke (.) and up until just a few years ago (.) I was still defending him as this great (.) wonderful creature (.) and kind of (.) and I realized/ but I realized long ago that um (.) how easy it is to take advantage of (.) in this instance (.) my son (.) you know (.) because like a dog (.) you know (.) you kick a dog and it'll still come back to you (.) for some reason it'll just/ and I just realized just (.) how vulnerable our children are (.) you know

In this story Jake shuttles between the past and the present in order to convey the change between what he 'just thought' as a child and what he is now 'starting to understand and realize'. In the beginning, Jake lives with his mother, but he misses his father 'terribly'. The phrase 'which act – which was, um, which I enjoyed' makes enjoyment of the mother something Jake realizes in hindsight, whereas the father is positioned as the exciting other ('I just thought "Dad's great"'). Thus Jake's triadic construction follows psychoanalytic orthodoxy as outlined in chapter two. Jake positions his past self as being in thrall to his father ('and that's what I remember as a little boy'), blinded by his yearning to the plight of his mother ('I wasn't that concerned about that because I just missed him so much').

However, in his concurrent commentary, Jake positions the father as a bully and he evokes empathy for the mother ('dragging her'; 'broke her down'). In fact, Jake forms a new triadic structure where he, his mother, and his son are linked by their vulnerability to abusive hegemonic masculinity. As his father's son, Jake likens himself to a dog where 'you kick a dog and it'll still come back to you' which, in turn, enables Jake the father to identify with his own son's vulnerability ('how vulnerable our children are').

In his uptake of new fathering, Jake repudiates his father as an embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, and turns back to his mother, identifying with her instead. Using Klein's concept of mourning (Hollway, 2007), it may be argued that Jake's new father position is founded on a transition from splitting to mourning and reparation towards his mother. Evidence of mother-father splitting may be found in the phrases 'Dad's great' and 'still defending him as this great wonderful creature' and evidence of mourning and reparation may be found in the sentence 'I've kind of come to forgive my mom now, and starting to understand and realize she was actually a very good person'.

In the process of concluding his interview, Jake summarizes his position as the father. As with earlier sections of Jake's interview, our talk is ruptured by our shared awareness of father-son attachment:

Interesting (.) shoo – there's so much in what you've just said

Well (.) I don't know/ I've kind of (3) hope I haven't painted too rosy a picture (.) but of/of/ you know (.) it wasn't my intention (.) it's just kind of where I'm at hey (2) *It's been quite a journey for you hey?* Ja, I know – big one hey (.) ja (.) it's um (.) But I/ but I have to say (.) that this/ this kind of um (.) if you (.) if/ if it's a cliché (.) you know that movie where the oke says "You complete me" (.) like um (.) parenting (.) um (.) has completed me (15) *Mm (.) mm (.) Ja, we love these guys so much hey* (4) Ja and I just/ I just realize that the way we're socialized (.) I mean I just feel for (.) just fathers who (.) who don't get it (.) you know (.) And a lot of it will probably have to do with (.) their stresses (.) you know (.) the problems/ financial difficulties (.) the way they were brought up

Jake comes close to apologizing for his celebration of his son and he hopes his listener hasn't become a skeptic ('I hope I haven't painted too rosy a picture'). In order to account for his 'rosy picture' of fathering, Jake again positions himself as having transitioned ('it's just kind of where I'm at') and he takes up my notion of a 'journey', confirming that it's been 'a big one'. As is evident from the long pause, Jake becomes distinctly emotional after his somewhat self-conscious invocation of the term: 'parenting has completed me'. Previous research shows that men often enjoy the social dividends of being a father, where fatherhood shores up hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Finn & Henwood, 2009, Morrell, 2006). However, Jake's emotionality, and the phrase 'completed me' indicate that, in this instance, Jake is not the commanding, responsible father. Instead, Jake constructs 'parenting' as a context where he has been restored via his attachment to his son.

It is argued that, in giving preeminence to his love for his son (it's just kind of where I'm at'), Jake takes up a position of vulnerability with his listener. In my emotional identification with Jake, I point to the love that he and I have for our sons. Jake then redirects the conversational focus onto 'fathers' and their losses (who don't get it'). This linguistic move implies that Jake

has been at least partly moved by sentiments towards the father, and that some of what ‘parenting’ has ‘completed’ in Jake has been his unrequited love for his father.

Jake goes on to construct the subjectivity of fathers who ‘don’t get it’. It is proposed that the phrases ‘I just realize that the way we’re socialized’ and ‘their stresses’ indicate that Jake is able to ‘feel for’ fathers with the ethics of the depressive position, where ‘bad’ fathers are restored as whole objects (Frosh, 2012). Jake’s emotionality, which is prompted by a recognition of what his son means to him, sees Jake transcend splitting and, with love and grief, to find grounds to ‘feel for’ his own father.

In summary, the above passages see Jake positioning the mother as an authority who models parenting for Jake and who guides him through his anxieties regarding his different son. In addition, through her ‘real gentleness’, Judith enables Jake to relinquish hegemonic masculinity and to embrace ‘parenting’. Hollway (2007) asks how men might allow themselves to be precipitated out of their remaining narcissism and allow themselves to be changed by their children. In Jake’s case the key seems to be identification with vulnerability which coincides with a repudiation of the demands of hegemonic masculinity. In the above extracts it is evident that Jake is vulnerable in his self-positioning. Jake bases his ‘corrective script’ on his sufferings as a son, and his wife facilitates the corrective script by allowing him to step away from being ‘a man’. In subsequent extracts Jake identifies his mother and his son’s vulnerabilities to hegemonic masculinity which widens his receptivity to new versions of masculinity and fathering. Finally, Jake heralds ‘parenting’, a gender neutral term, which coincides with his recognition of the latent vulnerabilities of ‘fathers who don’t get it’.

10.2. Summary

Brian and Douglas’s extracts show how sameness within the context of mentoring may see the mother subordinated and derogated as other, external to the father-son bond. However, Craig and Scott’s extracts show that this arrangement may change when difference and disappointment lie between father and son. In the latter situation, both Craig and Scott construct the mother-son bond as intimate whereas the father-son bond is constructed in terms of restraint and distance. Both participants take up the ‘moral authority’ position, where they function as moderators of their sons’ behavior, with the implication that the mother is not capable of this function. In

Scott's case, his position as father is bolstered by his son's aggressive assertions, as Scott and his son are able to identify with each other as masculine, to the exclusion of the mother.

In response to disappointment, both Scott and Craig take up a position of 'respect' towards their different sons. Using Benjamin's (1988; 1995) concept of recognition, it may be argued that the term 'respect' signals that, via their sons' negations, Scott and Craig come to recognize and love their sons as equivalent and independent centers of consciousness. However, both interviews show that 'respect' includes a certain intersubjective distance between father and son and that, to some extent, both men remain within what end up being the *confines* of fathering.

In the third subtheme, Brian and John position the mother as a mediator between them and their different sons. The mother offers the father an accepting/supporting position that holds the potential to dispel the father's disappointment in his son. It is evident that both Brian and John vacillate between an accepting position (so aligning themselves with their wives) and a hegemonic injunction to get their sons to achieve in ways that are recognizable to them as fathers.

In the fourth subtheme, Nick and Jake display contrasting ways of assimilating the maternal perspective, or 'side', in order to preserve and promote their attachments to their different sons. In Nick's case, the maternal 'side' is assimilated by reconstructing it as acceptably masculine, such that the son continues to be a clone of the 'proud' father. In Jake's case, a dismantling of the hegemonic position coincides with an amplified father position that transcends complementary maternal and paternal functions. Jake's repudiation of hegemonic masculinity (in the form of his father) leaves him open to incorporating the mother's perspective. Unlike other participants, Jake does not feel capable of introducing his son to his version of masculinity without harming his son in the process. As indicated in chapter eight, Jake does not hold onto the hope or expectation that he should mentor his son towards being 'like him' as father. Ironically, this uncertainty seems to free Jake up to join with his son's ways of doing masculinity. By suspending the mentor position, Jake is left less confident but also freer to share his wife's understanding and 'just love' his different son.

Jake's triadic constructions serve as something of a counterpoint to those made by Douglas. In Douglas's case, father and son are wielded together via idealized identifications with hegemonic

masculinity, which extend back to Douglas's identifications with his own father (see chapter six: 'ja, also, you know, very much hero worshipped him, and his interests were my interests). Within Douglas's triadic construction, father and son come together via repudiation of the mother/ the feminine, a collusion that makes difference unsafe for both Douglas's son as well as for me as the interviewer.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GENERAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

How does this sample of fathers describe their experiences and responses in the face of difference and disappointment in their sons? What father discourses are employed and how is the mother positioned in the process? Do fathers attempt to repair their relationships with different and disappointing sons, and if so, how do they go about this? These questions have been approached from a psychosocial perspective by attending to the ways participants position themselves and others in discourse, and by employing a psychoanalytic register to explore the particular and perhaps unconscious reasons for these investments. The psychoanalytic frame helps to give attention to issues of subjectivity and meaning-making, and to how these men make sense of their struggles with their disappointing sons in terms of self and other (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

As indicated, constructions of masculinity and fatherhood are linked (Morrell, 2006). In the above analyses it is evident that, as wealthy white South African men, the ways participants 'do' masculinity is intertwined with the ways they construct themselves as fathers of different or disappointing sons. This means that, for this sample of men, 'difference' from the hegemonic white South African norm accounts for conflict and disappointment in the father. For example, Douglas takes up positions of hegemonic masculinity in his talk which coincide with him being the father who 'would have struggled' if his 'real boy' son 'had been different'. This is not to say that Douglas positions himself in any static or uniform way. Indeed, the above extracts show how participants vacillate between different versions of masculinity and fathering during the course of their interviews (Edley & Wetherell, 1999). The point is that how participants construct a father's response to difference and disappointment is linked to the version of masculinity being performed. In turn, the disappointments and differences constructed by participants were informed by the versions of masculinity being performed. Many of the participants were heavily invested in sport, and in a traditional hegemonic masculinity that values competitiveness and physicality. These investments 'set up' disappointments that may be understood as products of a particular socio-historical context.

As chapter six shows, many participants took up normative and, in some instances, idealized versions of masculinity, through reference to their sporting prowess or their competitive,

‘winning ways’ (Edley and Wetherell, 1997). In concert with this normative or hegemonic self – positioning was the expectation that their sons would be similar to them. Consequently, reference to the son’s differences was typically foundational to participants’ constructions of ‘disappointment talk’. Chodorow (1999, p.viii) suggests that ‘mothers, by virtue of their gender ...experience daughters as, in a certain sense, like them, and sons as, in a certain sense, unlike’. Chodorow’s observation, together with the findings of this study, suggest the prevalence of taken – for – granted assumptions regarding sameness that parents hold towards children of the same sex. The notion of sameness has implications for the kind of relationship fathers expect to share with their sons. For instance, in Nydegger and Mittenes (1991) study, fathers felt that they shared a world with their sons, while daughters were seen as ‘the other’, and described as ‘complex’, ‘baffling’ and ‘harder to understand’. This implies that fathers carry the assumption that their sons will replicate their versions of masculinity and that similarity coincides with father-son understanding.

In the current study, fathers routinely referenced their own experiences in order to make sense of their sons and they claimed that it is harder to ‘understand’ the different son who was positioned as ‘the opposite’ or ‘very alternative’ (e.g. John, Brian and David). Furthermore, there is evidence in the above extracts that this sample of fathers associated difference or otherness with the feminine (e.g. Brian: ‘he’s very close to his girl cousins’). Fathers like Douglas, Quinton and Brian enjoy an implicit understanding of their similar sons who, like them, exemplify acceptable masculinity. On the other hand, Brian and John experience frustration and disappointment with sons who are constructed as lacking in acceptably masculine qualities (e.g. ‘animal instinct’) which implies similarity with the feminized and therefore foreign other.

In their qualitative study Palkowitz, Copes and Woolfolk (2001) found that men perceived significant changes in their life course and personalities with the advent of fatherhood. For some men, assuming responsibility for fathering was a ‘gentle evoker’ of latent personality traits, whilst for others fathering brought a ‘jolt’ to the life course. The findings of the current study suggest that fathering a son who is perceived as different represents a particular type of ‘jolt’, in that encountering difference disrupts taken-for granted fathering. Some kind of renegotiation is required. In the above extracts we see that some fathers respond by entrenching a hegemonic father position whilst others reach towards new father positions. As an example of the latter,

Craig says that his different son has made him ‘question’ himself in a million ways’ and he stands apart from ‘other dads’ at a dads’ evening. Similarly, Jake positions himself as a self – doubting father who questions what he terms ‘some old thoughts’ such as ‘I’ve gotta make him tougher’. As is evident, Jake constructs his son’s differences as representing a more credible version of masculinity to which Jake himself aspires. This uncertain father position may be contrasted with the hegemonic and more certain, or taken-for-granted versions of fathering performed by participants such as Brian, Douglas and Quinton. The suggestion then, is that instantiations of hegemonic masculinity coincide with a sense of certainty regarding who one is as the father, who the son should be and what should be done about his differences. In the extract below, Segal (1990) suggests that hegemonic masculinity requires this kind of certainty or ‘coherence’:

Masculinity is never the undivided, seamless construction it becomes in its symbolic manifestation. The promise of phallic power is precisely this guarantee of total inner coherence, of an unbroken and unbreakable, unquestioned and unquestionable masculinity. Deprived of it, how can men be assured of ‘natural’ dominance? (p. 102)

Segal’s observations are in keeping with Connell’s point that hegemonic masculinity is based on power rather than force, and that its effectiveness lies in the fact that it induces complicity because it is constructed as a given. For participants such as Scott, Craig and Jake, reaching towards new versions of fathering involves a questioning of what was once known. Accepting difference and tolerating disappointment seems to invoke the challenge of tolerating uncertainty about the self; a questioning of one’s gendered subjectivity. In the extract below, Butler (2005) suggests that recognition of the other is conditional on the capacity to be ‘disoriented from oneself’:

Suspending the demand for self – identity or, more particularly, for complete coherence seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self – identity at all times and require that others do the same ... one can give and take recognition only on the condition that one becomes disoriented from oneself by something which is not oneself, that one undergoes a de – centering and ‘fails’ to achieve self – identity. (p. 42)

If Butler's assertions are taken up, then the suggestion is that fathers need to be able to tolerate being 'de-centered' by their different sons: that there is movement away from what is known and towards the kind of 'strangeness' Nick experiences as he moves towards accepting and endorsing his singing son. As is evident, for several participants, certainty is destabilized by the father's love for his different son, where new ways of relating have to be found if the father is to remain attached to his son. For instance, Nick positions himself as 'surprised', not so much by his son's differences as by the position he finds himself in as the father of a different son. The conclusion Nick comes to is 'I guess you love them no matter what they do'. In contrast, of the participants, perhaps Quinton and Douglas presented as most sure of themselves as men; most 'coherent' in Butler's terms. In their interviews Douglas, Quinton and Brian embody the hegemonic ideal and they also see hegemonic masculinity in their similar sons and identify with it there. Understanding is thus predicated on a collusion regarding hegemonic masculinity. Understanding depends on conformity. My own reflexive experiences show how Quinton and Douglas's 'certainty' (Samuels, 1989) gave me the sense that difference was risky; that difference would not be tolerated without disapproval, or a breach in the relationship. I worried that they would detect that I thought and felt differently from them and that I would be 'othered' as a result.

