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VIEWS OF A GOOD FATHER: ECOLOGICAL
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VIEWS OF A GOOD FATHER: ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

By

Mikiyasu Hakoyama

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Family and Child Ecology

2007

ABSTRACT

VIEWS OF A GOOD FATHER: ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

By

Mikiyasu Hakoyama

Paternal parenting has been a focus of many researchers. Along with effects of fathering on particular aspects of child development, many scholars focused on promoting good fathering by emphasizing particular aspects of parenting efforts, such as involved fathering, responsible fathering, and generative fathering. However, it has not been a main focus of family research to investigate how or to what extent these good father views are shared with fathers and mothers who currently strive to be good parents. Also, it is little known how good father views are similar or different between fathers and mothers. This study utilized ecological perspectives in examining good father views and associated factors.

Based on the survey response of 23 married couples (23 fathers and 23 mothers), this qualitative study examined good father views of both the fathers and the mothers. Several factors associated with paternal parenting were also examined. As a result of analyses of the participants' responses to the question that asked them to describe what it means to be a good father, 238 comments were identified and classified into eight categories: involvement, expressed affection, child-centeredness, mentor, guardian, prerequisites for being a good father, caretaker, and parental equality. These

results indicated that good father views of these parents were multi-categorical. Further, frequency of comments belonging to these categories differed between the fathers and the mothers. The fathers in this study tended to mention comments in the mentor and the guardian categories more frequently than their spouses while the mothers mentioned comments in the involvement, child-centeredness, and expressed affection categories more frequently. Comments in the caretaker and the parental equality categories were found only in the mothers' responses.

It was also revealed that these parents perceived that many parents struggled to find enough time for multiple tasks they felt responsible. Spousal factors, such as spousal good father views, spousal supportiveness, and marital relationships, also influenced fathers in their efforts to be a good father. The majority of the respondents perceived that their children's gender had no effect on the fathers' efforts to be a good father.

It is expected that the findings in this study will contribute to gain a better understanding of paternal parenting and will help social service professionals in their efforts to help parents in their parenting efforts.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and express my appreciation for the support of the members of my committee, Drs. Robert Griffore, Lillian Phenice, Le Anne Silvey, and Lee June. I am especially grateful to Dr. Griffore for his patience, mentorship, availability, and willingness to share his passion for academic pursuit. I am thankful to Drs. Robert Griffore, Lillian Phenice, Le Anne Silvey, and Julia Miller for generously allowing me as a member of their research projects and for being patient, resourceful, and thoughtful mentors. I wish to extend my appreciation also to Dr. Barbara Ames for being supportive as the acting graduate program director throughout my program. I am also appreciative of the College of Social Science and the Department of Family and Child Ecology for providing me numerous fellowships, scholarships, and assistantships, all of which have tremendously helped me throughout my program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

What are the characteristics and roles of a good father? Should he be a provider, a nurturer, a role model, a caretaker, or a disciplinarian?

Considering influences of fathering on child development, many researchers and scholars have suggested multiple ways of being a good father. However, it is not clear whether and to what extent these views of good fathers proposed by the researchers are shared with parents who are currently engaged in childrearing. It is also uncertain how mothers' views may be different from or similar to fathers' views.

Significance and Relevance of the Problem

Many researchers have studied parenthood (e.g., Anthony & Benedek, 1970; Smith, 2005; Sanders, 1996). Some focused on maternal parenting (e.g., Cardona, Nicholson, & Fox, 2000; Steward & Steward, 1973; Williams, 2003; Ainsworth, 1973, 1979, 1991) while others focused on paternal parenting (e.g., Snarey, 1993; Sanders, 1996; Beitel & Parke, 1998; Dowd, 2000; Horn, 2001; Hofferth, 2003; Morman & Floyd, 2006). Still others examined parenting effects by comparing and contrasting paternal parenting with maternal parenting (e.g., Schwarts, 2003; McHale & Huston, 1984; Deutsch, 1999; Bronstein, 1999; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003).

While studies on maternal parenting remain more prevalent than

paternal parenting, viewing that father's contribution to child development is unique, more and more researchers have focused on paternal parenting in the last few decades. It was common for many investigators a few decades ago to compare children of father-present and father-absent families (e.g., Werdinger, 1981; Bannon & Southern, 1980; Schenenga, 1983; Draper and Harpending, 1982). Scholars in recent years focused on contextual factors, the results of which indicated that good fathering was associated with factors such as positive marital relationship and sufficient economic resources (Coiro & Emery, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). An effort has also been made to define fatherhood in relation to roles traditionally associated with fathers, such as role model (Townsend, 2003; Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Yang, 2000) and provider (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993; Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001).

In more recent years, scholars who focused on fathering proposed specific conceptual views of good or competent fathering, such as involved (Williams, 2003; Krishnakumar & Black, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003), responsible (Horn, 2001; Anderson, Kohler, & Lettiecq, 2002; Marks & Dollahite, 2001), and generative (Dollahite, Hawkins & Broteron, 1997; Snarey, 1993; Allen & Connor, 1997). A new concept was also proposed for dual-earner families, which suggested a gender-neutral parenting practice that husband and wife share all aspects of parenting equally (Deutsch, 1999).

Since fatherhood is socially constructed (Furrow, 1998; Doherty,

Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Zoja, 2001), what is expected of fathers could be altered according to the changes in socio-cultural contexts. Due to rapid societal and cultural changes that have taken place, including the increase in dual-earner families, the high divorce rate, and the impact of technological advancement, many scholars and researchers have proposed to redefine what good parenting should be like (e.g., Farley, 2006; Verhaagen, 2005; Dowd, 2000; Silverstein, 1996; Brooks & Gilbert, 1995; Hall, 1994). It is also inevitable that the mother understands her husband's view of being a good father, though she may not necessarily agree with her husband, in order for the father to be successful in his parenting effort.

Therefore, it is a significant concern that views of good fathers are not well-known, according to which fathers strive to be better fathers, and based on which mothers expect their husbands to participate in parenting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to examine views of what it means to be a good father of the fathers as well as the mothers who are currently engaged in childrearing and to compare their views. The study was designed also to examine factors that are influential for fathers in pursuing efforts to become good fathers.

Research Objectives

Research objectives of the current study are:

1. to describe fathers' and mothers' views of what it means to be a good

father,

2. to compare fathers' views of what it means to be a good father with those of mothers,
3. to identify factors that are influential, both positive and negative, in fathers' efforts to be a good father,
4. to examine the impact of spousal factors on the father's efforts to be a good father and,
5. to examine how views of good fathers and associated factors described by the fathers and mothers are related to those in current literature.

Research Questions

In order to accomplish research objectives stated above, the following research questions are addressed.

Q1. How do fathers and mothers describe good fathers?

Q2. How are mothers' and fathers' views of good fathers different or similar?

Q3. What factors are perceived by fathers and mothers to have contributed to fathers' efforts to be a good father or hindered them from being good fathers?

Q4. How do spousal factors, such as the mother's view of good fathers, perceived competence of her husband as a father, and past experience with her own father, relate to the father's efforts to be a good father?

Q5. To what extent are views of good fathers and associated factors expressed by the fathers and mothers consistent with views of good fathers and associated factors described in current literature?

Descriptive Analysis

For the purpose of analysis, descriptive statistics of quantitative variables will be utilized to obtain frequency, mean, and standard deviation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations of the Study

Ecological Perspectives

Ecological perspectives were utilized in this study, for they fit appropriately into the purpose of this study.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

Bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1997), in examining human developmental processes, takes into account both environmental factors as well as biological factors of the person. Bronfenbrenner (1989) previously identified four levels of systems in identifying environmental factors: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

A microsystem refers to interaction between the developing person and his/her immediate contact, mesosystem refers to interaction between microsystems, exosystem refers to interaction between the person's immediate contact and indirect contact, and macrosystem refers to impact of socio-cultural factors that encompass other systems. Time factors, such as the timing and duration of the interaction, that are thought to impact interaction,

are referred to as chronosystems.

In addition to these environmental factors, the bioecological model emphasizes individual biological factors. These factors include ethnicity, age, and temperament, especially in relation to their contribution to the proximal process, stable, continuous interaction between the developing person and his/her immediate contact. Utilization of this perspective in this study will be beneficial, as it allows the researcher to examine factors of multiple environmental levels.

Ecological Systems Approach

An ecological approach described by Griffore and Phenice (2001) incorporates the following general systems components: structural, dynamic, governing, information processing, interrelationship, disruptive, and life process components. Structural components include structure, hierarchy, and complexity; dynamic components include internal flow processes, physical and socio-emotional energy, and matter; governing components include rules, control, purposes, and goals; information processing components include information, memory, communication and learning; interrelationship components include concepts such as holism, interdependence, interaction, and independence; disruptive components include concepts such as conflict, disorder, strain, stress, and threat; and life process components include change, evolution, growth, and reproduction. This perspective will be useful as it enables the researcher to identify the characteristics of variables focused in

this study.