For this sample of fathers, understanding was virtually synonymous with identification, where the other is recognized as 'like me'. As Jake contemplates the possibility that his son may be gay, he says 'cos I don't understand homosexuality'. This claim simultaneously positions Jake as a real man and uses the logic that, because Jake is a man, he is unable to understand homosexuality. The suggestion is then, that instantiations of hegemonic masculinity preclude identification with and hence understanding of otherness. According to Hinshelwood (1991), identification is about relating to another person on the basis of experiencing similarities with the self. A problem this study addresses is how fathers might relate to sons where the anticipated bond of similarity is not immediately evident. The intention here is not to evoke heteronormativity, wherein likeness and difference are demarcated along gendered lines. Instead, and in line with Benjamin (1995), this study asks how it is possible for the father to form identifications that cross the line demarcating what he is supposedly like; "the boundary that encloses the identical" (p.53). This is key to the concept of recognition, which describes a tenuous intersubjective position in which the other is related to but is not colonized as an

extension of the self. Benjamin proposes that recognition refers to an intersubjective relating that is 'post oedipal' (Frosh, 2010), where over-inclusive identifications enable the experience of the other as different but also, like me, a subject of consciousness (Benjamin, 1998). This requires fathers to understand, or to make sense of their different sons' preferences and to identify with their agency and intentionality as like subjects.

The ethical position outlined by Butler indicates how challenging Benjamin's notion of recognition may be, since the father is required to tolerate a kind of strangeness to his self if he is to recognize the strangeness of his son. In order to recognize their different sons, fathers are required to suspend who they 'are' and to endure a certain fragmentation of the self. Regarding this challenge, it is interesting to note the varying ways that this sample of fathers takes up positions of 'respect' towards their different sons. It seems that both Brian and Douglas resolve disappointment by taking up what may be termed politely respectful positions towards difference. For instance, whereas Douglas is able to do the things he 'used to do as a kid' with his son, he imagines interacting with an 'effeminate son', on a 'different level'. The phrase 'different level' implies that Douglas's interactions with otherness lack identification; the union of sameness. Douglas confirms that the effeminate boy 'is still a decent nice guy' which is reminiscent of Brian's observation that 'at the end of the day' he 'respects' his different son for being a responsible child. But these apparent endorsements come with intersubjective distance, where different son is related to as foreign, respected perhaps, but not identified with and hence not really understood. Reflecting on the disappointment of difference, Douglas says 'I think as a parent you owe it to take what you've got and make the most of it'. There is clear sense of resignation in this father position. The position is ethical in the sense that the father does not attempt to coerce the other in the face of difference (you must be like me or I will destroy you). However, the position involves disengagement or withdrawal, which is a hallmark of intersubjective disappointment. It may be inferred then, that one way fathers cope with disappointment is by withdrawing psychic investment from the different son. It seems that, from this particular position of respect, the different son is positioned as the 'opposite', like women, against which masculinity is defined. It may also be argued that the position of 'respect' functions as a denial of disappointment as, for some of the fathers, the position has the effect of repressing emotional ambivalence and complexity. This certainly seems evident in Douglas's

position regarding his father's failings ('I respect the guy, irrespective of where he is, what he does').

The above respectful father positions may be contrasted with the responses of Scott and Craig who, through recognizing their sons' assertions take up what Craig terms an 'adult respect' for their sons. This term implies likeness and enables both fathers to be 'proud' of their sons' ability to stand up for themselves as the independent other. In fact, Scott establishes father-son understanding and respect based on an equivalent capacity for masculine aggression. Thus Scott's position seems to be an amalgam of recognition of otherness and identification with sameness in that his son's negations are constructed as masculine, beyond the ken of the mother. In similar vein, Nick constructs his son's singing as an act of (masculine) 'courage', which Nick identifies as his 'proudest moment'. But Nick also positions himself as the father who would 'probably still be proud' of a gay son because, as a parent, 'you love them no matter what they do'. This indicates that Nick is not simply coping with difference by making it similarly masculine, but that he himself is stretched by his attachment to his different son. For Craig, Scott and Nick, it may be argued that their sons' differences have expanded the father's circle of legitimate masculinity.

However, because difference threatens disappointment, some fathers do respond by constructing their sons' apparent deviations as similar to themselves, which facilitates identification and functions as a defense against disappointment. For instance, Angus is able to say that he is not disappointed in his son's sports performances because he was not a good sportsman himself. Father and son are the same. In part, Nick copes with his son's different ways by allocating different 'sides' to his son, and constructing an exclusive father-son bond around his son's more orthodox masculine activities. In a similar vein, both Nick and Douglas use the term 'balance' to claim reassuring identificatory bonds with their sons even as their sons turn towards the feminine in some way. Indeed, throughout his interview Douglas is at pains to portray his son as similar, such that the observation that his son prefers to play with a girl is constructed as a 'strong trait'. Hence, Douglas transforms the threat of difference into a suitably masculine quality with which he is able to identify. This illustrates Benjamin's (1995) observation that "from one angle, identification contributes to empathy and the bridging of difference" but that from "another angle, it stands opposed to recognizing the other: the self-engaged in identification takes the

other as fantasy object, not as equivalent center of being” (p. 7). It has been argued that, by making his son identical to himself, Douglas preserves an idealized version of the father-son relationship and a particular masculinity that this union of sameness represents.

Chapter seven (making an effort) focuses on fathers’ expectations regarding the kinds of attitudes they want their sons to show. Many fathers accounted for their assertions by separating effort from performance, such that ‘making an effort’ was constructed as a defensible moral that both mother and father upheld. However, it is clear that some fathers express intense disappointment in their non – competitive sons. This is especially so if the son has shown evidence of ability. It is also evident that effort and performance remain linked and that the issue is not simply about playing sport. Many participants want their sons to be physically assertive, to be competitive and essentially, to win. In the absence of these attributes, sons are constructed as too close to femininity which, as indicated earlier “defined principally in terms of its distance from masculinity” (Frosh, 1994, p.89). Whitehead (2005) introduces the concept of the ‘non-man’ who, ‘in the absence of any alternative gender category to “man”, other than “woman”... is feminized in order to align him with women as a non-participant in exchanges of power between men as men” (p. 416).

Consequently, it is difficult for some participants to recognize the value of their sons’ attributes. Fathers such as Brian and John construct their sons’ academic efforts as largely irrelevant to the fathering project. Instead, these fathers want their sons to possess ‘animal instinct’ or ‘killer instinct’ on the sports field. In a clear replication of hegemonic hierarchy, Quinton says that he’s instilled a ‘give it horns’ attitude in his son which, he argues, ‘distinguishes him from quite a few of his peers’. John bemoans his son’s lack of ‘animal instinct’, saying that with it, his son could be a ‘brilliant’ Rugby player. Both Brian and John have great difficulty accepting their son’s preferences because of the allure of the hegemonic fantasy regarding who their sons ‘could be’. In accounting for their disappointment, both fathers point to evidence of their sons’ abilities, their size and early promise. Many participants manage disappointment by postponing their expectations to a time when these expectations might be fulfilled. In this subtheme, the notion of time again emerges as an important strategy for postponing disappointment. Brian, John and Quinton all look forward to high school as the forum where their sons will be induced to take up appropriately competitive attitudes.

As indicated, expectations regarding achievement seem to be the key to this theme. Both Scott and Nick show how the decision to adapt these expectations to their sons' realities has the effect of protecting and, in Scott's case, bolstering harmony within the father-son relationship. It is interesting to note that, in the process of realigning their notions of achievement, both Nick and Jake raise the fear that their non-conforming sons might be gay. This suggests that when the son deviates from his father's implicit expectations regarding success, the son is at risk of being subordinated. This is in keeping with Connell's theory (2005) where gayness "is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity" (p. 78). In turn, it may be argued that the different son may be the receptacle of disowned aspects of the father, which the father may then reclaim by accepting and identifying with his different son's versions of achievement. Thus Nick is able to move closer to his son by identifying piano-playing as an unfulfilled 'wish' of his own.

It may be argued that expectations regarding achievement are also central to chapter eight (mentoring), where many participants looked to correct their own perceived shortcomings through forming close mentoring relationships with their sons. If interpretative repertoires are seen as part of a community's common sense, providing a basis for shared understanding (Edley, 2001), then mentoring seems to be a primary interpretative repertoire for this sample. Mentoring served as a "line of argument" for this sample of men to account for themselves as good and involved fathers (Wetherell, 1998, p. 400). Because most fathers were invested in the mentoring position, the mentoring relationship was identified as a primary site for frustration and disappointment. In part this endorses Seidler's (2006) observation regarding the instrumentality of men's relationships and Doucet's (2006) proposal that involvement in sports affords men a way of parenting that distances them from feminine styles of caring. Certainly, for this sample, mentoring provided a legitimate way for these fathers to experience intimacy with their sons (e.g. see Douglas's comment 'when we get out ... that's sort of my turf'). As indicated, research into the links between fathering and sport show that sport provides a means for men to develop close relationships with their children (Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik, 2012; Jenkins, 2009) and that sport offers fathers and children a common interest to talk about and do together (Harrington, 2006). Fathers use sports activities to bond with their children (Kay, 2007).

Chapter eight shows that the mentoring relationship incorporates a range of hopes for this sample of fathers. As evidenced by John's 'best moment' as the father who knows how to sail, the mentor position allows some fathers to take up a 'heroic' (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2005) version of masculinity as the competent father. Furthermore, by positioning themselves as mentors and their sons as enthusiastic mentees, father and son share in the intimate project of performing masculinity together. But participants also take up the mentoring position as a way of being close to their sons. For instance, Brendan, David and Douglas see mentoring as an opportunity to 'relive' their childhoods and John, Brendan and Jake expect that the mentoring relationship will serve as a primary forum to either correct or replicate the relationships they had with their own fathers (Byng-Hall, 1995).

Thus the mentoring function was central to the ways participants performed masculinity, but it was also constructed as an important site for father-son relating, with significant personal-biographical overlays. White (1994) argues that men are psychologically and physically estranged from family life because of the centrality of work in social definitions of masculinity. In White's (ibid.) study and in others (e.g. Finn and Henwood, 2009) fathers expressed the desire to be close to their children. This is replicated in the current study, where participants hope for close, supportive and involved relationships with their sons. Brendan, David, Nick and John all link the intention to be close to their sons to the notion that their own fathers were unavailable or unsupportive. In order to convey the intimacy that they enjoy or hope to enjoy with their sons, each of these fathers constructs stories involving shared activity or mentoring. Consistent with previous studies (Finn and Henwood, 2009), fathers espouse 'being there' for their sons and this 'being there' is situated in a mentoring relationship (e.g. Nick: 'if he wants to play Cricket, I'm there').

In a sense then, fathers in this study turn to the mentoring position as a version of 'new fathering' – different from their own experiences as sons. However, whereas the 'new father' has previously been defined as a caring, nurturing, emotionally involved co-parent (Craig, 2006; Dermott, 2008); participants in this study do not position themselves simply as co-parents, identical to the mother. Instead participants tend to construct triadic arrangements and they allocate distinct and instrumental functions to themselves as mentors of their sons. For Brendan and Douglas, the mentoring relationship is constructed in such a way that the mother is excluded;

father and son enjoy closeness through masculine performances that exclude and, in Douglas's case, denigrate femininity. When mentoring is frustrated by difference, some participants construct the mother-son relationship as being more immediate than their own relationships with their sons. These findings support the argument that current constructions of good fathering may "involve a modern if not motherly—like paternity" that incorporates elements of hegemonic masculinity (Finn and Henwood, 2009, p. 559; Henwood and Procter, 2003).

As indicated in chapter ten (pushing), disappointments emanating from the mentoring relationship are constructed as belonging primarily to the father, often to the exclusion of the mother. This implies that mentoring involves replicating the father's version of masculinity: that 'I' as father, am disappointed that you, my son, do not want to be like me. Some participants construct the maternal position as an alternative to the disappointed father position: a solution of sorts. However, participants vacillate between taking up and discrediting the maternal perspective. The problem seems to be that fathers have to forgo hegemonic masculinity if they are to align themselves with the maternal position and enjoy closeness with their different sons. Being 'like' the mother means not being a real man. Frequently, the mother is positioned as powerless, whilst participants enjoy the more glamorous and powerful mentor position. However, for some participants (e.g. Craig), paternal power seems to come at a price, in that it is the mother who enjoys a special intimacy with her son, an intimacy that both Craig and Scott seem to envy.

However, to join the mother, and 'just love' the different son, clashes with the project of turning the son towards acceptable masculinity. In response, fathers such as John and Brian make the maternal position time bound; a temporary solution. These fathers construct 'storylines' (Georgakopoulou, 2005) where the father gives way to the disappointing maternal view by imagining a time when his son will be induced to take up more acceptable ways. So John looks forward to a time when his son will 'choose to put that effort in' because of the influence of coaches and peers, and Brian anticipates a time when he may have to be more 'severe' as a father in order to get his son to conform. In the face of disappointment, both of these fathers hold onto the notion that their sons will, as they enter high school, move closer towards a way of being that is acceptable to the father. In a sense then, disappointment is deferred, but implicit to this apparent solution is the notion that their sons will move towards acceptable masculinity in time.

This extension of mentor hope allows fathers to join with mothers as accepting, supporting parents. However, this position does not represent real acceptance or recognition of difference, because it is founded on the hope that the son will replicate the father in time.

Alternatively, fathers such as Scott, Jake and Craig make direct links between their uptake of a revised or 'new' fathering and an often painful reworking of the mentoring position. For example, Craig works to relinquish the mentoring function as he reaches towards an ethical position where he conscientiously abstains from trying to influence his unwilling son. It may be argued that, by reworking the mentoring position, participants such as Jake, Scott and Craig take up post-oedipal father positions. For Jake this position enables him to 'just love' a gay son, whilst for Scott this position sees him relinquishing the task of getting his son to make an effort, but still insisting that his son be 'a part of the family' and 'do his 'share' around the house. Craig describes the process of reworking the mentor position as a 'journey of mourning'. However, at the end of his interview Craig continues to hope that 'long into adulthood' his 'silly ritual' will 'still ring' for his son. Thus Craig holds onto the hope that he (as the mentor) will be recognized by his son; that the son will take up Craig's attitude and so to some extent revive Craig's position as the mentor father. Craig became noticeably emotional during this stretch of talk, and I experienced sadness at the combination of love and distance evoked by the self-other positioning in Craig's concluding narrative. Craig's story is about mattering to his son, and being remembered by his son and it is important to note that he imagines being remembered in the mentor position.

Revising the mentoring function is thus no easy task. Participants hope to be close to their sons, but how do fathers enjoy closeness with their sons in the absence of the normative mentoring function? Certainly, one response to disappointment is to withdraw mentoring expectations from the son (e.g. Angus: 'Ag Angus, you're just wasting your time'), but as Craig and Scott illustrate, this is linked to the loss of anticipated bonding, and chapter six shows that participants equate disappointment with not loving the son. In this case it seems that the father simultaneously steps back from his son as he steps down from mentoring. Furthermore, if the mentoring function, pointing the son towards the world, is central to the way this sample of men constructs fathering, then the disappointed father cannot accept his son's differences unless these differences are somehow constructed as acceptable versions of masculinity. To simply accede to what is

constructed as unacceptable is to terminate the father position, to despair of being the father. In order to resolve this dilemma, the father must either construct his son's differences such that they are understood as acceptably masculine – not really differences at all, or the father must countenance a revised notion of acceptable masculinity, so reaching past a repudiation of the 'not me'. For fathers such as Nick, Jake and Scott, it is evident that the latter solution represents, for them, 'new' fathering (e.g. Jake: 'at one stage I almost wanted to toughen him up...and then I realized...my thinking was slipping into some old thoughts'). Jake's interview serves as an interesting counterpoint regarding the issue of mentoring. By renouncing the masculinity he has known, Jake steps away from mentoring and is open to being mentored by his wife and different, 'generous' son. Jake concludes his interview by saying that 'parenting' has 'completed' him as a man and he positions the mother as the bridge to this process. However, it is also evident that within Jake's solution lies a certain amount of unease regarding his position as the father, because he is not the orthodox mentor.

But because mentoring is central to the ways many of the participants perform fathering, constructing an ethical version of mentoring the different or disappointing son becomes crucial. Chapter nine (pushing) displays similar findings to Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik's (2012) study, in that 'good' fathers are required to find a balance between performance-oriented masculinity and caring masculinity. However, perhaps because this study asks participants to focus on disappointing sons, greater emphasis is given to the difficulty of this fathering task. Also, because of the way it foregrounds subjectivity, the psychosocial approach helps to shed light on the ways this sample manages the conflict between their power as men and as fathers and their anxiety that exercising this power can damage their sons whom they love.

If men position themselves as mentors, with the function of introducing the son to the outside world, what does the good father do when his son won't comply? What is evident is that, for fathers of disappointing sons, it is not always easy to link mentoring with good fathering and this constitutes a central dilemma for this sample of fathers. The shameful impulse to 'push' or attack the disappointing son is defended against in a variety of ways. Participants distance themselves from 'pushing', preferring instead to position themselves as 'challenging', supporting' or 'encouraging' their reluctant sons. The ethical breach that fathers attempt to avoid is the notion that they are damaging their sons by asserting their desires. As such, admitting personal desire is

problematic for this sample of fathers and it is evident that various discursive strategies are employed to defend against the shameful notion that the father is gratifying his own desires. Some participants manage this by constructing desire as intrinsic to their sons (e.g. Nick: 'they like to do well') whilst others frame their assertions as those of the responsible father who is preparing his son for adulthood (e.g. Douglas: 'even at this age they need to be semi-independent', and John: 'which needs to be taken forward'). In some instances, there is a denial of any investment in moulding the son and, in fact, Angus, John and Brendan project pushing onto other parents ('who push-push-push') who are then attacked for being bad parents. Other participants construct pushing as a part of them which, as responsible fathers, is consistently restrained (e.g. Quinton: 'I've always managed to restrain myself').

Webb and Damiluk (1999) suggest that positioning oneself as the responsible father is a way of claiming social status which, according to Finn and Henwood (2009) is a 'virtuous and masculine style of fatherhood that ...is not easily let go of' (p. 559). It is evident, in this sample, that the 'responsible father' position is both overdetermined and nuanced. Participants take up the position as a way of distinguishing themselves from the mother (e.g. Craig: 'Hey! Treat your mom with respect') and as a way of both replicating and correcting the ways that they themselves were fathered (Byng-Hall, 1995). Then, as indicated above, some fathers turn to this position as a way of accounting for the ways they coerce their sons towards acceptable masculinity. However, as Nick, Craig and Scott illustrate, responsible fathering also has to do with restraining the hegemonic impulse and striving to meet or recognize the different son. Benjamin (2004) formulates a notion of the 'third' that moves psychoanalytic theory away from oedipal structures towards postulating a 'space' in which contact between like subjects can occur. This space has two elements, each of which makes it possible to frame the challenge that Nick, Scott and Craig undertake in their talk. The 'third in the one' refers to the father's capacity to imagine what he and his son can create together, "a kind of reparative ability to believe that it is possible to comprehend the other even when the other is destructive and alien" (Frosh, 2010, p.134). The 'one in the third' is a way of being that links father and son, producing something new, "a space for meeting, reflection and creativity, owned by neither party, but an aspect of them both" (ibid.). This intersubjective accomplishment is perhaps most clearly illustrated by Scott's sense of 'success' that he and his different son have managed to 'connect' and 'enjoy each other's company' despite their differences.

Benjamin (2004) refers to the ‘moral third of responsibility’ which involves taking the first step towards this space, so ‘demonstrating the route out of helplessness’ (p.33). But Benjamin (ibid.) also argues that the morality of this position depends on acknowledging ones capacity to hurt the other. As chapter nine shows, it is difficult for participants to acknowledge that their assertions have hurt or damaged their sons. In some instances, fathers blame their damaging actions on an inherent masculine impulse that needs to be managed (e.g. Brendan: ‘it was just my own competitiveness which came out’). Others defend against guilt by downplaying the extent to which their children have been harmed (e.g. Angus: ‘because children are resilient you know’), or by constructing themselves as the responsible father who has every right to be disappointed and take action against his wayward son (e.g. Douglas and Angus). Morrell et al. (2012) point out that South African hegemonic masculinities incorporate the legitimacy of violence, and it is evident that Angus, in particular, takes up a discourse of caning in order to account for his violence in disciplining his disappointing son.

However, as Brendan and Nick demonstrate, acknowledging damage and taking up a position of remorse are important aspects of the move towards a revised or ‘new’ fathering. So, for example, Brendan says ‘I think I shattered his little world ... and I will not do that to Chris’, and Nick says ‘I could see he was totally devastated by the experience and ...it was a good lesson for me’. Klein’s notion of the depressive position has been used to suggest that guilt and the urge to repair moves these fathers to a new ethical awareness and a collapsing of the old father position. If hegemonic masculinity is “based on a nexus of ideas, institutions and behaviours that normalize ...and demand male dominance” (Lindegger and Quayle, 2009), then it can be argued that acknowledgement of damage destabilizes the hegemonic position. As such, the depressive position may be seen as a generative form of disappointment, in that brooding over feelings of loss and responsibility undercut the hegemonic fantasies that fathers hold for themselves and their sons. Actual or fantasized notions of damage lead fathers to reflect on their sons’ vulnerability (e.g. John: ‘a little soul like that’) as well as their own (e.g. Brendan: ‘that killed me. I got home and I cried, over what I had done’). As Jake’s interview shows, acknowledging the damage inherent to hegemonic masculinity sees fathers constructing particular identificatory links with their different sons based on shared vulnerability. Regarding the morality of the depressive position, Alford (1989) says the following:

A morality based not merely upon the desire to make sacrifices, in order to make reparation for phantasied acts of aggression; it is based also upon an ability to identify deeply with others, to feel connected with their fates. (p. 8)

Alford's description indicates how the concept of depressive functioning might complement Benjamin's theorizing, in that depressive functioning prevents the uptake of responsibility from forming part of a performance of heroic masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 2005). When 'going first' forms part of a heroic masculinity performance, the father becomes the isolated, sacrificial father who denies his need for his son. In contrast, tolerating the depressive position appears to amplify the father's capacity to identify with his son in ways that transcend stereotypical masculinity: as the parent who, like the mother, loves his son and is deeply connected with his wellbeing.

Difference is never absolute in reality ... Difference is always accompanied by similarity ultimately found in human universals like pain and joy, fear, loss and need. (Hollway, 2007 p. 107)

CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUDING REMARKS

12.1. Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is the fact that the sample is non-representative and very distinctive in terms of socio-economic and cultural features. Certainly, socio-economic and cultural factors are likely to inform the self-other expectations that men bring to the father-son relationship which means that the findings of this research cannot be generalized across different contexts within South Africa and abroad. As indicated in chapters two and three, socio-economic factors have a strong influence on fathering practices (Morrell, 2006) and in South Africa, socio-economic status is largely demarcated along racial lines. The fathers interviewed in this research project demonstrate that they are highly invested in mentoring their sons. But it is also evident that the disappointment of difference tends to centre on deviations from the hegemonic white South African norm, regarding investment in sport, competitiveness and physical striving.

Clearly then, the sample characteristics have had a constraining effect on the findings, which are unlikely to be entirely or even partially replicated in other socio-economic and cultural contexts. For example, in the absence of financial security, paternal expectations may have more to do with the son's potential to contribute financially than the son's potential as a sportsman.

As indicated chapter two, Morrell (2001) has identified a 'white masculinity' that is founded on economic and political dominance. However, it could be argued that due to political changes and perhaps particularly the policy of affirmative action, white South African men face an eroding of this dominance. Consequently, this sample of fathers may be especially invested in their sons' progress at school as a means of preserving their privileged status. Further research is needed to explore how racial, socio-economic and cultural factors intersect with the experience of fathering a disappointing son.

In addition to being distinctive and homogenous, the sample size is small, and whilst this facilitated a detailed analysis of the data, the fact that only eleven men were interviewed further limits the generalizability of the findings. However, as a qualitative study the primary aim was not one of generalizability.

The use of a single interview may also be viewed as a limitation of this study. A single interview yields only one take, where the interviewee performs only one version of a multiplicity of responses, masculinities and fathering. As Frosh and Emerson (2004) point out, follow-up interviews can yield information about the ways participants reflect back on the themes generated in the first interview, and how these reflections might inflect “future intentions and expectations” (p. 18). Frosh and Emerson (ibid.) argue that researcher reflexivity is enhanced by receiving feedback on interpretations from research participants and that this feedback can inform the research process. Thus, although an argument has been made for the decision to interview participants only once, the single interview may be viewed as a weakness of this study. Nonetheless, efforts have been made to consistently index data as evidence for analytic claims and interpretations. In addition, alternate readings and reflections from the research supervisor and peer groups have consistently informed the interpretive process.

The process of analysis and the interpretations made are always open to debate and alternative readings (Frosh & Emerson, 2004; Riessman, 1993). Certainly, as researcher, my own values and personal history have shaped my positioning on the thesis, from the selection of the topic to this final write-up. As both a son and a father, I have been personally invested in understanding how fathers negotiate disappointment in their sons whom they also love. This means that I have entered this project with conscious and unconscious assumptions that will have influenced the interpretation of data. As indicated in chapter four, I have sometimes found myself caught between an urge to protect the participants and an urge to criticize them as ‘bad’ fathers. As a researcher with prejudices, I have felt shifting sentiments of irritation, antipathy, fear, tenderness, sadness and affection towards the research participants and I have attempted to reflect on these experiences in the iterative process of analysis and interpretation. Thus, in keeping with a psychosocial approach that draws on psychoanalysis, I have attempted to both own and utilise my subjectivity as an analytic resource.

It is hoped that researcher reflexivity regarding these investments, values and prejudices, as well as receptivity to the feedback of colleagues, has moderated any undue bias in the final analyses. Nonetheless, as Riessman (1993, p.66) points out “our texts have unstable meanings” and it is acknowledged that this thesis represents only one reading of the data (Willig, 2008).