Summary

Parenting, both maternal and paternal, has been studied by many researchers and scholars. Several conceptual frameworks have been utilized in defining fatherhood. However, views of being a good father previously proposed are those of the researchers and scholars. Views of the ordinary parents may not necessarily be consistent with the researchers' views. Although paternal parenting and maternal parenting have been previously compared, good father views of the father and the mother in a married couple have never been explored. It is unclear how and to what extent good father views are related to variables, such as perceived competence, marital relationship, age, education level, and child's gender.

In the next chapter, the pertinent literature is reviewed. What has been stated briefly in this chapter regarding paternal parenting will be examined in more detail in the next chapter for clarification of the significance and relevance of this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parenthood

In this chapter, literature pertaining to parenting is reviewed.

Although the main focus of this study is paternal parenting in relation to how parents perceive what it means to be a good father, literature on parenting in general including maternal parenting is also reviewed briefly. This is because female parents' views of good fathers could be related to their views of maternal parenting. For instance, mothers who are concerned about attachment during early infancy would value high involvement and responsiveness in child rearing behavior and, therefore, they could expect similar attitudes from their husbands in their fathering practice. Also, there is a notion that parental roles should be gender-neutral and all the parental tasks should be shared equally by both parents (Deutsch, 1999).

As stated in the previous chapter, many scholars suggested the need for redefining good parenthood, as parental attitudes as well as behaviors are being altered along with the societal changes. Increase in maternal employment will impact parenting behavior of many parents directly. Increase in divorce results in single-parent families, impact of which on both fathers and mothers as well as on their children must be significant. Remarriage of singles with children creates a stepfamily which is likely to increase complexity of family relationships, which, in turn, may require more sensitive

parenting than that of intact families. What is expected of parents is also influenced by impact of rapid technological advancement, such as the increased use of computers, the Internet, instant messaging, computer/video games, and cell phones.

It is difficult to predict, however, how or to what extent these factors have impacted the previously examined views on paternal parenting. Roles that were traditionally considered to be important might have regained their status. More gender-neutral views might have been accepted widely in defining good fathering. Therefore, responses gained by an open-ended form of inquiry in a particular context and time could vary widely in content.

A broad understanding of parenting is anticipated to be useful in coping with possible variations in the process of data analysis as well as interpretation of the results. Therefore, the review of literature provided in the following sections is broad.

Multiple Disciplinary Perspectives

In this section, studies conducted by researchers representing various disciplines are briefly reviewed to illustrate multiplicity of parenthood. Review of multiple disciplinary perspectives also provides minimal knowledge necessary in understanding parenthood.

Parenthood or parenting has drawn attention of researchers and scholars in various disciplines, including biology (Kaufman, 1970), ethology (Smith, 2005), anthropology (Mering & Mulhare, 1970), sociology (Mayall,

1994; Handel, 1970), psychology (Meadow, 1996), and clinical psychology (Bauman, 2002; Smith, 2005; Paul, 1970). Smith (2005), who is a primatologist, a comparative psychologist and also a clinical psychologist, was aware that the focus of psychologist and that of evolutionary biologist were likely to differ, and utilized both psychological and evolutionary biological perspectives in studying parenting behavior. She compared both perspectives and concluded that although many people thought that they automatically knew how to parent when they became parents due to maternal or paternal instinct, they eventually learned that it was not the case (Smith, 2005).

According to Handel (1970) who applied a sociological perspective, humans were considered to be social beings that belonged to a socially ordered world and that human behavior had to be understood in relation to such order. Handel (1970) further stated that parenthood was thought of as a position in a social structure along with other positions such as teacher, pediatrician, and neighbor. Each of these positions including parent was socially defined in terms of a set of expectations, which could vary from one group to another. Factors that influenced in defining parenthood included social class, ethnic group, religion, occupation, and type of residential community (e.g., urban vs. suburban) (Handel, 1970). Other sociologists indicated the possibility that children's cognitive skills were either constrained or expanded due to the social settings in which children belonged, for what children were encouraged as well as offered to learn could vary depending on what adults in the setting

valued (e.g., Mayall, 1994).

Paul (1970), a clinical psychologist, pointed out the significance of affective empathy that sought to meet emotional needs involving all feelings including those that were not expressed verbally. Although empathy was considered to be a critical component especially in the parent-child relationship, empathic processes tended to be quite impoverished not only in the families with special issues but also in many families facing no apparent issues (Paul, 1979).

The studies reviewed in this section suggest that parenting is one of the most important elements for the future of humankind, and appropriate skills required for parenting need to be learned. Appropriate parenting practice varies across cultural and social contexts, and as a result, children grow up to be individuals who fit into the culturally recognizable society in which they live. In order for such parenting efforts to be successful, effective interpersonal skills such as empathy are needed to meet children's emotional needs. More literature is reviewed in the following section to provide a more detailed picture that illustrates complexity of parenthood.

Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, studies that applied theoretical perspectives are reviewed. Although the main focus of the current study is paternal parenting, a few maternal parenting studies are reviewed as well. This is because the objectives of this study include not only the views of the fathers but also how

mothers' view what a good father should be like as well. Mothers' views of being a good father are assumed to be related to their maternal parenting views.

Many researchers utilized theoretical perspectives in their efforts to gain better understanding of parenting behaviors (e.g., Heller, 1997; Meadows, 1996; Mercer, 2006; Snarey, 1993; Ainsworth, 1993). The attachment theory proposed by John Bowlby (1958) and further examined by Ainsworth (1973, 1979, & 1991) has been one of the popular theoretical perspectives addressing the importance of the attachment process and its relationship to parenting practices particularly during infancy.

Mercer (2006) defined attachment as the emotional ties existing between human beings that guide their feelings and behavior. Therefore, the most important aspect of attachment involves emotion. However, attachment is more than just personal emotional experiences. Along with emotions, attachment includes thoughts such as beliefs and ways of thinking about relationships with others. These two aspects of attachment are combined to form an internal working model of emotional and social relationships that include feelings, memories, ideas, and expectations related to people's interpersonal attitudes and actions. Therefore, loving and caring physical contact becomes inevitable in establishing high quality mother-infant attachment (Heller, 1997).

Bowlby (1984) examined violence in the family as a disorder of the

attachment and care-giving systems, according to which active rejection of the child by caregivers was likely to contribute to anger-oriented behavior patterns. Ainsworth (1989) also proposed attachment theory as a way of examining the child's socio-emotional development beyond infancy. Turner (1991) examined the child's socio-emotional development in relation to the child's attachment quality to her mother and found that securely attached preschoolers were more likely to develop a harmonious, responsive and happier relationship with their peers than were insecurely attached preschoolers.

Many scholars examined parenthood in relation to generativity, a social task to be accomplished in middle adulthood according to Erikson's psychosocial theory (e.g., Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997). Dollahite, Hawkins, and Brotherson (1997) adopted the concept of generativity in exploring fathering and stated that fathering was not a role but work that lives up to the needs of children by constantly creating and maintaining an ethical relationship with them. Snarey (1993) also examined paternal parenting as generative work.

Maternal Parenting versus Paternal Parenting

Mothers tend to be the center of focus when it comes to parenting simply because in most human societies as well as most nonhuman primate species, mothers are the primary caregivers of infants, and also we know more about mothers than fathers (Smith, 2005). Because many more mothers work

fulltime now, Deutsch (1999) proposed the idea of equally shared parenting. Deutsch (1999) suggested that in dual-earner families it was only fair and effective when parenting behaviors were shared equally by both parents regardless of whether they were previously perceived to be paternal or maternal roles. Other investigators assumed that fathers and mothers contributed in different ways to child development and compared paternal parenting with maternal parenting (e.g., Wang, et. al., 2006). Wang and colleagues (2006) utilized structural equation modeling in studying perspectives of fathers and mothers in relation to family quality of life. According to the result of this study, no difference was found between fathers and mothers in perceived importance of factors related to family quality of life items or in their overall satisfaction with family quality of life.

Benedek (1970) explained the relationship between paternal and maternal parenting as “the functions which represent fatherhood, fatherliness, and providing are parallel to motherhood, motherliness, and nurturing. Fatherhood and motherhood are complementary processes which evolve within the culturally established family structure to safeguard the physical and emotional development of the child” (p. 167).

It seems that while there are perspectives that view roles of the father being quite different from those of the mother, there are also others who view little differences between the two. Therefore, literature review on quality of parenting provided in the following section includes, along with studies on

paternal parenting, some studies focused on parenting in general as well as some studies that focused on maternal parenting.

Quality of Parenting

Concerning the impact of parenting on child development, many scholars focused on quality of parenting (e.g., Baumrind, 1966, 1968; Sclafani, 2004; Hannush, 2002; Berk, 2005). Baumrind (1966, 1968, 1971) examined parenting patterns in relation to social competence in children and identified multiple parenting patterns, among which the authoritative parenting style, that is represented by being responsive and demanding, was found to be associated with positive developmental outcomes.

Psychoanalyst Winnicott proposed the idea of *good-enough mother*, who at first satisfied the baby's every need due to maternal preoccupation, would gradually fail to meet the baby's needs, which is what was needed for the baby in order for him to learn objective reality (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Based on the view that growth is being governed primarily by genetic factors, Scarr (1992) suggested that parents needed to be only good-enough. Harris (1998) also supported the view that parents needed to be merely good-enough, for children's development and growth were largely shaped more by genetic makeup and peer relations in later childhood than by parental influence.

However, Hannush (2002) disagreed with these views that suggested that parenting needed to be only good-enough. He stated that good-enough parenting was not good enough, and suggested that parents had to strive to be

as good as they could possibly be. According to Hannush (2002), parenting is an ethical life project, a spiritual endeavor, requiring constant moral vigilance and perpetual inspiration by the idea of goodness. What it means to be good and loving parents is encompassed within what it means to be good and loving persons or human beings. He further stated that “we learn to become good and loving human beings by becoming good and loving parents and we become better parents as we become better persons” (p. 1).

Research has been conducted that examined impacts of fathering not only on the child’s development but also on the man himself (e.g., Parke, 1996; Snarey, 1993). According to Dollahite and Hawkins (1998), good fathering is hard work that can be considered as one of the most important kinds of work men could do, which would be beneficial to fathers themselves in their development as well as their children. Father involvement was found to be linked to paternal self-esteem, self-confidence, and marital satisfaction along with children’s positive development (Sanderson, 2000).

Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk (2001) examined the relationships between men’s early adult development and fathering qualitatively. They found that men who were fathers viewed father involvement as bringing a jolt to the life course, a gentler evoker of latent personality trait, as well as the single greatest shaper of their lives. Among low-income families it was found that at least having one supportive parent regardless of gender, than those with none, positively impacted the child’s cognitive development (Ryan,

Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006).

In his efforts in advocating good parenting, Sclafani (2004) emphasized the importance of parents being educated with regard to what research findings had to offer. According to Sclafani (2004), because parents serve as first role models for children and first love and attachment objects, as well as first socializers and shapers of self-esteem and consciences, parental influence is enormous on who the child becomes. This means that no role or responsibility is more important than that of being a good parent. Bad parenting, on the other hand, could result in serious long-term negative consequences (Sclafani, 2004).

These studies imply that although there are researchers who are less concerned about quality of parenting, there are others who view that it is quality of parenting, whether maternal or paternal, that matters; and good quality positively impacts not only the child's development but development of parents as well. More details are provided of how quality of parenting, particularly pertaining to paternal parenting, impacts child's development.

Impact of Paternal Parenting on Children

Many researchers examined impacts of fathering on child development by comparing the differences in developmental outcomes between father-present children and father-absent children (e.g., Werdinger, 1981; Jayakody & Kalil, 2002; Marshall, English & Stewart, 2001; Bannon & Southern, 1980). Draper and Harpending (1982) suggested that male

adolescents of father-absent households exhibited several socio-emotional difficulties, including complexities of aggression, competitiveness, low male parental investment, and derogation of females. In contrast, father-present male children displayed less interest in competitive dominance with other males while showing more interest in manipulation of the nonhuman environments. Furthermore, father-absent female adolescents tended to show sexual interest and activity earlier than did their father-present counterparts (Draper & Harpending, 1982). Father-absent females were also more likely to show negative attitudes toward males and had poor ability to establish long-term relationships with one male (Draper & Harpending, 1982).

In order to examine ego ideal development and oral judgment in early adolescent boys, Schenenga (1983) compared father-present and father-absent eighth graders in a New York junior high school and found that boys in the father-absent group did not use moral reasoning as extensively as their father-present counterparts. Werdinger (1981) utilized a psychoanalytic approach in investigating the importance of the role of the father in the child's developmental process and found that there was an association between father absence and psychopathology, presumably derived from disturbances during the pre-Oedipal period that resulted in failure to complete the separation individuation process. In their efforts to examine the possible effect of fathers or father figures on child behavioral problems, Marshall and colleagues (2001) conducted a longitudinal study and found that while there

were no apparent impact found at age 4, children at age 6 showed lower levels of aggression as well as depression when father or father-like figure was present in the child's life.

Children in father-absent families tended to exhibit more behavioral problems and also were less competent in mathematics and reading ability than were children in two-parent families, and further, this difference in reading ability was likely to become greater over time (Teachman, Day, & Paasch, 1998). Agronick (2001) focused on parental impact on daughters and found that good father-daughter rapport was associated with the decrease in negative emotionality from young to middle adulthood, which suggested that the mother and the father were important in different ways.

Black, Dubowitz, and Starr (1999) investigated the relationship between paternal role and well-being of children from low income, African American families and found that paternal satisfaction with parenting, financial contribution to the family, and nurturance during play were associated with children with better cognitive and language competence; and paternal satisfaction with parenting and employment were associated with children with fewer behavior problems. Sanders (1996) also focused on African American families and concluded that having a father or father figure in the family was strongly associated with successful academic achievement of African American males.

Emihovick, Gaier and Cronin (1984) studied fathers' general sex-role

beliefs in relation to what they expect of their sons of European American father-son pairs, fathers of which were well educated and middle class. They found that most of the fathers held very traditional sex-role expectations for themselves as well as their sons, and both sex-role beliefs and expectations of fathers and sons were found to be strongly and positively related.

Both European American and African American middle-class fathers were found to hold sex-role attitudes that were significantly more masculine toward their sons and more feminine toward their daughters, though these tendencies were less apparent among European American fathers (Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1982). According to Stern (1980) who examined single mothers' perceptions of the father role, the major concern of the single mothers for related to development of their sons regarding sex role and play activity..

These findings suggest that the father is influential to the development of his children, and the way the father impacts his children is likely to be different from that of the mother. Therefore, in studying parenting efforts, it should be beneficial to focus on the quality of paternal parenting along with that of maternal parenting.

Fatherhood

As discussed in the previous section, parenting views as well as actual parenting behavior of the father are likely to differ from those of the mother. Therefore, the following section focuses on fatherhood in particular.

Defining Fatherhood

The concept of fatherhood is a social construction (Furrow, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Zoja, 2001), suggesting that what is expected of fathers could well vary depending on the socio-historical context as well as cultural and political environments. Along with societal changes that take place, what is expected of a good father could also change.

Atkinson and Blackwelder (1993) analyzed popular magazine articles since 1900 and found that popular interest in and the definition of fatherhood had changed over time, according to the results of which the definition of fathering had alternated between providers and nurturers. According to Miller-Scher (1997), being a good financial provider, a primary role of an ideal father in the past, was considered no longer good enough, as a good father now is expected to be involved in everyday childcare while maintaining to be a good provider.

Dollahite and Hawkins (1998) argued that it was insufficient to view fathering as a social role embedded in an altering socio-historical context. Instead, fathering should be considered as generative work, one of the most important kinds of work men are engaged.

What It Means to Be a Good Father

There have been researchers who devoted their energy to defining what it means to be a good father (e.g., Palkovitz, 2002; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), and one of the ways these researchers have taken was to

describe fatherhood in terms of the major roles and behaviors pertaining to being a father in relation to child development (e.g., Townsend, 2003; Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993). Wright (2005) viewed that African American men were ignored in social science research and focused on paternal identity in his efforts to examine African American men's views of themselves as fathers. The results of this study indicated that paternal identity was related to father role satisfaction (Wright, 2005).

Many investigators viewed gender role model as one of the major father roles that impact child development (e.g., Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003; Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1982; Yang, 2000; Emibovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984). In order to better understand the role of the father in relation to the child's behavior, Williams (2003) focused on paternal involvement and father-child attachment security. Shears and colleagues (2006) explored the meaning of father roles among fathers in low income families and found that the fathers in their study thought it very important for them to "be there" for their children in their relationship. Many other scholars also viewed paternal involvement as one of the most important aspects of fathering (e.g., Offer, 2003; Strom, et. al., 2000; Krishnakumar & Black, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride & Darragh, 1995; Palkovitz, 2002).

Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) proposed generative fathering, fathering that meets the needs for the next generation across time as well as context. Snarey (1993) also viewed parental generativity as a major

component of being a good father. Many other researchers also focused on parental generativity in their investigation of fathering (e.g., Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998; Allen & Connor, 1997; Griswold, 1997; Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998).

Horn (2001), as well as Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998), promoted responsible fathering as a way of being a good father. Many others also viewed responsible fathers as good fathers (e.g., Anderson, Kohler, & Lettietcq, 2002; Lowenstein, 1982; Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Sanders, 1996). Summers and colleagues (2006) investigated how fathers of low-income families construct what it means to be a good father and identified four broad roles: to be a provider of a stable environment including being present emotionally and physically, to be a teacher who guides and exposes his child to the world, to be physically interactive by playing, caregiving, etc., and to be emotionally supportive by providing love, and helping his child establish self-esteem. According to McAdoo (1993), who utilized an ecological and historical perspective in investigating the roles of African American fathers, although African American fathers experienced economic, employment, and educational barriers, their expected roles in the family as provider, decision maker, child socializer, and nurturer of spouse, were no different from fathers of other ethnic groups.