12.2. Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this research project indicate that disappointment may be viewed as a common experience for fathers of sons and that the experience can play a role in unsettling hegemonic assumptions and shifting men towards more reflective, less gender certain father positions. This has implications for both theory and practice. Exploring how fathers respond to the disappointing son reveals some of the ways power is implicated in fathering, but it also represents an opportunity to listen to men speak about their experiences of vulnerability within relationships that matter to them. Seidler (2006) argues that attending to men's emotional experiences within prevailing masculinities provides clues as to how these masculinities might be challenged. Similarly, Lindegger and Quayle (2009) argue that critical analyses of the vulnerability inherent in hegemonic masculinity can open up pathways to more authentic masculinities. The above extracts show that speaking about difference and disappointment is no easy matter, and in many instances the responses may be influenced by issues of social desirability. However, it is also evident that, because participants were given time and space to speak and think, participants became more open about their frustrations, fears, regrets and wishes. Thus it may be argued that, whilst paternal disappointment is likely to remain a sensitive topic for research, the topic does shed light on complex personal investments, vulnerabilities, and frustrated desires that may not always be revealed by other research on fatherhood.

Benjamin (1995) refers to the "mysterious persistence" of gender demarcations within psychic experience (p. 51). If fathers retain conscious and unconscious expectations that their sons will be similar to them, and that they will introduce their sons to successful masculinity, then fathering a different son presents a dilemma to the father. By addressing the relational challenge of fathering a disappointing son, this research project contributes to two important areas of research into fatherhood: the quality of the relationship between father and child (Lamb, 2010) and fathering as a context for the promotion of caring, responsible masculinities (Morrell, 2006). Understanding how fathers might repair their relationships in the face of 'ordinary' disappointment can contribute to existing research on healthy relating between father and child. In addition, by focusing on the father-son relationship, this research project foregrounds the production of masculinities within the context of fathering. Of course, a psychosocial perspective holds these two foci together, and Frosh et al. (2002) argue that research into the experiences of men is enhanced when it is informed by both social constructionist theory and theories of personal subjectivity. The authors maintain that this dual theoretical perspective enables research

to explore social constructions of masculinity as well as the individual ambivalences and emotional investments of men.

Psychoanalytic theory has been used to provide amplified readings of fathers' responses to disappointment, and whether and how fathers attempt to repair their relationships with their different sons. If the intrapsychic and intersubjective coexist in a state of constant tension (Benjamin, 1995), it may be argued that the challenge for fathers of disappointing sons lies in negotiating between their own conscious and unconscious desires and recognising that the son has a separate subjectivity. Regarding desire, it is evident that most participants are highly invested in the mentor position and that fathers are vulnerable to their sons' negations of them as mentors. Close analysis of self and other positioning reveals the pervasive and often very subtle ways that fathers assert themselves on their sons, such that the mentor position is never really relinquished. Thus, if the father is invested in being the mentor, *can* he allow his son to remain different – to not be the mentee? In the face of difference, all but one of the fathers constructs solutions that preserve the mentor function. Either the son will take up his father's ways in the future, or the father reconstructs the son's differences as acceptably masculine such that the mentor-mentee arrangement can continue. Only Jake distances himself from mentoring but this coincides with his rejection of his own version of masculinity in favour of his son's. In a sense then, Jake and son are still able to bond on a road towards a similar 'new' masculinity. It is also evident that the prospect of utter difference evokes despair and so one sees fathers vacillate between asserting the self and reaching towards the other to articulate new versions of similarity.

Benjamin's (ibid.) theory emphasizes how recognition contributes to attachment: the discovered love of an external and different other with whom one also shares some similarity. Furthermore, Benjamin (2004) proposes that, because it nourishes attachment, recognition is ultimately a "pleasure" rather than simply a "chore" (p. 6). The above analyses do not necessarily contradict Benjamin's observations, as there is evidence of participants' taking up positions of tenderness, enjoyment, and pride as fathers of different sons. It seems however, that from the mentor position, accepting difference does constitute something of a chore, demanding both tolerance and self-restraint. According to Benjamin (1988), there is often an element of loss involved in recognizing the reality of the other who lies beyond one's fantasies. The above extracts show that participants struggle to relinquish fantasies regarding who their sons 'could be' and that the

mentor position incorporates fantasies of the competent father, as one who is admired by the son. Consequently, constructions of successful mentoring tend to include elements of projective identification, where the son is related to as an extension of the father rather than a separate source of subjectivity. It is important to note the tone of gratification inherent in these constructions of successful mentoring. The above findings suggest that fantasies regarding self as competent father and son as ‘real boy’ contribute to a hegemonic masculinity that legitimates the father’s assertions and which obscures the independent subjectivity of the son. This implies that interventions aimed at helping fathers to accept their sons’ differences would need to be cognisant of the potency of hegemonic fantasies that may be incorporated in the mentor position. For fathers, accepting difference may work against ‘common sense’ or ‘the real world’, and may also entail a forgoing of deep “wishes for glory” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 15): a combination that could galvanize significant conscious and unconscious protest.

Acknowledging damage presents as an important route out of hegemonic fathering. By acknowledging damage, fathers identify with their sons’ vulnerability to hegemonic masculinity and shift towards positions that displace mentoring and prioritise care. The position of the ‘uncertain’ father thus emerges as a counterpoint to the hegemonic mentor father depicted above. Because fathers don’t want to lose or damage their different sons, fathers take up reflective and less certain positions. From these positions, fathers are disposed to suspend or revise mentoring and to wrestle with the challenge of recognising their sons as separate sources of subjectivity. Clare (2001) argues that fathers can benefit their sons and their daughters but that these benefits partly hinge on fathers’ capacity for awareness of children “as individuals in their own right” (p. 189). Similarly, in a recent review of the literature, Benbassat and Priel (2014) point out that the father’s ability to reflect on his thoughts and feelings, as well as those of others, is beneficial to his relationships with his children. The findings of this research suggest that reflecting on experiences of difference and disappointment in one’s son represents an opportunity for fathers to take up self-reflecting positions of ‘uncertainty’ regarding self and other. From this position, the father engages in the vexing challenge of refashioning the mentor-mentee relationship via his understanding of the thoughts and feelings of his son. In the absence of the certainty of successful mentoring, fathers of disappointing sons may be encouraged to learn that ‘good fathering’ hinges on the task of trying to understand the son, of apprehending certainty in order to engage in intersubjectivity.

Various theorists have noted that, along with socio-economic changes, there has been a shift in men's involvement in family life (Lewis & Lamb, 2007) and a lack of certainty regarding just what the father's role might be (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2010). Against this backdrop, 'new fathering' has emerged as a reaction against orthodox discourses that promote distant, uninvolved versions of fathering. New fathering is sometimes portrayed as a type of 'male mothering' (Clare, 2001), where distinctions between maternal and paternal functions are erased. However, these research findings show that, whilst participants wish to enjoy close and supportive relationships with their sons, participants do not construct themselves as identical to the mother. Instead, participants routinely construct triangular mother-father-son relationships that distinguish the father as mentor to his son. Within this triadic arrangement, fathering is constituted by a prevailing imperative to guide the son towards acceptable versions of masculinity. Within successful mentoring, father and son 'bond' through instrumental activities and the mother is positioned as outsider to this bond. Thus, consistent with Finn and Henwood's (2009) findings, participants maintain traditional father positions even as they distinguish themselves from their own fathers, by dint of being involved and engaged with their sons. However, when mentoring is disappointed by difference, some of the participants join the mother by 'just' loving and accepting the son. Regarding this 'joining', some participants postpone their expectations in order to temporarily align themselves with the accepting mother, and some envy the mother but feel unable to match her bond with the different son. In both of these cases, there is the sense of the father waiting in a compromised father position until he can actually be the father by taking up his position as mentor. Perhaps it could be argued that, when stripped of the gratifications available in the mentor position, fatherhood, like motherhood, involves the 'chore' of self-forgetfulness (Hollway, 2007). Of course, as indicated in the above section, these patterns are applicable to a very specific sample of men and should not be read as the 'natural' way in which conflicted fathering presents. Fathers from different socio-economic and cultural contexts may simply not experience the 'challenges' identified by this sample. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, in Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes' (2012) study, participants identified the value of social fathers 'being there' to encourage and guide their social sons. As one of their participants comments: "he taught me how to be a man". This suggests that some of the patterns identified in this study may have some level of applicability in other contexts.

This thesis raises the implication that being the father is synonymous with mentoring. If one holds to the distinction Samuels' (1995) makes between mother and father *functions*, then the above findings suggest that the father function is distinguished by a prioritising of the child's capacity to be assertive and to engage in goal-directed behaviour. Certainly there is evidence that fathers are more likely than mothers to emphasize these attributes in their interactions with their children (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). But Samuels' (ibid.) point is that both women and men are able to take up mother and father functions despite a prevailing tendency to split them into stereotypical gender roles. For this sample of fathers, being a 'goodenough father' of the disappointing son seems to entail the capacity to straddle maternal and paternal functions, in some combination of 'just loving' and mentoring. However, because participants are so invested in mentoring, in its absence, participants seem to lack a clear identity as fathers. Consequently, 'goodenough fathering' of a different son involves restraint and tolerating a disappointment that is not entirely quelled even though, 'like' the mother, the father 'just' loves and supports his son.

Returning to the notion of maternal and paternal functions, it may be argued that mentoring – encouraging goal directed behaviour in one's child – can be seen as a legitimate version of parental love that is maintained by goodenough fathers of whatever sex. Benjamin (1988) makes the point that power is not only about control, and that its productive potential should also be acknowledged. Therefore, censorious interventions, where fathers are scolded for attempting to 'live through' their sons as mentors, could miss the notion that mentoring (as a father function) also represents a legitimate version of love for the child. On another note, the above analyses also show how fathers yearn to be close to their sons, and too critical an approach could miss the possibility that mentoring is turned to as a forum for a 'best friend' closeness that men may struggle to access in other contexts.

Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik (2012) argue that the struggle to negotiate between caring and competitive versions of masculinity is defining of contemporary middle class fathering. Does the good father push his son towards hegemonic masculinity or does he suspend these expectations and prioritise close and caring fathering? In this regard, it seems that interventions aimed at helping fathers of sons may need to be particularly adroit regarding the topics of effort and success, and the ways these two topics are implicated in varying and contradictory versions of masculinity. The above findings suggest that if fathers can't see effort in their sons, and if fathers

lose hope of their different sons finding acceptable versions of ‘success’, then even engaged and involved fathers are at risk of attacking the son, or of giving up, or of vacillating between these two negative responses. Consequently, those seeking to work with fathers of different and disappointing sons will need to attend to the prevailing issue of mentoring: how might the father survive as mentor even as he accepts his son as equivalent other?

12.3. Suggestions for future research

As indicated above, the size and distinctiveness of this sample mean that it is not possible to generalise the findings of this research project. It would be important to find out how fathers from different cultures and socio-economic communities understand issues of disappointment and difference in the son. What kinds of expectations are held by fathers from different contexts, particularly where the challenge of poverty exists? In these contexts, how does the good father respond to the disappointment of his expectations?

The methodology of ‘getting’ fathers to talk about disappointment is problematic. Being disappointed as a parent may represent an admission of failure and so issues of social desirability make the topic difficult to examine. The current project has addressed this issue by asking fathers to talk about ‘challenges’, looking out for intimations of disappointment and then opening up space in the interview for fathers to reflect further on these intimations. Nonetheless, future research that includes both fathers and sons could explore how sons experience their fathers as disappointed in them, as this could significantly enrich the analysis of self-other constructions within discourses of difference and disappointment.

Given that many of the fathers referred to the young age of their sons as a way of holding onto hope, there may be value in researching fathers of older sons, to explore their responses to what may be identified as initial or early disappointments. Alternatively, sustained contact with research participants, for example through longitudinal research, could yield important information on the ways fathers negotiate disappointment and difference over time. Although a ‘single take’ is warranted by the epistemology and ontology of the current study, repeat interviews could yield more information on the ways men might be changed by the experience of fathering a disappointing son. Again, the contributions of longitudinal research could be especially relevant since this study found that many of the research participants coped with

disappointment by postponing their hopes to an imagined future when their sons would be more ready or willing to take up their fathers' ways.

12.4. Final Comments

This thesis has focused on fathers' experiences and responses to disappointment and difference in their sons. In doing so the thesis foregrounds how men account for themselves within a problematic relational context. A psychosocial framework was used to read participants' responses, where a combination of psycho-discursive and psychoanalytic readings have rendered a fine-grained analysis of participants' self and other positioning within the context of difference and disappointment.

As indicated above, expectations of similarity within a mentoring relationship contribute to a hegemonic masculinity that subordinates difference. In response to the challenge of a different son, participants construct a line between pushing and encouraging in order to preserve mentoring whilst avoiding the threat of damaging the son or the relationship. In the face of negation, some fathers take up uncertain father positions where 'good' fathering entails the task of understanding the mind of the son and tolerating a fragmented, attenuated father position.

Bjornholt (2010) has argued that micro-level studies of family practices and intimate relations can illuminate macro-level social processes. By providing detailed analyses of the complexities involved in responding to the disappointing son – how fathers negotiate the dilemma of power and care – this research project adds to existing research on the ways fathers negotiate their primary relationships and the ways masculinities may be (re)produced within fathering.

REFERENCES

- Aldous, J., Mulligan, G.M., & Barnason, T. (1998). Fathering over time: What makes the difference? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 809 – 820.
- Alford, F. (1989). *Melanie Klein and critical social theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Allan, A. (2008). *Law and ethics in psychology: An international perspective*. Somerset West: Inter-Ed.
- Allred, P., & Gillies, V. (2002). Eliciting research accounts: Reproducing modern subjects In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop, & T. Miller (Eds.), *Ethics in qualitative research* (pp. 146-165). London: Sage.
- Amato, P. (1998). More than money? Men's contributions to their children's lives. In A. Booth, & A. Crouter (Eds.), *Men in families. When do they get involved? What difference do they make?* (pp. 241-277). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson, E., & McGuire, R. (2010). Inclusive masculinity theory and the gendered politics of men's rugby. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 19(3), 249-261.
- Antaki, C., Billig, M. G., Edwards, D., & Potter, J. A. (2003). Discourse analysis means doing analysis: A critique of six analytic shortcomings. *Discourse Analysis Online I*. Retrieved from: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html>,
- Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2005). Qualitative studies. In E. Babbie, & J. Mouton (Eds.), *The practice of social research* (pp. 269-311). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Barber, B.K. (1996). Parental psychological control: Revisiting a neglected construct. *Child Development*, 67, 3296-3319.

- Baumrind, D. (1991). Parenting styles and adolescent development. In J. Brooks, R. Lerner, & A. Peterson (Eds.), *The encyclopedia on adolescence* (pp. 758-772). New York: Garland.
- Bell, D. (2002). Modes of enquiry: Positioning the self. In P.R. Ulin, E.T Robinson, E.E. Tolley, & E.T. McNeill (Eds.), *Qualitative methods: A field guide for applied research in sexual and reproductive health* (pp. 15-17). Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International.
- Benbassat, N., & Priel, B. (2014). Why is fathers' reflective function important? *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038022>.
- Benjamin, J. (1988). *The bonds of love: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and the problem of domination*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Benjamin, J. (1995). *Like subjects, love objects: Essays on recognition and sexual difference*. London: Yale University Press.
- Benjamin, J. (1998). *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Benjamin, J. (1999). Recognition and destruction: An outline of intersubjectivity. In S.A. Mitchell, & L. Aron (Eds.), *Relational psychoanalysis: The emergence of a tradition* (pp. 181-210). New Jersey: The Analytic Press.
- Benjamin, J. (2000). Response to commentaries by Mitchell and by Butler. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 1*, 291-308.
- Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: An intersubjective view of thirdness. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 73*, 4-46.
- Benjamin, J. (2009). A relational psychoanalysis perspective on the necessity of acknowledging failure in order to restore the facilitating and containing features of the intersubjective relationship (the shared third). *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 90*, 441-450.
- Biddulph, S. (1997). *Raising Boys*. Sidney: Finch.
- Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., & Radley, A. (1988). *Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology idea of everyday thinking*. London: Sage.

- Billig, M. (1991). *Ideology, rhetoric and opinion*. London: Sage.
- Billig, M. (1997). The dialogic unconscious: Psychoanalysis, discursive psychology and the nature of repression. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36, 139-159.
- Billig, M. (1999). *Freudian repression: Conversation creating the unconscious*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bjornholt, M. (2010). Like father like son? The transmission of values, family practices and work-family adaptations to sons of work-sharing men. *Fathering*, 8(3), 276-299.
- Blackbeard, D., & Lindegger, G. (2007). Building a wall around themselves: exploring adolescent masculinity and abjection with photobiographical research. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 37, 25-46.
- Blackbeard, D. (2011). *Adolescent Boys Living with HIV*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: UKZN, Pietermaritzburg.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2) pp. 77-101.
- Braver, S.L., & O'Connell, D. (1998). *Divorced dads: Shattering the myths*. New York/NY: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Breckenridge, A. (1998). The allure of violence: Men, race and masculinity on the South African goldmines, 1900-1950. *Journal of South African Studies*, 24, 669-693.
- Brickell, C. (2005). Masculinity, performativity, and subversion: A sociological reappraisal. *Men and Masculinities*, 8(1), 24-43.
- Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in social research*. London: Routledge.
- Bryant, A.L., & Zimmerman, M.A. (2003). Role models and psychosocial outcomes among African American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18, 36-67.
- Burgess, A. (1997). *Fatherhood reclaimed: The making of the modern father*. London: Vermillion.

- Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an account of oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Byng-Hall, J. (1995). *Rewriting family scripts: Improvisations and systems change*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Catlett, B.S., & McKenry, P.C. (2004). Class-based masculinities: Divorce, fatherhood and the hegemonic ideal. *Fathering*, 2(2), 165-190.
- Chodorow, N. (1999). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (2nd ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chu, J.Y., Porche, M.V., & Tolman, D.L. (2005). The adolescent masculinity ideology in relationships scale: Development and validation of a new measure for boys. *Men and Masculinities*, 8(1), 93-115.
- Clare, A. (2001). *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis*. Arrow Books: London.
- Coakley, J. (2006). The good father: Parental expectations and youth sports. *Leisure Studies*, 25 (2), 153-163.
- Coley, R.L., & Chase-Landsdale, P.L. (2000). Welfare receipt, financial strain, and African-American adolescent functioning. *Social Service Review*, 74, 380-404.
- Coltrane, S., & Adams, M. (2001). Men's family work: Child-centered fathering and the sharing of domestic labor. In R. Hertz & N. Marshall (Eds.), *Work and family: Today's realities and tomorrow's visions* (pp. 72-99). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coltrane, S. (2007). Fathering: Paradoxes, contradictions and dilemmas. In M. Kimmel & M. Messner (Eds.), *Men's Lives*. (Seventh edition). (pp. 448-465). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Palo Alta: University of California Press.
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. (Second edition). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

- Craib, I. (1994). *The importance of disappointment*. London: Routledge.
- Craig, L. (2006). Does father care mean fathers share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with their children. *Gender and Society*, 20, 259-281.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Culp, R. E., Schadle, S., Robinson, L., & Culp, A. M. (2000). Relationships among paternal involvement and young children's perceived self-competence and behavioural problems. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9(1), 27-38.
- Daly, K. (1995). Reshaping fatherhood: Finding the models. In W. Marsiglio (Ed.), *Fatherhood: Contemporary theory, research and social policy* (pp. 21-40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Demetriou, D.Z. (2001). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. *Theory and Society*, 30 (3), 337-361.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dermott, E. (2008). *Intimate fatherhood*. London: Routledge.
- Diamond, M.J. (2004). The shaping of masculinity: Revisioning boys turning away from their mothers to construct male gender identity. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 85, 359-380.
- Diamond, M.J. (2007). *My father before me: How fathers and sons influence each other throughout their lives*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Donaldson, M. (1987). Love sex and strife. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 23 (2), 16-184.
- Doucet, A. (2006). *Do men mother? Fathering, care and domestic responsibility*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1995). *Men in perspective: Practice, power and identity*. London: Prentice Hall.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1996). Masculinity, power and identity. In M. Mac an Ghail (Ed.), *Understanding masculinities* (pp. 97-114). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1997). Jockeying for position the construction of masculine identities. *Discourse and Society*, 8, 203-217.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1999). Imagined futures: Young men's talk about fatherhood and domestic life. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 181-194.

Edley, N. (2001). Analysing Masculinity: Interpretive Repertoires, Ideological Dilemmas and Subject Positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (pp. 189-228). London: Sage.

Edley, N. (2006). Never the twain shall meet: A critical appraisal of the combination of discourse and psychoanalytic theory in studies of men and masculinity. *Sex Roles*, 55: 601-608.

Eggebeen, D. J., & Knoester, C. (2001). Does fatherhood matter for men? *Journal of Marriage and the Family - Minneapolis*, 63, 381-393.

Emanuel, E.J., Wendler, D., Killen, J., & Grady, C. (2004). What makes clinical research in developing countries ethical? The benchmarks of ethical research. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 7, 930-937.

Emerson, P., & Frosh, S. (2004). *Critical narrative analysis in psychology: A guide to practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Etchegoyen, A. (2005). Psychoanalytic ideas about fathers. In J. Trowell, & A. Etchegoyen (Eds.), *The importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic re-evaluation* (pp. 19-41). [Kindle DX Version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

Fakhry Davids, M. (2005). Fathers in the internal world: from boy to man to father. In J. Trowell, & A. Etchegoyen (Eds.), *The importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic re-evaluation* (pp. 66-91). [Kindle DX Version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

Fast, I. (1999). Aspects of core gender identity. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 9, 633-661.

- Finn, M., & Henwood, K. (2009). Exploring masculinities within men's identificatory imaginings of first-time fatherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 48*, 547-562.
- Frosh, S. (1994). *Sexual difference: Masculinity and psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.
- Frosh, S. (1997). Fathers ambivalence (too). In W. Hollway, & B. Featherstone (Eds.), *Mothering and ambivalence* (pp. 37-53). London: Routledge.
- Frosh, S. (1999). *The politics of psychoanalysis*. London: Palgrave.
- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2002). *Young masculinities: Understanding boys in contemporary society*. New York: Palgrave.
- Frosh, S. (2003). Psychosocial studies and psychology: Is a critical approach emerging? *Human Relations, 56*, 1547-1567.
- Frosh, S., & Baraitser, L. (2003). Thinking, recognition and otherness. *The Psychoanalytic Review, 90*, 771-789.
- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2003). Taking a stand: Using psychoanalysis to explore the positioning of subjects in discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*: 39-53.
- Frosh, S., & Emerson, P. D. (2005). Interpretation and over-interpretation: Disputing the meaning of texts. *Qualitative Research, 5*(3), 307-324.
- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2005). Struggling Towards manhood: Narratives of homophobia and fathering. *British Journal of Psychotherapy, 22*(1), 37-55.
- Frosh, S., & Baraitser, L. (2008). Psychoanalysis and psychosocial studies. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society, 13*(4), 346-365.
- Frosh, S., & Saville Young, L. (2008). Psychoanalytic approaches to qualitative psychology. In C. Willig, & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 109-126). London: Sage.
- Frosh, S., & Saville Young, L. (2010). The Psychoanalytic Psychosocial. In J. Mason, & A. Dale (Eds.), *Social Researching: New Perspectives on Method* (pp. 49-62). London: Sage.

- Frosh, S. (2010). *Psychoanalysis outside the clinic*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frosh, S. (2012). *A brief introduction to psychoanalytic theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2005). Styling men and masculinities: Interactional and identity aspects at work. *Language in Society*, 34(2), 163-184.
- Gibson, D., & Lindegaard, M. R. (2007). South African boys with plans for the future: why a focus on dominant discourses tells us only part of the story. In T. Shefer, K. Ratele, A. Strebel, N. Shabalala, & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From boys to men: Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society* (pp. 128-144). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Given, L.M. (Ed.) (2008). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods (vol. 2)* (pp. 697-698). Sage: Thousand Oaks.
- Goodman, J.H. (2005). Becoming an involved father of an infant. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynaecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 34, 2, 190-200.
- Gottman, J. (1994). *Why marriages succeed or fail*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gottzen, L. (2011). Involved fatherhood? Exploring the educational work of middle-class men. *Gender and Education*, 23(5), 619-634.
- Gottzen, L., & Kremer-Sadlik, T. (2012). Fatherhood and youth sports: A balancing act between care and expectations. *Gender and Society*, 26(4), 639-664.
- Gough, B. (2004). Psychoanalysis as a resource for understanding emotional ruptures in the text: The case of defensive masculinities. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 43, 245-267.
- Gough, B. (2009). A psycho-discursive approach to analysing qualitative interview data, with reference to a father-son relationship. *Qualitative Research*, 9, 527-545.
- Gough, B., & Madill, A. (2012). Subjectivity in psychological science: From problem to prospect. *Psychological Methods*, 17(3), 374-384.

- Greenson, R.R. (1968). Disidentifying from mother – its special importance for the boy. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 49, 370-374.
- Griswold, R.L. (1993). *Fatherhood in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Guenther, K.M. (2009). The politics of names: Rethinking the methodological and ethical significance of naming people, organizations and places. *Qualitative Research*, 9, 411-421.
- Guma, M., & Henda, N. (2004). The socio-cultural context of child abuse: A betrayal of trust. In L. Richter & A. Dawes & C. Higson-Smith (Eds.), *Sexual abuse of young children in southern Africa* (pp. 95-109). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Hakoama, M., & Ready, B.S. (2011). Fathering quality, father-child relationship, and child's developmental outcomes. *The American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Journal*, 15, 1-24.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1-18). London: Sage.
- Harrington, M. (2006). Sport and leisure as contexts for fathering in Australian families. *Leisure Studies*, 25, 165-183.
- Harris, K.M., Furstenberg Jr. F.F. & Kramer, J. K. (1998). Paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families: The influence of fathers over the life course. *Demography*, 35, 201-16.
- Haywood, C., & Mac an Ghail, M. (2003). *Men and masculinities: Theory, research and social practice*. Open University Press: Buckingham.
- Hearn, J. (1999). A crisis in masculinity, or new agendas for men? In S. Walby (Ed.), *New agendas for women* (pp. 148-169). Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke.
- Hearn, J. (2004). From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Feminist Theory*, 5(1), 49-72.
- Heath, D. H. (1994). The impact of delayed fatherhood on the father-child relationship. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 155(4), 511-530.

Henwood, K., & Procter, J. (2003). The 'good father': Reading men's accounts of paternal involvement during the transition to first-time fatherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42, 335-337.

Hinshelwood, R.D. (1991). *Dictionary of Kleinian thought*. London: Free Association Books.

Hird, M.J. (2003). Vacant wombs: Feminist challenges to psychoanalytic theories of childless women. *Feminist Review*, 75, 5-19.

Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp. 227-263). London: Routledge.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently*. London: Sage.

Hollway, W. (2006). Paradox in the pursuit of a critical theorization of the development of self in family relationships. *Theory and Psychology*, 16, 465-482.

Hollway, W. (2007). *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity*. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com

Hollway, W. (2011). Through discursive psychology to a psycho-social approach. In Bozatzis, Nikos, Dragonas, Thaleia (Eds.), *Social psychology: the turn to discourse* (pp. 209-240). Athens: Metaixmio.