Holland (1994) examined Australian fathers' perceptions of their fatherhood experience and found that the fathers in her study desired to form

close, friendly, and companionable relationships with their children while being aware that the traditional role of disciplinarian to be still part of their responsibilities.

The findings of these previous studies suggest that multiple definitions are available for what it means to be a good father. The following section, therefore, further examines these major paternal parenting views.

Role model.

The findings of a study that investigated the relationship between gender role model and psychosocial outcomes among African American adolescents indicated the importance of the father as role model. Male adolescents without male role models and female adolescents who identified brothers as role models reported the most problem behavior (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003). In addition to providing emotional support, structure and direction for the child throughout life, what a good father should do is to be present both physically and emotionally for a child in the child's everyday life and build trust in the child (Townsend, 2003).

Yang (2000) examined the effects of variation in patterns of contemporary fathering on children's sex role development in Korea and found that there was a significant association between fathers' masculinity and girls' femininity. Other researchers also suggested the paternal influence on child's sex-role related development (e.g., Emihovich, Gaier, & Cronin, 1984; Power, 1981; Stern, 1980)

Traditional role as a provider and a head of the household.

Although modern fathers are likely to be expected to play multiple roles, being a provider, the primary role of a good father in the past, is still one of the important paternal roles (Miller-Scher, 1997). According to Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001), provider role of the father was made invisible by many societal changes that took place. More fathers now work outside home where other family members are unlikely to see their fathers actually working, and fathers' incomes are directly paid to the bank account, which is likely to make fathers' efforts in being a breadwinner less apparent and less appreciative of the father as provider. In addition, there seems to exist negative connotations of the traditional father being a good provider as authoritarian and unavailable for the child's everyday life (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001).

However, being a good provider remains one of the very important roles for fathers, as it is a form of paternal involvement that has a significant impact on healthy child development. Being a good provider is a way for the father to express his care and responsibility for his child along the way of building his father identity (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001).

For many fathers who respect traditional values, father's responsibility includes not only being the major provider but also being the head of household. In these cases, fathers should provide watchful protection for the mother-infant dyad as well as provide economic support, which should

be helpful for children and mothers, and allow fathers to reconstruct their sense of masculinity, which is an important component of confident fathers (Diamond, 1997).

These findings imply that traditional values associated with fatherhood, such as a provider, protector, and a head of the family, remain as part of the important aspects that impact development of children. In addition, being successful in these roles positively impact fathers themselves.

Involved father.

Scholars have argued fathers' active involvement in childrearing to be crucial in ensuring healthy child development (Biller, 1993; Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent, & Hill, 1993). Many family scientists focused their discussion on paternal involvement in childrearing (e.g., Palkovitz, 2002; McBride & Rane, 1997; Sanderson, 2000; Miller-Scher, 1997).

Sanderson (2000) stated that there was a linkage between father involvement and children's positive development such as physical health and intellectual, social, and moral development. Strom and colleagues (2000) examined the views of African American fathers and their adolescent children on successful paternal parenting and found that the amount of time shared by fathers and children was one of the factors that impacted the greatest on the views of successful fathers by both fathers and adolescents.

Greif, Hrabowski, and Maton (1998) also studied African American families and found that fathers of academically successful children described

themselves more involved with their children in monitoring homework and stricter than other fathers in their neighborhood, as well as encouraging their children in their participation in extracurricular activities. On the other hand, low father involvement, along with low mother involvement, was found to be significantly related to adolescents' bullying behavior, while father involvement helped prevent children from engaging in bullying behavior when maternal involvement was low (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003).

Responsible father.

In promoting responsible fathering, Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998) expressed their reason as the needs of children, which is suggestive of certain value-laden views that are applied in constructing what it means to be a good father, domains of which include acknowledging paternity, willing to be present and provide economic support, and being involved in child-rearing. Other scholars have also viewed responsible fathering as a way of being a good father (e.g., Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Silberstein & Auerbach, 1999).

Generative father.

Many social scientists have tried to define what it means to be a good father based on the concept of generative father (e.g., Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997; Snarey, 1993). Dollahite, Hawkins and Brotherson (1997) stated, "by generative fathering, we mean fathering that meets the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing ethical relationship with them" (p. 18), which consists of four components: ethical

work, stewardship work, development work, and relationship work.

It was found that there were multiple ways of defining a good father and also changes in definition over time as well as across culture. While there were scholars who defined a good father in terms of the major roles expected of a father such as role model, provider, protector, and nurturer; there were others who utilized a broader conceptual framework such as involved, responsible, and generative, each of which was constructed of multiple roles and attitudes.

Factors That Affect Fathering

Many factors were found to influence paternal parenting. While some factors positively impact development of the child, the father, or both; other factors may be disruptive in nature, which are likely to be perceived by fathers as challenges or barriers in acting according to their good father views. Certain factors may be perceived as difficulties or barriers by some fathers while the same factor may be perceived as neutral or positive by other fathers. For instance, working long hours may be the biggest obstacle for fathers who value spending time together with their children. However, it may not bother other fathers as much whose first priority is being a provider.

Types of factors that influence paternal parenting vary widely. In this section of review of literature, such influential factors are reviewed. Studies focused on maternal parenting are included when the findings apply to paternal parenting.

Some researchers focused on particular aspects of parenting such as the source of good parenting ideas, challenges, and biological factors, while others focused on influence of socio-demographic factors including ethnicity, age groups, or gender of the parents (e.g., Richard & Sharp, 2006; Summers, et. al., 2006). According to Smith (2005), a mother's temperament, which is frequently viewed as purely genetic, is, along with parenting style, partially influenced by her life experience and also by changes in her environment.

Some other researchers focused particularly on factors that influence paternal parenting (e.g., Sanderson, 2000; Fagan, 2000; Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999), as fathers were vulnerable to interpersonal and environmental influences (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). For instance, father involvement was thought to be influenced by factors such as paternal self-esteem, self-confidence, marital satisfaction, and ethnicity (Sanderson, 2000). Other investigators also suggested that paternal parenting was influenced by factors such as marital relationship (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Rogers & White, 1998; Doherty, et. al., 1998), economic factors (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Doherty, et. al., 1998), spouses' expectations and behaviors (Doherty, et. al., 1998), parental employment status (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999) and religion (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998; Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Marks & Dollahite, 2001).

Barriers to the father's efforts in pursuing to be a good father has also been examined (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Fagan, 2000). Ethnicity was

found to be associated with paternal parenting (Hofferth, 2003; Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1982). Divorced fathers were likely to experience difficulty in maintaining positive relationships with their children (Jacobs, 1982). Farley (2006) also focused on divorced fathers' efforts and struggles in their parental involvement.

Socio-Cultural Influences

The concept of paternal parenting also is socially constructed, which suggests that what is expected of fathers could vary as socio-cultural environments change (Furrow, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). Taking into account rapid socio-cultural changes that have taken place in recent years, Verhaagen (2005) proposed that a new approach is needed in parenting the Millennial generation. Some of the major socio-cultural changes Verhaagen (2005) pointed out include ethnic composition (over one-third of this generation are comprised of African American or Hispanic and the current minorities may turn out to be the majority by the year 2050), technological advancement particularly in communication tools and computers which includes negative influence such as exposure of adult content to young children, higher academic expectations (the majority of high school seniors seriously consider going to college), and positive messages in the pop music world.

The Millennials are also more politically conscious than the previous generation, and their views of success have dramatically changed from those

of previous generations. While what earlier generations defined of success was achieving the American Dream – a good job, a house, two children, and all the gadgets for comforts; the success defined by the Millennial generation was personal satisfaction of activity of one's choice, having close family relationships and close group of friends, active religious/spiritual life, and contributing to society (Verhaagen, 2005).

Considering all these socio-cultural changes apparent to the Millennial generation, Verhaagen (2005), based on research findings, further proposed 21 protective factors associated with good outcomes for children, all but two of which can be enhanced. These 21 protective factors were classified into six broad categories, which are: emotional, cognitive, academic, personality, social, and family protective factors.

Dolev and Zeedyk (2006) suggested the importance of being well informed in how to cope with terrorism for parents in this terrorism-threat present world as part of being a competent protector. The provider role of the father changes with cultural and socio-ecologic conditions (Benedek, 1970). When fathers of multiple ethnic groups were compared, European American fathers exhibited significantly more androgynous attitudes toward both sons and daughters than did African American fathers (Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1982).

As a result of studying family behavior in relation to stressful and oppressive social circumstances, Peters and Massey (1983) stated that African

Americans' capability to provide for the basic needs of their families tended to be lessened because of a negative status in American society associated with their cultural identity; and they further described the environment in which African Americans live as a mundane, extreme environment (MEE), an environment in which racism and subtle oppressions are omnipresent, constant, and continuing. Carroll (1998) followed up the impact of MEE stress on African Americans and found that African Americans were experiencing the unique stress of the dilemma of "being Black in White America," for the color line continues to exist and keeps affecting them in their daily efforts to live, work and play.

Environmental, Socio-Demographic and Economic Factors

Many researchers have examined socio-demographic factors associated with parenting (e.g., Shears, et. al., 2006. Rodriguez, et. al., 2006; Farley, 2006). Pajulo and colleagues (2006) scrutinized association between prenatal views of baby and parenthood of the pregnant women and socio-demographic as well as pregnancy factors. They found that the number of children under 7 years of age in the household, especially when already having two or three children under 7 years old, as well as the current pregnancy being unplanned, was associated negatively with prenatal representations about the child, self, partner, and own mother. Factors that had no association with the pregnant women's views included factors such as social class, previous abortions, duration of gestation, and somatic problems

related to the current pregnancy (Pajulo, et. al., 2006). When parenting was examined from a perspective of evolutionary biology, babies in family-living species could be more likely to face risk of neglect or abandonment if no support from other family members were available to the mother for child-rearing (Fairbanks, 2004; Smith, 2005).

Having some college education for fathers was associated with higher levels of weekday father involvement, while fathers' earnings were negatively associated with their weekday involvement with children (Yeung, et. al., 2001). Nettelbladt, Uddernberg, and Engesson (1980) studied Swedish fathers and suggested that fathers with low incomes or fathers who felt dissatisfactory about their jobs were likely to be more negative toward their children.

The results of many studies suggested that ethnicity was one of the influential factors for fathering (e.g., Carroll, 1998; Sanderson, 2000; Price-Bonham & Skeen, 1982). Hofferth (2003) compared African American and European American fathers and found that African American fathers exhibited significantly fewer warm behaviors, greater control and monitoring, and more responsibility for their children's care than did their European American counterparts. According to Price-Bonham and Skeen (1982) who also compared African American and European American fathers, European American fathers tended to exhibit significantly more androgynous attitudes toward both sons and daughters.

Marital Relationship

Numerous studies have documented associations between marital relationships and parenting (e.g., Cummings & Watson, 1997; Bradford, 2002; De Luccie, 1995; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Coiro & Emery, 1998). In pursuit of being a good parent, it was found that quality of marital relationship largely influenced parenting quality (Mansfield, 2005). The quality of the marital relationship and parenting satisfaction were significantly and positively associated, and these two factors seemed to have reciprocal impact on both fathers and mothers (Rogers & White, 1998).

According to the results of the study that examined the relationship between maternal characteristics and father involvement, the mother's perception of marital satisfaction was related to the frequency of father involvement (De Luccie, 1995), which is congruent with the findings of the previous studies (Bumpass, 1990; Harris & Morgan, 1991) that indicated the positive association between marital satisfaction and father involvement. A more recent study also indicated a relationship between marital intimacy and positive fathering (Bradford, 2002). Marital problems, on the other hand, were likely to result in disruption of father involvement, which, in turn, would lead the quality of father-child relationships to be weakened (Coiro & Emery, 1998). Doherty and colleagues (1998), who proposed responsible fathering, concluded that, in order for men to pursue being responsible fathers in the U.S., one of

the most effective approaches would be to try to maintain a caring, successful marriage, as substantial barriers are expected to arise otherwise.

Past Experience

It is frequently helpful to explore the past in order to understand the present forms of parenting practice, as we learn quite a bit from our parents, and this seems to be true of negative practices that we promised ourselves not to repeat them when we become parents ourselves, as interaction patterns are frequently learned unconsciously. In a similar manner our parents would have learned much of how they parented from their parents. Parenting practice, both positive and negative, in this way is passed on from one generation to another (Smith, 2005).

Shears and colleagues (2006) also examined intergenerational transmission of parenting values and found that fathers were influenced how they parent by their relationship with their own fathers. Early experience is thought to impact temperament as well as environment, which, in turn, results in individual differences exhibited in our parenting behaviors (Smith, 2005).

Child factors

Parenthood is a complex developmental process, and a child plays an active role as a stimulator that influences the personality development of the parents and their relationship (Anthony & Benedek, 1970). Studies of nonhuman primates indicated that non-responsiveness of the infant

negatively impact the mother in her parenting capabilities as well as mismatches between the temperament of the mother and the infant being disruptive factors in establishing attachment (Harlow & Harlow, 1965).

When focused on paternal parenting, the child's gender was found to be related to father involvement (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002; Harris & Morgan, 1991). Maternal reports of father involvement in infant care revealed that fathers were significantly more available to and also involved in care-giving activities with sons than to daughters, and they were also more available to temperamentally easy sons than to temperamentally difficult sons (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002).

The findings of a study that examined the differences in paternal involvement between adolescent sons and daughters indicated that fathers directed more attentions toward their sons than daughters (Harris & Morgan, 1991). Mexican fathers were also found to pay more attention to, and to be more cognitively involved with, their sons than their daughters (Bronstein, 1999).

The age of the child seemed to be associated with father involvement. There was a negative association between the frequency of father involvement and the age of the child (De Luccie, 1995; Yeung, et. al., 2001). It was found that the mothers of younger children were more likely to place higher value on father involvement than were the mothers of older children (De Luccie, 1995).

Mother Factors

The idea of necessity of skin-to-skin contact between mothers and infants immediately after the infant's birth proposed in the 1970's became popular and gained support as a practice inevitable in promoting bonding, which changed the way of delivering babies in the United States. However, further research did not support this idea that immediate skin-to-skin contact promoted mother-baby bonding. It was found instead that mother-infant bonding was just as strong in cases of caesarian section or premature babies that did not allow immediate skin-to-skin contact (Smith, 2005).

Health condition and age of the mother were likely to impact maternal parenting. For human mothers as well as nonhuman primate mothers, poor health negatively affected maternal parenting as well as putting mothers at risk, as malnourished mothers were associated with higher risk of dying during child birth as well as having low-birth-weight babies than were healthy mothers. Further, too young or too old mothers were associated with higher risk of mothers dying during labor and also of infant death prior to the first birthday (Smith, 2005).

Mother's age being too young including adolescent pregnancy was also associated with negative parenting, as too young mothers are still immature to be adequate mothers both physically and psychologically. This tendency of adolescent pregnancy was found to be more prevalent in developed countries including the United States than developing countries due mainly to typical

diet being high in simple carbohydrates and fats while requiring little energy expenditure in daily life (Smith, 2005).

Influence of mother factors on paternal parenting.

Some of the factors associated with mothers were also found to be influential to paternal parenting (e.g., Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; De Luccie, 1995; Hoffman & Moon, 1999; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). Father involvement was found to be influenced by the mother's attitudes (Beitel & Parke, 1998), and perception of her husband's competence as a parent (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999).

De Luccie (1995) also stated that mother factors such as attitudes toward, expectations of, and support for the father would impact the efforts of a father in involvement with his children, as a mother often serves as a gatekeeper in the father-child relationship.

Fathers whose wives evaluated them positively for their efforts in fathering tended to report higher levels of involvement in child-related activities, and they also considered the father role more important (Pasley, Futris, & Skinner, 2002). Mothers with nontraditional, egalitarian gender role attitudes were more likely to be supportive of father involvement than their counterparts with traditional attitudes (Hoffman & Moon, 1999). Mothers' work hours and father involvement in childcare were found to be positively associated (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Pleck, 1997).

Father Factors

Soule, Standley, & Copans (1979) examined father identity in prospective fathers whose wives were in the last month of pregnancy, and found that prospective fathers who scored high in father identity questions were more likely to report either highly positive or highly negative relationships with their own fathers. Fathers who had androgynous gender role identity were more likely to show higher levels of paternal involvement (Sanderson, 2000). Christiansen and Palkovitz (1998) examined predictors of fathering generativity and found that paternal identity, psychosocial identity, and psychosocial intimacy with their children were the best overall predictors of paternal generativity.

Fathers who perceived themselves as skillful in childcare tasks had higher levels of involvement (Sanderson, 2000; McHale & Huston, 1984). Psychological health and nurturance of a father were found to be predictors of paternal motivation, which contributed to behavioral involvement, suggesting the possibility of paternal motivation being intrinsic in nature (Duke, 1998). Working conditions of a father, such as long work hours, could be a barrier to greater participation in parenting (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999).