Hollway, W. (2012). Psychoanalytically informed knowing in qualitative social research. British Sociological Association Annual Conference: Leeds. Retrieved from <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1w6ig/BSAAnnualConference/resources/198.htm>

Hosegood, V., & Madhavan, S. (2012). Understanding fatherhood and father involvement in South Africa: Insights from surveys and population cohorts. *Fathering*, 10 (3) Fall, 257-273.

Jacobson, E. (1946). The effect of disappointment on ego and superego formation in normal and depressive development. *Psychoanalytic Revue*, 33, 129-147.

Jarrett, R. (1994). Living poor: Family life among single-parent, African-American women. *Social Problems*, 41, 30-49.

- Jefferson, T. (2002). Subordinating hegemonic masculinity. *Theoretical Criminology*, 6 (1), 63-88.
- Jenkins, R. (2009). Nonresident fathers' leisure with their children. *Leisure Sciences*, 31, 255-271.
- Johnson, D.J. (1997). Fathers' presence matters: A review of literature. NCOFF Review.
- Jones, K. (2004). Assessing psychological separation and academic performance in nonresident-father and resident-father adolescent boys. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21, 333-354. DOI: 10.1023/B:CASW.0000035220.56477.19
- Joseph, L., & Lindegger, G. (2007). The social construction of masculinity in visually impaired adolescent boys. *Psychology in Society*, 35, 73-90.
- Kay, T. (2007). Fathering through Sport. *World Leisure Research Papers*, 2, 69-82.
- Kelly, K. (2004). From encounter to text: Data gathering in interpretive research. In M. Terre Blanche, & K. Durheim (Eds.), *Research in practice* (pp. 379-397). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Kimmel, M. S. (1990). Baseball and the reconstitution of American masculinity: 1880 – 1920. In M.A. Messner & D.F. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, men, and the gender order: Critical feminist perspectives* (pp. 55-67). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Klein, M. (1955). The psychoanalytic play technique. In M. Klein (Ed., 1975). *Envy and gratitude and other works*. New York: Delta.
- Klein, M. (1957). Envy and gratitude. In M. Klein (Ed., 1975), *Envy and gratitude and other works*. New York: Delta
- Kremer-Sadlik, T., Izquierdo, C., & Fatigante, M. (2010). Making meaning of everyday practices: Parents' attitudes towards children's extracurricular activities in the United States and in Italy. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 41, 35-54.

Kremer-Sadlik, T., & Gutierrez, K. (2013). *Homework and Recreation*. In E. Ochs & T. Kremer-Sadlik, (Eds.), *Fast forward Family: Home, Work and relationships in Middle-Class America* (pp. 130-150). Berkeley: University of California Press

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Lamb, M.E. (1987). Introduction: The Emergent American Father. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *The Father Role: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (pp. 1-26). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lamb, M.E. (2000). The history of research on father involvement: An overview. *Marriage and Family Review*, 29, 2342.

Lamb, M.E., & Tamis-Lemonda, C.S. (2004). Fathers' role in child development. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (4th ed.) (pp. 1-31). New York: Wiley.

Lamb, M.E. (Ed.) (2004). *The Role of the Father in Child Development* (4th ed.). New York: Wiley.

Lamb, M.E., & Lewis, C. (2004). The development and significance of father-child relationships in two-parent families. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development*. (4th ed.) (pp. 272-307). New York: Wiley.

Lamb, M.E. (Ed.) (2010). *The role of the father in child development*. (5th ed.). New York: Wiley.

Lamb, M.E., Tamis-Lemonda, C. (2010). The role of the father: an introduction. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development*. (5th ed.). (pp 1-31). New York: Wiley.

Langa, M. (2011). *Becoming a man: Exploring multiple voices of masculinity amongst a group of young adolescent boys in Alexandra Township, South Africa*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Witwatersrand.

Langford, W., Lewis, C., Solomon, Y., & Warin, J. (2001). *Family understandings: Closeness, authority and independence in families with teenagers*. London: Family Policy Studies Centre.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

La Rossa, R. (1988). Fatherhood and social change. *Family Relations*, 37, 451-457.

Larson, R.W., Richards, M.H., Monet, G., & Holmbeck, G. (1996). Changes in adolescents' daily interactions with their families from ages 10 to 18: Disengagement and transformation. *Developmental Psychology*, 32, 744 – 754.

Lewis, C. (2000). *A man's place: Fathers and families in the UK*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lewis, C., & Lamb, M.E. (2007). *Understanding fatherhood: A review of recent research*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Retrieved from www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/

Lindegger, G., & Quayle, M. (2009). Masculinity and HIV/AIDS. In P. Rohleder, L. Swartz, S.C. Kalichman, & L.C. Simbayi (Eds.), *HIV/AIDS in South Africa 25 Years On: Psychosocial Perspectives* (pp. 41-54). New York, NY: Springer.

Loewald, H. (1951). The ego and reality. In *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (pp. 3-20). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Lundberg, S., & Rose, E. (2004). Investments in sons and daughters: Evidence from the consumer expenditure survey. In A. Kalil, & T. De Leire (Eds.), *Family investments in children's potential: Resources and parenting behaviours that promote success* (pp. 163-180). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Lupton, D., & Barclay, L. (1997). *Constructing fatherhood: Discourses and experiences*. London: Sage.

Marcus, R.F., & Betzer, P.D. (1996). Attachment and antisocial behaviour in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 16, 229-248.

Mahler, M.S., & Gosliner, B.J. (1955). On symbiotic child psychosis: Genetic, dynamic and restitutive processes. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 10, 195-212.

Mahler, M.S., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (1975). *The psychoanalytic birth of the human infant: Symbiosis and individuation*. New York: Basic Books.

Mandara, J., & Murray, C. B. (2006). Father's absence and African American drug use. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 46(1/2), 1-12.

Marsiglio, W., & Day, R. (1997). Social fatherhood and paternal involvement: Conceptual, data, and policymaking issues. *Report of the Working Group on Conceptualising Male Parenting. Report prepared and presented for the NICHD Conference on Fathering and Male Fertility: Improving Data and Research*, Bethesda, Maryland.

Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R.D., & Lamb, M.E. (2000). Scholarship on fatherhood in the 1990's and beyond. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 1173-1191.

Marsiglio, W. (2004). When stepfathers claim stepchildren: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66, 22-39.

Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action*. (pp. 225-241). London: Sage.

Mboya, M., & Nesengani, R. (1999). Migrant labour in South Africa: A comparative analysis of the academic achievement of father-present and father-absent adolescents. *Adolescence*, 34, 763-767.

McMahon, A. (1999). *Taking care of men: Sexual politics in the public mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McNeill, T. (2004). Fathers' experience of parenting a child with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(4), 526-545.

Messner, M. (1992). Boyhood, organized sports, and the construction of masculinities. In M.S. Kimmel & M.A. Messner (Eds.), *Men's Lives* (2nd ed.) (pp. 161 – 176). New York: Macmillan.

Messner, M. (2009). *It's all for the kids: Gender, families and youth sports*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Miedzian, M. (1992). Father hunger: Why soup kitchen fathers are not good enough. In K. Hagen (Ed.), *Women Respond to the Men's Movement: A feminist collection* (pp. 127-132). San Francisco: Harper.
- Miller-Day, M., & Lee, J.W. (2001). Communicating disappointment: The viewpoint of sons and daughters. *The Journal of Family Communication, 1*(2), 111-131.
- Miller, M. (1995). An intergenerational case-study of suicidal tradition and mother-daughter communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 23*, 247-270.
- Mitchell, J. (1975). *Psychoanalysis and feminism*. New York: Pelican Books.
- Mitchell, S.A. (1998). The analyst's knowledge and authority. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 67*(1), 1-31.
- Mitchell, S.A. (2000). *Relationality: From attachment to intersubjectivity*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Morman, M.T., & Floyd, K. (2002). A "changing culture of fatherhood": Effects on affectionate communication, closeness, and satisfaction in men's relationships with their fathers and their sons. *Western Journal of Communication, 66*, 395-411.
- Morman, M.T., & Floyd, K. (2006). Good fathering: Father and son perceptions of what it means to be a good father. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers, 4* (2), 113-136.
- Morrell, R. (2001). *Changing men in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.
- Morrell, R. (2006). Fathers, fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa. In R. Morrell, & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 13-25). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., & Lindegger, G. (2012). Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa: Culture, power and gender politics. *Men and Masculinities, 15*(1), 11-30.
- Mott, F. (1994). Sons, daughters and fathers' absence: Differentials in father-leaving probabilities and in-home environments. *Journal of Family Issues, 15*, 97-128.

- Ngobeni, S. (2006). Representations of fatherhood in black US film and how this relates to parenting in South Africa. In R. Morrell, & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 147-154). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Nydegger, C.N., & Mitteness, L. (1991). Fathers and their adult sons and daughters. In S.K. Pfeifer, & M.B. Sussman (Eds.), *Families: Intergenerational and generational connections* (pp. 249-262). *Marriage and Family Review*, Special Issue 16.
- O'Brien, M., & Shemlit (2003). *Working fathers: Earning and caring*. London: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Ogden, T. (1999). 'The music of what happens' in poetry and psychoanalysis. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 80, 979-994.
- Palkowitz, R., Copes, M.A., & Woolfolk, T.N. (2001). "It's like...you discover a new sense of being". Involved fathering as an evoker of adult development. *Men and Masculinities*, 4, 49-69.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (2005a). Lacanian discourse analysis in psychology: Seven theoretical elements. *Theory and Psychology*, 15, 163-182.
- Parker, I. (2005b). *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Pease, B. (2000). Beyond the father wound: Memory-work and the deconstruction of the father-son Relationship. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 21 (1), 9-15.
- Peck, B., & Lillibridge, J. (2005). Normalization behaviours of rural fathers living with chronically-ill children: An Australian experience. *Journal of Child Health Care*, 9 (1), 31-45.
- Plantin, L. (2007). Different lasses, different fathers? *Community, Work and Family*, 10(1), 93-110.
- Plantin, L., Mansson, S., & Kearney, J. (2003). Talking and doing fatherhood: On fatherhood and masculinity in Sweden and England. *Fathering*, 1(1), 3-26.

Pleck, E.H., & Pleck, J.H. (1997). Fatherhood ideals in the United States: Historical dimensions. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed.) (pp. 33-48; 314-318). New York: Wiley.

Pleck, J. H. (1997). Paternal involvement: levels, sources and consequences. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed.) (pp. 63-103). New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Pleck, J.H., & Masciadrelli, B.P. (2004). Paternal involvement by US resident fathers: Levels, sources and consequences. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. (4th ed.) (pp. 222-271). New York: Wiley.

Pleck, J.H. (2010). Paternal Involvement: Revised conceptualization and theoretical linkages with child outcomes. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development*. (5th ed.) (pp. 67-107). New York: Wiley.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1994). Analysing discourse. In A. Bryman & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data* (pp. 47-66). London: Routledge.

Ramphela, M., & Richter, L. Migrancy, family dissolution and fatherhood. In L. Richter, & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 73-82). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Ratele, K., Shefer, T., & Clowes, L. (2012). Talking South African fathers: a critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 42(4), 553-563.

Rabe, M. (2007). My children, your children, our children. *South African Review of Sociology*, 38, 161-175.

Redman, P. (2001). The discipline of love: Negotiation and regulation in boys' performance of a romance-based heterosexual masculinity, *Sexualities*, 4(2), 186-200.

- Rice, K.G. (1990). Attachment in adolescence: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 19, 511-538.
- Richards, B. (1990). Masculinity, identification and political culture. In J. Hearn, & D.J. Morgan (Eds.), *Men. Masculinities and social theory* (pp. 160-169). London: UNWIN HYMAN.
- Richter, L., & Morrell, R. (Eds.). (2006). *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Richter, L. (2006). The importance of fathering for children. In L. Richter, & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 53-72). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Richter, L., & Smith, W. (2006). Children's views of fathers. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 155-172). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. California: Sage.
- Rosenwald, G.C. (1988). A theory of multiple case research. *Journal of Personality*, 56, 239-264.
- Saltzburg, S. (2004). Learning that an adolescent child is gay or lesbian: The parent experience. *Social Work*, 49(1), 109-118.
- Samuels, A. (1989). *The plural psyche: Personality, morality and the father*. London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Samuels, A. (1995). The good-enough father of whatever sex. *Feminism and Psychology*, 5(4), 511-530.
- Sandberg, L. (2011). *Getting intimate: A feminist analysis of old age, masculinity and sexuality*. Linköping: TEMA, Linköping University.
- Saville Young, L. J. (2006). *'Doing brother' and the construction of masculinities: A psychosocial study*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Department of Psychology, Birkbeck College, University of London.

- Saville Young, L. (2009). Not Knowing: Towards an ethics for employing psychoanalysis in psychosocial research. *Psycho-Analytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, 17 (2), 21-46.
- Schafer, R. (1999). Disappointment and disappointedness. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 80, 1093-1103.
- Schwalbe, M., & Wolkomir, M.L. (2001). The masculine self as a problem and resource in interview studies with men. *Men and Masculinities*, 4(1), 90-103.
- Segal, H. (1973). *Introduction to the work of Melanie Klein*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Segal, L. (1990). *Slow motion: Changing masculinities changing men*. London: Virago.
- Seidler, V. J. (2006). *Young men and masculinities: Global cultures and intimate lives*. London: Zed Books.
- Silverberg, S. B. (1996). Parents' well-being at their children's transition to adolescence. In C.D. Ryff, & M.M. Seltzer (Eds.), *The parental experience in mid-life*. (pp. 215-254). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. London: Sage.
- Singer, A.T.B., & Weinstein, R.S. (2000). Differential parental treatment predicts achievement and self-perceptions in two cultural contexts. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14, 491-509.
- Singh, I. (2003). Boys will be boys: Fathers' perspectives on ADHD symptoms, diagnosis, and drug treatment. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 11, 308-316.
- Smith, J. A. (2000). Introduction. In J.A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. (pp. 1-3). London: Sage.
- Snarey, J. (1993). *How fathers care for the next generation: A four-decade study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Solnit, A., & Stark, M. (1961). Mourning the birth of a defective child. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 16, 523-527.

Speer, S. (2001). Reconsidering the concept of hegemonic masculinity: Discourse psychology, conversation analysis and participants' orientations. *Feminism and Psychology, 11*(1), 107-135.

Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., & O'Connor, W. (2003). Analysis: Practices, principles and processes. In J. Ritchie, & J. Lewis, (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. (pp. 199-218). London: Sage.

St. Clair, M. (2004). *Object relations and self psychology: An introduction*. Belmont CA: Thompson Learning.

Stern, D. N. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York/NY: Basic Books.

Stoller, R. (1964). A contribution to the study of gender identity. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 45*, 220-226.

Stoller, R. (1965). The sense of maleness. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 34*, 207-218.

Stoller, R. (1968). *Sex and gender: The development of masculinity and femininity (vol. 1)*. London: Hogarth Press.

Stopford, A. (2002). Researching postcolonial subjectivities: The application of relational (postclassical) psychoanalysis to research psychology. *Critical Psychology, 10*, 13-35.

Tamis-LeMonda, C., & Cabrera, N. (1999). Perspectives on father involvement: Research and Policy. *Society for research in child development, vol xiii, no. 2*.

Target, M., & Fonagy, P. (2005). Fathers in modern psychoanalysis and in society: The role of the father and child development. In J. Trowell, & A. Etchegoyen (Eds.), *The importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic re-evaluation* (pp. 41-66). [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amaon.com.

Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Kelly, K. (2006). First steps in qualitative research. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.), *Research in Practice* (p. 320-344). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

- Timlin-Scalera, R.M., Ponterotto, J.G., Blumberg, F.C., & Jackson, M.A. (2003). A grounded theory study of help-seeking behaviours among white male high-school students. *Journal of Counselling Psychology, 50*(3), 339-350.
- Townsend, N. (2002). Cultural contexts of father involvement. In C. Tamis-LeMonda & N. Cabrera (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 249-277). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Townsend, S.S. (2003). Fatherhood: A judicial perspective – unmarried fathers and the changing role of the family court. *Family Court Review Special Issue: Separated and Unmarried fathers and the courts, 41*, 354-361.
- Trowell, J. (2005). Introduction. In J. Trowell, & A. Etchegoyen (Eds.), *The importance of fathers: A psychoanalytic re-evaluation*. (pp 1-18) [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Ulin, P.R., Robinson, E.T., Tolley, E.E., & McNeill, E.T. (2002). *Qualitative methods: A field guide for applied research in sexual and reproductive health*. Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International.
- Veneziano, R.A., & Rohner, R.P. (1998). Perceived paternal acceptance, paternal involvement, and youths' psychological adjustment in a rural, biracial southern community. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60*, 335-343.
- Veneziano, R. A. (2000). Perceived paternal and maternal acceptance and rural African American and European American youths' psychological adjustment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(1), 123-132.
- Warin, J., Solomon, Y., Lewis, C., & Langford, W. (1999). *Fathers, work and family life*. London: Family Policy Studies Centre for Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Webb, R. E., & Damiluk, J. C. (1999). The end of the line: Infertile men's experiences of being unable to produce a child. *Men and Masculinities, 2*(1), 6-25.

- Wetherell, M., & Potter, J. (1988). Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 168-183). Newbury Park CA: Sage.
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*, 9, 387-412.
- Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices. *Feminism and Psychology*, 9(3), 335-356.
- Wetherell, M. (2003). Paranoia, ambivalence and discursive practices: Concepts of position and positioning in psychoanalysis and discursive psychology. In R. Harre, & F. Moghaddam (Eds.), *The self and others: Positioning individuals and groups in personal, political and cultural contexts* (pp. 99-120). Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
- Wetherell, M. (2008). Subjectivity or psycho-discursive practices? Investigating complex intersectional identities. *Subjectivity*, 22, 73-81.
- White, N. R. (1994). About fathers: Masculinity and the social construction of fatherhood. *Journal of Sociology*, 30, (2), 119-131.
- Whitehead, S.M. (2002). *Men and masculinities: Key themes and new directions*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Whitehead, A. (2005). Man to man violence: How masculinity may work as a dynamic risk factor. *The Howard Journal*, 44(4), 411-420.
- Williams, S. (2008). What is fatherhood? Searching for the reflexive father. *Sociology*, 42(3), 487-502.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wood, J.J., & Repetti, R.L. (2004). What gets dad involved? A longitudinal study of change in parental child caregiving involvement. *Journal of Family Psychology, 1*, 237-249.

Worthman, S. (2001). *Narratives in action*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Yang, J. (2000). Fathering and children's sex-role orientation in Korea. *Adolescence, 35*, 731-745.

Yeung, W.J., Sandberg, J.F., Davis-Kean, P.E., & Hofferth, S.L. (1999). *Children's time with fathers in intact families*. Mimeo: University of Michigan.

Zeelenberg, M., van Dijk, W., Manstead, A., & van der Pligt, J. (2000). On bad decisions and disconfirmed expectancies: The psychology of regret and disappointment. *Cognition and Emotion, 14*(4), 521-541.

APPENDIX 1: Copy of Informed Consent Document

PhD Research Project

Fathers' experiences of challenges raising sons

Many thanks for being open to participate in this study. I am a registered Counselling Psychologist and a PhD student at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg). As indicated in my email to you, I am interested in talking to fathers about their experiences of raising a son, with a particular focus on some of the perhaps unexpected challenges and difficulties that fathers may have faced along the way.

I would like to meet with you for an interview lasting about an hour. The interview takes the form of an informal conversation. I will need to record the interview for research purposes. Please note, however, that your participation will remain confidential throughout. When referring to any part of the interview, I will use a pseudonym for you as well as for any other people or places that we end up discussing so as to ensure that everyone mentioned is protected from identification. Careful steps will be taken to ensure that it will be very difficult for anyone (either family members or the general public) to identify you or themselves from interview excerpts.

During the interview, you will be invited to reflect on your experiences as a father, of your own experiences as a son, and of your wife as co-parent. Talking about our families can leave us feeling emotional. If, at any stage, you feel you don't want to answer a particular question, you are perfectly entitled not to. In addition, you are free to withdraw from the research at any stage. Should you find any aspect of our discussions distressing, I will do my best to arrange the necessary assistance for you to deal with your distress.

After our conversation, I will transcribe the contents of the interview and I will be happy to email this transcript to you. Only I and, in some instances, my supervisor will listen to the tape or read the transcripts. The study is being supervised by Professor Graham Lindegger, a registered Clinical Psychologist. Professor Lindegger may be contacted should you wish to discuss aspects of the research process with him (contact details below). Parts of the interview may be referred to or may appear verbatim in the final document. This document will be bound and stored at one of the university libraries. If you'd like me to send you a copy, I will be happy to do so.

I will be contacting you within the next few days to arrange a suitable day, time, and venue for the interview. Please note that you are under no obligation to go ahead with the interview if you decide not to. If you have any further questions, either before or after the interview, you are most welcome to contact me.

With sincere appreciation

Rob Pluke

Graham Lindegger

(033-3455962 or pluke@polka.co.za)

(033-2605853 or Lindegger@ukzn.ac.za)

I (full name of participant).....hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project, and I consent to participating in the study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I wish to

.....

.....

SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX 2: Interview Prompts

- Tell me about your son
- Have you ever felt worried or frustrated about your son's choices or actions? If so, how have you dealt with this?
- So would you say that you came into fatherhood with any expectations for yourself or your son?
- Have your expectations changed in any ways over the years?
- How did/do your experiences as a son affect the way you father your own son?
- Do you ever feel frustrated by your son's choices?
- Have you ever felt disappointed in any of your son's choices or actions and if so, what have you done with this?
- What does, or what should a father do if he feels like his son is going about things the wrong way?
- How does your wife react at these times? Is there something different in what the two of you do?
- What would you say has been your best moment as father to your son?
- What would you say has been your worst moment as father to your son?

APPENDIX 3: Thematic Analysis Index

Theme One: Constructions of similarity and difference between father and son

Subtheme 1: Similarity, difference and understanding

John

Lines 3-12: challenge accounted for on basis of difference. Difference associated with difficulty understanding the son.

Lines 55-60: Father and son have different 'personalities'. Positions self as an independent, 'make a plan' man.

Scott

Lines 43-45: Difficulty accepting based on difference from the father's childhood.

Lines 257-274: Father struggles to understand or connect with his different son. Positions self as incapable of understanding different son.

Line 112: Scott reflects on the notion that he and his son 'do have some similarities'.

Brian

Lines 10-13: Easier child linked to similarity and similarity linked to understanding. Different son positioned as 'very alternative'.

Lines 70-74: Similarity expected between father and sons.

Douglas

Lines 36-43: Understanding the son on the basis of similarity.

Brendan

Lines 207-210: Father and son similar regarding competitiveness

Jake

Line 32: Son very different to 'what I was like'. Father doesn't think he 'had anything to do' with his son's good qualities.

Angus

Lines 90-121: Father empathises with son who is like himself. Father says 'my heart has bled for him', based on similarity of experience.

Subtheme 2: Similarity, difference and sport

David

Lines 85-108: Expectation of similarity as 'first expectation', son as the 'opposite' due to sports performances.

Lines 153-169: Disappointment over difference is managed, hopes for future sporting success are preserved

Nick

Lines 145-152: Difference in sports performance as a potential 'issue'. Disappointment is managed by Nick by separating the father position from his position as competent man (via sport)

Angus

Lines 55-67: Similarity in sports ability means that Angus is not entitled to expect better from his son.

Brendan

Lines 156-162: Father competent sportsman, son not competent and without interest.

Subtheme 3: Negotiating different 'versions of the world'

Brendan

Lines 19-27: Brendan claims competitive attitude. Different son causes Brendan to review his competitive attitude, but Brendan retains investment in competitive male position. Split between accepting father position and self-position as competitive man.

Brian

Lines 179-189: Takes up position of 'respect' towards different son as an antidote to disappointment.

Lines 88-98: Older son's sporting interest allows for automatic fathering, whereas younger son's difference leaves Brian wondering whether 'too much focus' is placed on the older son.

Scott

Lines 220-253: Concerns over favoritism due to similarity and difference. Negotiating disappointment over difference and the ability to 'connect' lead to the experience of success as the father. Difference requires more conscious, effortful fathering.

Jake

Lines 271-289: Negotiating difference in the son coincides with evolution in the father as man. Relinquishing self-investments in hegemonic masculinity as he joins son's new masculinity

Lines 253-256: Sense of relief as father relinquishes notion that his son must be a good sportsman.

Douglas

Lines 120-153: Similarity and understanding/closeness. Difference related to 'on a different level'.

Subtheme 4: Sameness

Douglas

Lines 8-13: Similar son as extension of the father. Implicit understanding based on sameness.

Lines 134-140: Identification with sameness coincides with gender hierarchy. Facilitates automatic fathering.

Lines 245-251: Disappointment is managed by framing son's ways as similar to the father.

Lines 141-146: Difference constructed as a challenge. Father must go beyond the ordinary. Shifts to position of 'respect' that denotes intersubjective distance.

Lines 212-220: Possible difference constructed as sameness – a 'strong trait'.

Angus

Lines: Similarity leads to understanding and compassion from the father.

Nick

Lines 42-45: Nick and his son enjoy spending time together pursuing similar interests.

Brendan

Lines 337-338: Expectations for success based on sameness as equally competitive.

Theme Two: Making an effort

Subtheme 1: Falling short

Quinton

Lines 202-205: Self investment as 'fiercely competitive'

Lines 240-243: Looking for similarity in the son, who still falls short of the father's mark.

Lines 190-191: Don't do things in a half-hearted fashion.

Angus

Lines 37-42: Disappointment over son's lack of aggression. Father withdraws and then returns in an ambivalent supportive/critical position.

Jake

Lines 55-72: Desire to make son 'tougher', reconciled by shift to new father position – 'that doesn't matter'.

Lines 245-247: Wanting son to be more of a 'rugger bugger'.

Douglas

Lines 178-179: Wanting the son to be 'more ambitious' and 'more responsible'.

Scott

Lines 29-30: Son 'obsessed' with computers.

Brendan

Line 219: Different son does not have the 'killer instinct'.

Subtheme 2: Good fathering and the 'big rule' of effort

Angus

Lines 201-222: Moral of effort is espoused, but it must be separated from success. Ambivalence and defense against wanting success.

Nick

Lines 257-265: Father and mother stand united regarding the moral of effort. Linked to commitment and discipline, but distinguished from success.

Lines 285-307: Commitment given priority over achievement. Recognising son's 'limitations' and prioritizing his 'happiness'.

Scott

Lines 15-39: Father and son differ regarding effort. Father manages disappointment by questioning the 'big rule' of effort. This makes it possible to accept son.

Lines 40-56: Lack of effort as a problem. Managed by constructing a future where the son's ways can lead to success that the father can recognize

Quinton

Lines 10-18: Quinton attunes to the fact that his son 'likes to succeed' and is 'quite happy to put in the hours'. This distinguishes his son from his peers.

Lines 172-182: Children must be prepared to compete. Children should not be protected from competition. Quinton defends against the notion that he 'has got it wrong in the sense that it's been too competitive'.

John

Lines 642-644: Disappointment that son won't put in 'whole effort'.

Brendan

Lines 432-434: Making an effort as an antidote to disappointment, also as a way of ensuring achievement.

Subtheme 3: Effort and Potential

John

Lines 15-20: Father's disappointment accounted for by indexing gap between effort and potential.