Religiosity was found to be one of the influential factors in shaping fatherhood (Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998). Bartkowski and Xu (2000), by focusing on the fathering practices of conservative evangelical families, examined the influence of

conservative Protestant gender ideologies on paternal involvement, and found that conservative Protestant fathers were more likely to engage in paternal supervision and affective parenting than were non-evangelical fathers. Fathers with a religious identification had a higher tendency to be generative than did other fathers (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998). Religious fathers, both married and divorced, were found to be more involved (King, 2003). Further, being religious seemed to have effectively helped fathers in challenging circumstances (Dollahite, Marks, & Olson, 2002). In relation to religious influence, however, Palkovitz and Palm (1998) pointed out the possibility that, instead of religion that impacted fathering, it could be father roles that a man was engaged in that promoted the development of religious values, faith, and morals in fathers.

As indicated in the review of literature in this section, parenting behavior was found to be impacted by many factors, including biological elements, interpersonal relationships, and socio-demographic factors. It would be a concern of the researcher whether or not these factors are mentioned also in the response of the participants in this study, as well as whether or not any new factors are revealed.

Summary

As revealed in the review of literature in this chapter, fathers' efforts in paternal parenting are believed to positively impact development of their children as well as fathers themselves. It was also revealed that defining a

good father view is not necessarily easy, as there are multiple views of what it means to be a good father, which could also vary depending on the socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, both biological and contextual factors of various kinds, including age, ethnicity, past experience, marital relationship, and socio-cultural influence, are likely to play important roles in how parents view what it means to be a good father.

Views of fathers who currently strive to be a good father may not necessarily be the same with the views stated by the researchers. Changes taking place in our society are rapid and drastic, including increased maternal employment, divorce, and the economy. Impact of technological advancement, such as cable TV, internet, cell phone, video games, and instant messaging, on parenting is also assumed to be great. Due to these reasons, it would be worthwhile to investigate views of what it means to be a good father of the fathers and the mothers who are currently engaged in raising young children and compare them with those proposed by the scholars.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Design

An IRB approved study was conducted in 2003-2004 by Hakoyama (2004) for his master's thesis under the supervision of Drs. Camarena, Long, Angera, and Hagens at Central Michigan University. The study was designed to examine good father views and two sets of survey instruments, one for the male parents and the other for the female parents, were developed by the researcher. Each survey consisted of eleven open-ended questions, seven of which also contained 7-point Likert scales, and ten demographic questions. The top page of the survey described the purpose, anonymity, voluntary nature of the survey, contact information, and the instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires. A copy of the male survey and a copy of the female survey were folded and placed separately in an unsealed envelope. Both were placed in a larger envelope to be distributed to the parents of two-parent families through their children attending the CMU Human Growth and Development Laboratory and two affiliated childcare centers.

Parents were asked to respond to the survey by themselves without consulting with anyone or any other resources. The survey, when it was finished, was to be placed back in the envelope and sealed, then placed in a pair into the larger envelope, which was to be returned to the return box prepared in the childcare centers. A reminder was distributed approximately

two weeks after the surveys were distributed. Surveys were distributed to approximately 120 families altogether.

Of the total of 54 surveys returned, 25 surveys were by fathers and 29 by mothers. Only 25 surveys by fathers were analyzed for the M.A. Thesis. Research questions addressed were the following two questions.

- 1) How do fathers define their own ideas about what it means to be a “good” father?
- 2) How do fathers construct their own idea of what it means to be a good father?

Although there were eleven questions related to fatherhood in the survey, in order to answer the two research questions addressed, data analysis focused on the first open-ended question that asked the participants their views of good fathering. The participants’ responses were analyzed and categorized according to the properties contained in their comments. The participants (25 fathers) were further categorized into six father types: responsible father, committed father, personal characteristic father, integrated father, role specific father, and abstract conceptual view oriented father. Participants’ responses to Question 2 (self-evaluation of fatherhood according to their good father views), Question 3 (source of idea of good father), and Question 11 (consciousness of being a father) were examined to better describe characteristics of the six father types. Relationships between father types and demographic variables were also examined.

Using the data collected by the author for the study for the M.A. Thesis described above, the current study was designed to compare good father views of the fathers with those of the mothers. While the previous study focused on the good father views of only the male respondents and examined responses of four of the eleven questions in the survey, the current study included female respondents to examine how good father views are similar or different between the male and female respondents. Not only the responses of the four questions examined in the previous study, but also the responses to other questions were included in the analysis. Also included in the current study was analysis of demographic variables.

Sample

Participants were fathers and mothers of children of two-parent families attending the Central Michigan University (CMU) Human Growth and Development Laboratory and two affiliated childcare centers in the central region of Michigan, who responded to the survey conducted for the M.A. Thesis. The participants responded voluntarily to an anonymous survey distributed through staff members at the childcare centers. Fifty-four parents responded and returned their surveys. Twenty-five of these respondents were males and labeled as #1m through #25m, and 29 were females and labeled as #1f through #23f and #26f through #31f (#1 through #23 of each gender were couples.) Of the 54 respondents, 59.3% were between 24 and 36 years old and 81.5% were Euro-American. Because the current study focused on the couples,

eight respondents (two males and six females) were excluded, as their spouses did not respond.

Procedure

This study focused on good father views of both the fathers and the mothers. Therefore, survey responses of parents of two-parent families were selected. Responses of 46 parents (23 fathers and 23 mothers) were examined.

Data Collection

All the data that are to be analyzed for the current study were collected by the researcher in 2003-2004 as a part of the IRB approved study for his master's thesis. Therefore, the current dissertation study does not involve data collection process. It is a secondary analysis of existing data.

Qualitative Analysis

In order to analyze qualitative data obtained through open-ended survey questions, the constant comparative method, introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and recommended by Dey (1999) was utilized. Instructions on the analysis process of the grounded theory by Charmaz (2000) were referred to as a guide.

There are four stages in the process of the constant comparative method; 1) comparison, 2) integration, 2) delimitation, and 4) theorization. The processes of each stage are as follows:

- 1) Comparison – This is a process of defining and categorizing data through the assignment of codes. One incident is compared with

another, and by further comparison new incidents and categories emerge, which results in the evolution of new categories.

- 2) Integration – This is a stage of integrating categories and their properties, of clarifying the similarities and differences within and between categories.
- 3) Delimitation – This is the third stage which delimits the theory and categories. The major modifications become fewer as the comparison of the next incidents of a category to its properties continues. This process will eventually lead to the reduction of categories and properties, which allows a smaller number of concepts to formulate a theory.
- 4) Theorization – This is the final stage in which a conclusive theory is written, based on well-organized coded data and a solidified theory developed throughout the constant comparative process.

Participants' responses to open-ended questions were reproduced in Microsoft Word and printed out to be analyzed.

Terms Applied for Qualitative Analysis

A few terms will be applied in the process of the following qualitative analysis. A comment refers to words or phrases that contain a property (meaning or concept). A response refers to the whole response to each question which is likely to contain one or more comments.

Indicator of Methodological Rigor

For the purpose of increasing the rigor of the results of the analyses, the whole process of the constant comparative method was repeated when it was completed. The results of both analyses were compared. When discrepancies arose between the two results, the processes were repeated again until discrepancies disappeared.

Subjectivity of analysis

In qualitative research, data analyses as well as interpretation of the results are frequently affected by the biases of the researchers due to the contextual factors such as culture, religion, ethnicity, educational background, and socio-economic status. Therefore, personal characteristics of the researcher are provided below.

The researcher of this study is a Japanese male who is a father of four children, three sons and a daughter. He is married for 24 years with his first wife who is also Japanese. He has been a father for 22 years. He has also experienced three distinctive cultures: Japanese, Samoan, and American. He has also visited numerous countries including Australia, New Zealand, England, and several Pacific Island nations. Although the researcher has had university education and lived for almost ten years in the U.S.A., English is his second language and his cognitive process of how he interprets the results will not be exactly the same as that of a native English speaker. Because the researcher is tri-cultural and bilingual, his interpretations might not also be

exactly the same as those of others who are mono-cultural or monolingual.

While some of these characteristics pertaining to the researcher, such as being U.S. non-native, could be disadvantageous, some other characteristics, such as being a father of four children and being tri-cultural, may lead to findings that would otherwise be taken for granted and overlooked.

Having been aware of these personal characteristics that may influence the analysis process and having explicitly stated here is expected to be beneficial for the researcher as well as others who are interested in the findings of this study.

Descriptive Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the participants' responses to 7-point Likert scale variables, demographic questions, and some of the coded qualitative data, were analyzed by utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to provide descriptive statistics.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Survey responses of 46 parents (23 couples) were analyzed. While 56.5% (13/23) of the male participants were between 24 and 36 years old and 34.8% (8/23) were between 37 and 49 years old, 60.9% (14/23) of the female participants were between 24 and 36 years old and 26.1% (6/23) were between 37 and 49 years old. 86.0% of the respondents were (18 males and 19 females) Euro-Americans. While 69.6% (16/23) of the female respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher, 52.2% (12/23) of the male respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher. Nearly one half (11/23) of the male respondents had an individual annual income of \$40,000 or higher, while less than 10% (2/23) of the female respondents had an individual annual income of \$0,000 or higher. Of the 23 couples, nine couples were married for 6-10 years and six couples for 11-15 years. Nearly three quarters (17/23) of the couples had two or three children.

The survey included eleven questions, seven of which contained 7-point Likert scales as well, and ten demographic questions. The core of the current study was to examine views of being a good father of both the male and female participants and compare them. A question that asked the participants to describe their views on a good father was addressed in Question 1 in the survey with the following open-ended question: "In your own words, please describe what you think a 'good' father should be like." Other questions in the

survey were asked to help understand respondents' good father views described in Question 1. The following sections are devoted to answering five research questions stated in Chapter 1.

Question 1: How do fathers and mothers describe good fathers?

This section focuses on analysis of the participants' responses to Question 1 in the survey that asked parents to describe their good father views. The responses of the fathers ranged from 9 to 96 words (mean = 43.57, SD = 23.407), and those of the mothers ranged from 15 to 82 words (mean = 42.52, SD = 18.942).

Utilizing the constant comparative method, 238 comments were identified, 111 of which were by fathers and 127 by mothers. The number of comments per response ranged from 2 to 12 (mean = 5.17, SD = 2.122). The number of comments per response of the male parents ranged from 2 to 10 (mean = 4.83, SD = 1.899), while that of the female parents ranged from 3 to 12 (mean = 5.52, SD = 2.313).

Fathers' Views of a Good Father

This section analyzes responses by the fathers. Focusing on the descriptive content of the comments (the meaning of verbally expressed ideas), comments by the fathers were classified into six categories: involvement, expressed affection, child-centeredness, mentor, guardian, and prerequisites for being a good father.

Of the 111 comments identified in the responses of 23 fathers, nine

comments belonged to the involvement category, nine to the expressed affection category, 14 to the child-centeredness category, 28 to the mentor category, 22 to the guardian category, and 29 to the prerequisites for being a good father category. Description of each category and some examples are as follows.

Involvement.

Comments belonging to the involved category contained properties that were descriptive of the importance of a father spending time and sharing daily activities with his children. Some examples of comments are “I think that a good father needs to take time to participate in his children’s activities” (#1m), “spend time with children” (#11m), and “participate in the daily life of his children” (#14m).

Of the responses by 23 fathers, nine included the comments in this category. None of these nine responses included more than one comment in this category. None included any specific expression that indicated that involvement was the most important element in being a good father. Considering the tendency that the respondents in this study were likely to include more than one comment of a category in a response or add a specific phrase such as most importantly when they wanted to emphasize the importance of a specific idea; these results imply that, although more than one third of the fathers in this study were aware of the importance of being involved in their children’s life, it seems less likely that they viewed

involvement to be the single most important factor in being a good father.

Expressed affection.

Comments in the expressed affection category included properties expressing parental love with an emphasis on being expressive as well as being understood by their children. Some of the examples are “constantly telling them how much he loves them and how special they are” (#6m), “a good father has unconditional love for children” (#12m), and “I believe a good father is one who gives lots of love to his children” (#19m).

Nine of the 23 fathers included comments in this category. It is noteworthy that one third of these comments included an expression of “unconditional love.” These results indicate that fathers think it is important to express their love in the way their children understand that they are loved.

Child-centeredness.

Comments that belong to the child-centeredness category contained properties that described the importance of assisting children and maintaining peer-like relationships. Some examples are “he should be a good friend to his child” (#7m), “the child should be the number one priority” (#7m), and “I think a good father should be there as a friend” (#21m).

More than one half (12/23) of the responses included comments in this category and two of them included more than one comment in this category. A few of these responses indicated child-centeredness to be the central construct of their good father views.

These results imply that rather than being an authoritarian figure, many fathers in this study think it is important for a good father to maintain friend-like relationships with his children.

Mentor.

Comments in the mentor category contained properties emphasizing the father's role as a guide and a figure to be modeled. Some examples include "male role model" (#2m), "he should guide the child through their issues" (#3m), "he should be a good role model" (#9m), "be a good example for their children" (#10m), and "teach them to make good decisions" (#11m).

More than three quarters of the responses (18/23) included comments in this category, and seven of these responses included two or more comments belonging to this category. These results indicate that being a role model or a guide is viewed as one of the important qualities for being a good father. It is also indicated that some of the fathers in this study viewed mentor quality as the central construct for being a good father.

Guardian.

Comments in the guardian category indicated the importance of father as protector, provider, and disciplinarian who takes responsibility of raising children correctly. Some of the examples are "being a good \$ provider" (#5m), "a good father should also provide safety for his child" (#7m), and "a disciplinarian when needed" (#20m).

More than two thirds (16/23) of the responses included comments in

this category and five of them included two comments that belong to this category. Although it did not appear that guardian quality to be the single most important element in being a good father, many fathers thought that traditionally held father roles as being a provider, protector and disciplinarian were still part of the father responsibilities.

Prerequisites for being a good father.

Comments that were classified into the prerequisites for being a good father category contained properties that expressed personal characteristics and abilities of a man for him in pursuing to become a good father, which included physical presence, knowledge on child development, positive marital relationship, and state of mind. Some of the examples that belong to this category are “a man of integrity” (#8m), “available” (#8m), aware of adequate child development” (#14m), “patient” (#15m), and “be educated” (#17m).

More than one half (14/23) of the responses included comments in this category and five of these responses included three or more comments in this category. It was apparent that some fathers described their good father views in terms of the personal quality that is required in being a good father.

Category prevalence.

Prevalence of comments in each response with regard to their categories is examined in this section. This is to examine multi-categoricalness of the participants’ views as well as what categories are more recognized as important characteristics for being a good father.

The number of comment categories in a response ranged from 2 to 6 (mean = 3.39, SD = 1.118). It was revealed that the largest number of fathers included comments in the mentor category (18/23), followed by comments in the guardian category (16/23).

Every father included comments of two or more categories in his response. Fathers with comments of three categories were most common (9/23), followed by fathers with comments of two categories (5/23) and four categories (5/23). When the patterns of combination of comment categories in each response were examined, it was revealed that the combination of the mentor and the child-centeredness was most frequent, followed by the mentor and the guardian. The most frequent combination pattern of three categories was the mentor, the guardian, and the child-centeredness. Also, some fathers viewed personal quality, the ideas represented by the comments in the prerequisites for being a good father to be very important for them to pursue to become a good father.

These results indicate that good father views described by the fathers in this study are multi-categorical. While the views represented by comments in the child-centeredness (e.g., the child's needs should be the number one priority, a desire to establish peer-like relationships with children) were likely to be one of the important components of the respondents' good father views, the fathers in this study tended to view traditionally valued father roles belonging to the mentor and the guardian categories, such as provider,

protector, disciplinarian, and role model, as an important part of their father responsibilities.

Mothers' views of a Good Father

Again utilizing the constant comparative method, responses of the mothers to Question 1 were analyzed. Comments belonging to all six categories previously identified in the fathers' comments were all present. There were comments, however, that did not fit into these six categories, which were classified into two newly added categories: caretaker and parental equality.

Of the 127 comments, 17 comments belonged to the involvement category, 19 to the expressed affection category, 26 to the child-centeredness category, 19 to the mentor category, 15 to the guardian category, 23 to the prerequisites for being a good father category, three to the caretaker category, and five to the parental equality category. Examples of the comments for each of these eight categories and description of the two additional categories (caretaker and parental equality) are as follows.

Involvement.

Examples of the comments belonging to the involvement category by the mothers are "a good father goes to his kids' school activities and athletic activities" (#6f), "a man who spends time with his children" (#18f), and "I think a good father is a dad who is involved with their children" (#19f).

Of the 23 responses, 15 responses included comments in this category,

two of which included more than one comment. Several mothers stated the importance of involvement at first in the response, followed by comments in the other categories which served to explain more concretely how a father should be involved in his child's life. These results indicate that for some mothers involvement is one of the major factors for their husbands in being a good father.

Expressed affection.

Some examples of the comments in this category that the mothers expressed are "he should be openly loving" (#1f), "a 'good' father should show affection towards his children" (#2f), "most importantly he loves his child unconditionally" (#4f), "always letting the child know that they are loved" (#7f), and "a good father is someone who loves their child unconditionally" (#23f).

More than two thirds of the responses (16/23) included comments in this category, two of which included more than one comment that belonged to this category. Two respondents who included comments in this category in their responses indicated that unconditional love was one of the most important components for being a good father.

Child-centeredness.

Examples of the comments by the mothers that expressed the importance of having the children in the center of life include "do just about anything for them" (#18f), and "a good father should put his children first no

matter what” (#23f).

Nearly three quarters (17/23) of the responses included comments in this category, 41% (7/17) of which included more than one comment in this category. It was apparent that many mothers think that it is very important for a father to have his children’s life in the center of his concern and try to be as supportive as possible.

Mentor.