Lines 664-613: Father galvanized by fantasy of who the son could be and what he could achieve if he put in effort.

Lines 671-676: Disappointment over lack of effort managed by postponing the problem. The notion that time will solve disappointment.

Brian

Lines 25-32: Son 'very laid back' and lacking the 'killer instinct' despite potential. Lacking 'drive' which is a concern to the father.

Lines 40-50: Brian positions son as straddling 'non-sporting computer faction' and 'sporting faction' at school. The son is 'caught between the two' which gives the father scope to pull his son towards desirable orientations.

Lines 51-65: Brian struggles to understand that his son 'hasn't got that competitive spirit...yet he's a big guy...capable'.

Lines 240-258: Brian looks forward to his son's high school phase, where he will be able to be more 'severe' as the father in pushing his son towards more acceptable competitive/driven attitudes.

Lines 88-104: Brian shifts to more self-conscious fathering of his different son, but defends against the notion that his younger son is 'soft'. Instead he is 'every bit as hard' as his sporting older brother.

Lines 128-135: Brian defends against 'loving' and takes up mentor position instead, such that mentoring is distinguished from 'loving'.

Lines 210-217: Brian's best moment as the father involves getting his son to 'realize' the necessity of going through 'a bit of pain' to enjoy something that's 'worthwhile'.

Nick

Lines 216-217: Frustration at disparity between effort and potential.

Brendan

Lines 7-9: Frustration regarding disparity between effort and potential.

Lines 33-34: Father can see what his sons can do, but they can't see it.

Theme three: Mentoring

Subtheme 1: Bonding

Brendan

Lines 33-45: Narrative of absent fathering leads to the statement: 'I've always wanted to be the father my father wasn't'.

Lines 129-131; 133-138: Father and son bond over sports.

Lines 572-586: Father and son bond through mountain biking – 'it was awesome'

David

Lines 26-41: Narrative of absent and authoritarian fathering contrasted with David's relationship with his son, which is defined by mentoring and terms such as 'friend' and 'encourage'.

Lines 238-248: Mentoring, where the son 'learns' and 'gets it' defined as best moment for David as father.

Quinton

Lines 54-64: Father absence linked to lack of mentoring through sports. Quinton defines his own involved, mentoring style of fathering as a contrast to this.

Lines 6-18: Father and son bond through time at the Cricket nets and on the Hockey field. The son is like the father because he has inherited his father's 'passion' for sports.

Lines 246-256: Quinton can 'be there' for his son as the mentor father. Quinton identifies with his son's 'desire to do well' and he displaces disappointment onto the son.

John

Lines 184-195: Father wants closeness with the son through mentoring.

Lines 282-292: Good fathering constructed as mentoring, giving the son 'your time' as opposed to being the 'absent' father.

Nick

Lines 76-87: The good father helps his son to achieve through mentoring (pushing).

Craig

Lines 62-67: Expectation of closeness through mentoring.

Douglas

Lines 270-272: Foregrounds the 'emotional attachment' that he and his son share through mentoring. Father positioned as the son's 'hero'.

Lines 279-284: Bond between father and son is idealized – 'unconditional love'.

Lines 318-321: The good father exposes his son to opportunities via mentoring.

Line 382: The son needs to be 'built' by his father.

Angus

Lines 330-352: Best moment based on shared father-son activity.

Subtheme 2: Frustrated mentoring

John

Lines 195-207: John's experience of father absence accounts for his resolve to give his sons what he never had.

Lines 338-349: John positions himself as the resourceful, needless man, but imagines how his sons could benefit from his mentoring

Lines 30-36: John positions himself as the frustrated father and accounts for this by indexing the opportunities he gives his son only to find that the son does not take these opportunities up.

Lines 37-47: John attempts to get his son to understand the father's values, but the son lacks the 'desire to take it'. John is left 'fighting' his son 'all the time'.

Lines 130-137: John positions fathers as 'proud' 'gurus'. John constructs the notion of the 'exceptional father'.

Lines 371-381: As the 'exceptional father', John takes up the mentor position, based on competence and the son's adoration.

Craig

Lines 71-80: Need to change mentoring expectations in the face of the son's negations.

Lines 109-118: Frustration of the mentor position leaves Craig 'dethroned' as the father and accounts for a 'lot' of 'conflicts' between father and son. In the absence of mentoring, Craig finds himself negotiating an 'impossible...balance' as the father.

Lines 127-147: Disappointed mentor withdraws from the son. Then takes up position of 'proud father' regarding his son's independent achievements.

Lines 148-157: Devoid of mentoring, Craig is excluded from a circle of legitimacy formed by successful mentor fathers.

Lines 164-184: Reworking fathering in the absence of mentoring constructed as a 'journey of mourning'. Shifts father towards a position of 'adult respect' towards his son.

Lines 236-242: Absence of mentoring linked to relational distance and the hope that Craig will survive in his children's mind.

Brendan

Lines 553-558: Father stands away from the sports field.

Lines 28-32: The son won't listen to the father's advice.

Subtheme 3: Guidance from below

Jake

Lines 15-20: Seeing the other (feminine) through the son's eyes

Lines 53-84: Jake disqualifies himself from the father as mentor position.

Scott

Lines 52-58: Father contemplates his son's perspective as a better way of pursuing a career.

Brian

Line 187: Father contemplates the son's ability to see the 'bigger picture'.

Theme four: Pushing

Subtheme 1: Other parents

Angus

Lines 33-38: Other parents positioned as status obsessed, bad parents who push their child to achieve.

John

Lines 226-231: John distances himself from 'other families and parents' who push their children and 'really put a lot of pressure on their son'. In contrast, as the good parent, John foregrounds his son's happiness and does not try to make his son something that he's not.

Nick

Lines 14-16: Nick distances himself from the 'pushy parent' who stands on the sidelines and shouts'.

Lines 22-23: Nick is not the parent who expects his son to be in 'the A team.

Quinton

Lines 103-105; 119: Father resolves not to 'go down the route' of other parents.

Brendan

Lines 356-358: Some fathers are at all the practices, giving their sons an unfair advantage.

Subtheme 2: Pushing, encouraging, and the extrinsic/intrinsic frame

Douglas

Lines 178-189: Douglas frames pushing as 'challenging' the son to be 'as good as he can be'.

Nick

Lines 186-204: Encouraging is distinguished from pushing. Fun and the son's enjoyment are fore-grounded. The son's 'natural competitive nature' is nourished by the encouraging father.

John

Lines 238-255: John vacillates between encouraging and pushing, foregrounding his son's vulnerability ('little soul') as well as his potential 'which needs to be taken forward'.

Subtheme 3: Defending the damaging father

Nick

Lines 88-97: Nick still has a good relationship with his father despite his father's critical ways.

Quinton

Lines 116-128: Quinton positions self as the encouraging father who has 'never gone down (the) route' of pushing his son.

Lines 346-352: Quinton takes up position of father who laughs, although 'you can see that it's not something that (the son) enjoys'.

John

Lines 22-28: 'Nothing lasts' in terms of conflict between father and disappointing son.

Lines 121-124: Dominant position as the responsible father who is 'just doing his job'.

Lines 312-322: Father fears losing his son's 'heart'. Good father ensures that his son knows that 'you love him'.

Lines 388-390: Love constructed as basis for pushing.

Lines 576-599: How careful do we have to be? Pushing and the potential for damage. Reconciled by notion that 'we don't actually have any problems', 'we're lucky'.

Angus

Lines 302-310: Angus naturalizes position as disciplinarian father. Angus minimizes his son's injuries as well as possible damage to his relationship with his son.

Lines 320- 335: Angus vacillates between position as disciplinarian father who did the right thing and position as the affected father who is distressed by his own actions.

Lines 337-338: Vacillation between moral/disciplinarian father and distressed uncertain father.

Brian

Lines 227-233: Brian defends against damaging his son. Constructs a 'no problems' father-son relationship.

Subtheme 4: Acknowledging damage

Nick

Lines 382-398: Nick moves from hegemonic father position to new parent position based on his son's vulnerability to damage.

Brendan

Lines 11-20: Brendan reflects on the damage he has caused by shaming his disappointing son. Brendan vacillates between father who recoils from his damaging actions and investment in orthodox competitive masculinity.

Lines 515-517: Blurring the lines between pushing and being part of the son's life.

Lines 539-553: Brendan acknowledges damage which he constructs as irreparable.

Lines 610-618: Brendan identifies with his damaging father.

Lines 102-109: Brendan positions himself as the abused child who stands opposed to his abusive father.

David

Lines 220-236: Father 'screams and screams' only to realize that 'he's doing his best'. Father moves to a reparative position.

Scott

Lines 173-174: Scott acknowledges time he has been 'too hard' on his son.

Lines 311-321: Father 'far too angry' with young son ('when he was a little boy') and recognizes the son's hurt.

Jake

Line 204: Acknowledging potential to 'put bad' in his son's 'space'.

Line 215: Anxiety that he might be a 'burden' to his son.

Lines 380- 393: Positions self against father capacity to 'brutally smack a child'.

Theme 5: Women's ways

Subtheme 1: Mentor father on the inside, mother on the outside

Brendan

Lines 173-189: Mentoring aligns father and son to the exclusion of the mother.

Lines 100-101: Father sides with the sons, mother is the 'disciplinarian'.

Lines 232-233: Father and sons engaged in wrestling, mother 'just walks away'

Lines 283-292: Father and sons form a unit to the exclusion of the mother.

Douglas

Lines 127-139: The father pulls son away from the mother towards his ways. The mother is denigrated in the process of masculinity performance.

Lines 196-210: Mother positioned as cautious and constraining, father positioned as adventurous and enabling.

Lines 225-229: Son's friendship with a girl constructed as a 'strong trait', giving the son a 'balance'. Son positioned as the 'figurehead' amongst the girls.

Lines 24-244: Son positioned as having 'respect' for girls.

Nick

Lines 46-48: Nick and son aligned via similarity, mother is excluded.

Subtheme 2: Mother on the inside, disappointed father on the outside

Craig

Lines 17-18: Different son looks more like the mother.

Lines 185-208: Father stands back from negating son, mother engages.

Scott

Lines 105-108: Mother understands different son, father unable to sense son's moods and 'what he wants to do'.

Lines 257-274: Mother understands the different son, father positions self as incapable of sharing the same connection with his different son. Mother and different son are positioned as 'alike'.

Lines 116-145: Father connects with different son through aggression, mother positioned as incapable of embodying this aggression.

Lines 163-171: Father takes up position of 'respect' towards different son, based on the son's ability to assert himself as different.

Line 293: Mother has an 'emotional connection' with the different son.

Brian

Lines 71-82: Mother closer to different son, father positioned as provider and disciplinarian.

Lines 121-127: Mother understands the son, is able to 'read' the different son.

Lines 145-152: Mother intimate with the son, constructed as 'idle chatter'. Father positioned as disciplinarian ('when I do talk, it's serious').

Nick

Lines 251-252: Mother and different son similar and therefore get on well.

Brendan

Lines 76-78: Father is 'jealous' of the mother's proximity to the sons.

Subtheme 3: Mother as moderator between father and disappointing son

Brian

Lines 155-178: Mother represents accepting encouraging version of parenting. Brian vacillates between taking up and distancing himself from this position.

John

Lines 226-231: Mother advocates support and acceptance of the disappointing son. John vacillates between taking up and relinquishing the maternal perspective.

Lines 165-173: Different son positioned as 'hormonal'. Mother understands different son and presents his perspective to the father.

Lines 425-435: 'Structured' Mother constructed as 'good balance' for the 'carte blanche', 'a la carte' father.

Quinton

Lines 9-10: Son touches base with the mother, son likes 'that comfort'.

Lines 26-36: Mother motivates for a co-ed junior school to help the son to socialize. Constructed as a 'good decision'.

Lines 285-289: Son shares difficulties with the mother, mother passes this information on to the father.

Lines 330: Mother expresses the emotions, father is more controlled.

Brendan

Line 8-11: Female teacher urges father to accept son as he is.

Jake

Lines 317-319: The mother 'manages' the father's interactions with his children.

Angus

Lines 31-35: Mother encourages the father to 'just be' with the children, as opposed to activity-based fathering.

Subtheme 4: Assimilating the maternal

Nick

Lines 232-244: Mother and father parent different 'sides' of the son. Again, fathering has to do with sponsoring 'likeness', whereas otherness is projected onto mother-son relationship.

Lines 328-232: Father fears his son may be gay. Father turns to the mother with this fear.

Lines 235-240: Father returns to notion of 'balance' as reassurance against the threat of gayness.

Lines 354-364: Son's 'other side' constructed as alien, father shifts to 'proud' position that assimilates this other side.

Lines 369-381: Father assimilates other side by constructing it as acceptably masculine, and as a latent part of himself.

Jake

Lines 138-155: Jake stands opposed to abusive hegemonic masculinity and the mother enables his expression of a new masculinity. Mother positioned as parenting authority who guides Jake.

Lines 67-78: Mother positioned as closer to and in command of son's diagnosis of ADHD. Mother protects father from disappointment.

Lines 256-269: Jake turns to the mother in order to understand homosexuality and to locate a position of love and acceptance.

Lines 118-131: Jake transitions from idealizing the father to reparation with the mother.

Lines 427-435: Parenting constructed as a reparative process, enabling Jake to take up mourning position towards the abusive father.

Brendan

Lines 46-50: In the caring position, father is described by mother as ‘more like the mother than what she is’.

APPENDIX 4: Ethical Approval Letter



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN
4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
sshrec@ukzn.ac.za

17 MARCH 2010

Mr. RH Pluke
School of Psychology
PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS

Dear Mr. Pluke

ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0125/10D

PROJECT TITLE: "Men's experiences of fathering sons: Encountering differences and disappointment"

In response to your application dated 13 March 2010, the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Prof. G Lindegger)
cc. Mrs. B Jacobsen