Some of the examples of the comments in this category by the mothers are “a good role model for the child” (#8f), “he is a role model of kindness, honesty, and respect for others” (#9f), and “teaching, guiding their child” (#14f).

Less than one half (11/23) of the responses included comments in this category. Of the eleven responses that included comments in this category, three responses included two comments in this category and three responses included three or more comments. These results indicate that although mentor role is not as popular as other father roles, a few mothers view that being an educator is one of the distinctive father roles.

Guardian.

Examples of the comments by the mother in the guardian category are “he should discipline fairly” (#1f), “...yet still enforce discipline at an appropriate degree related to the child’s age and infraction” (#5f), “helps create a safe and structured home life” (#16f), “he would protect them from

harm” (#18f), and “a good father should work and support his family” (#21f).

Slightly less than one half of the responses (11/23) included comments in this category. It is likely that the mothers in this study view traditional father roles such as provider, protector, and disciplinarian to be not as important for a father as being involved in his child’s life or expressing love to his children.

Prerequisites for being a good father.

Some of the examples of comments in this category by the mothers include “available for routine needs” (#3f), “a good father should be patient” (#5f), and “open-minded man so as to be understanding of a child’s changing developmental and emotional needs” (#5f).

Of the 23 responses, 12 included comments in this category, four of which included three or more comments in this category. Although not as apparent as involvement or affection, some mothers see that father characteristics such as being educated, patient, and open-minded are important factors for a father in pursuing to become a good father.

Caretaker.

This category emerged as there were several comments that did not fit into the categories previously created. Comments in the caretaker category contained properties that emphasized the importance of a father in being active in everyday childrearing practice, which was traditionally associated with the mother’s role as a caretaker. Examples of the comments include “be

involved in their everyday care, from diapering and feeding to bathing, and kissing boo-boos” (#2f), “a good caretaker” (#17f), and “care-giving responsibilities” (#20f).

Three of the 23 responses included comments in this category. Although there were only a few responses that contained comments in this category, this result is noteworthy, as these comments characterize the female parents’ views of a good father.

Parental equality.

This category was created as, though not many, there were comments that did not fit into any of the seven categories previously created. Comments in this parental equality category contained properties that emphasized gender-neutral parenting views in which little distinction was made between paternal parenting and maternal parenting. Examples of the comments are “a ‘good’ father is the same as a ‘good’ mother” (#14f), and “a good father should be a partner in all aspects of raising children” (#20f).

Only three of the 23 responses included comments in this category. However, two of them indicated that parental equality was their major importance for being a good father.

Category prevalence.

The number of comment categories in a response ranged from 2 to 8 (mean = 3.83, SD = 1.154). It was revealed that the largest number of mothers included comments in the child-centeredness category (17/23), followed by

comments in the expressed affection category (16/23) and the involvement category (15/23).

Every mother except one contained comments of three or more categories in her response. Mothers with comments of four categories were most common (11/23), followed by mothers with comments of three categories (8/23). When the patterns of combination of two comment categories in each response were examined, it was revealed that the combination of the expressed affection and the child-centeredness was most frequent. Also, category patterns consisting of any three of the five categories – involvement, expressed affection, child-centeredness, and prerequisites for being a good father – were equally prevalent among responses that contained three or more categories.

These results indicate that good father views described by the mothers in this study are multi-categorical. Their views are represented by the child-centeredness, the expressed affection, and the involvement categories. Comments in the mentor and the guardian categories were present among the responses by the mothers. However, these traditional father roles do not seem to be the central construct of good father views for the mothers in this study.

Question 2: How are mothers' and fathers' views of good father different or similar?

Responses of both the fathers and the mothers contained more than one comment and more than three quarters of the responses in each gender

(18/23) included 3 to 6 comments. When comments in each response were examined in terms of category, all responses were multi-categorical, which means that each response included at least two comments, each of which belonged to different categories. The number of comment categories in each response ranged from two to four for more than 80% (19/23) of the male parents, while that in each response for the same number (19/23) of the female parents ranged from three to four.

While comments in the mentor category were most prevalent among the responses by the fathers (18/23), followed by comments in the guardian category (16/23); comments in the child-centeredness category were most prevalent among the responses by the mothers (17/23), followed by comments in the expressed affection category (16/23). Also, it is noteworthy that, although a few (3/23), responses by only the mothers included comments in the caretaker category as well as comments in the parental equality category (3/23).

These results indicate that, although good father views of the fathers overlap with those of the mothers, they are not exactly the same. For instance, responses by the mothers contained comments in two categories, caretaker and parental equality that were not included in responses by the fathers. Also, while the other six comment categories were shared by both the fathers and the mothers, the difference in prevalence suggests that what is thought to be important as a father is different between the fathers and the mothers.

Many responses by the fathers contained comments belonging to the mentor (18/23) and the guardian (16/23) categories, suggesting that the traditionally valued father roles such as financial provider, protector, role model, and disciplinarian are still viewed important by the fathers. Many responses by the mothers, on the other hand, contained comments belonging to the child-centeredness (17/23), the expressed-affection (16/23), and the involvement (15/23) categories, suggesting that the mothers are likely to view being loving, friendly and involved in the child's life to be very important father qualities. Furthermore, although the number was small, there were a few responses by the mothers that mentioned the importance of a father in actively participating in everyday caretaking activities. Also, there were a few responses by the mothers that included comments indicating that there is no difference between a good mother and a good father. Both of these views were mentioned only by the mothers. Table 1 and Figure 1 below illustrate similarities and differences between fathers' views of a good father and mothers' views of a good father.

Table 1. Comment Categories in a Response

Comment Category	Father	Mother
Involvement	9/23	15/23
Expressed affection	9/23	16/23
Child-centeredness	12/23	17/23
Mentor	18/23	11/23
Guardian	16/23	11/23
Prerequisites for being a good father	14/23	12/23
Caretaker	-----	3/23
Parental equality	-----	3/23

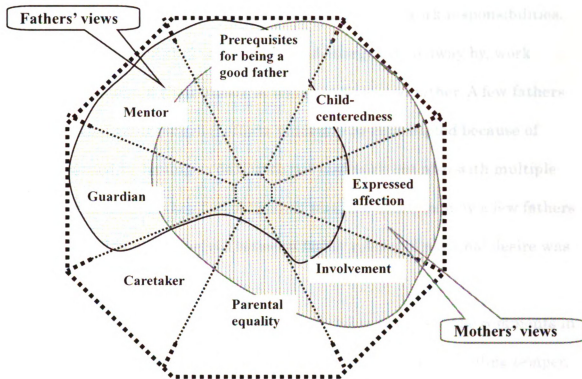


Figure 1. Views of Being a Good Father

Fathers' views tended to center around the mentor and the guardian categories, while mothers' views tended to be more diverse and center around the involvement, child-centeredness, and expressed affection categories.

Question 3: What factors are perceived by fathers and mothers to have contributed to fathers' efforts to be a good father or hindered them from being good fathers?

Fathers' Perception of Influential Factors in their Efforts to Be a Good Father

Time was the factor mentioned most frequently by the fathers in this study that influenced their efforts to be a good father. They indicated that whether or not they manage to find enough time to be with their family was

the key. Many fathers thought that they did not have enough time or flexibility to be with their children due mainly to their work responsibilities. It was also mentioned that stress from, and energy taken away by, work negatively influenced their efforts in trying to be a good father. A few fathers mentioned that their paternal efforts tended to be interrupted because of overload caused by having to deal with not just work but also with multiple father responsibilities they feel obliged. It was also mentioned by a few fathers that how to balance themselves between father roles and personal desire was the key.

Other factors mentioned by the fathers were related to the comments in the prerequisites for being a good father category, such as controlling temper, ability to be patient, and having understanding of children's developmental needs. Also, there was a comment that mentioned that having waited until mature age to become a parent contributed to his being a good father.

These results indicate that the fathers in this study are aware that being a good provider, though important, is not good enough for being a good father; and they tend to struggle to find time to actively take multiple responsibilities.

Mothers' Perception of Influential Factors in their Spouses' Efforts to Be a Good Father

Time was frequently mentioned by the mothers as a factor that influenced their spouses in their efforts to be a good father. They thought that

although their husbands tried to act according to their good father beliefs, they either found not having enough time or experienced time conflict. Work was also mentioned frequently as an interrelated factor that influenced their husbands' efforts in trying to do well as a father. They indicated that their husbands tended to struggle to find time or energy needed to strive to be good fathers due to long hours required for and stress from work.

Other factors mentioned by the mothers that influenced their husbands' fathering efforts include anger management, level of self-confidence, childhood experience, and child factor. A few mothers mentioned that their husbands sometimes failed to control their temper toward their children as well as toward their spouses. There were a few other mothers who thought that indecisiveness and lack of confidence in parenting behavior hindered their husbands from being better fathers. A couple of other mothers thought that their husbands' fathering attitudes and behaviors were influenced by how they were raised. They thought that not having a good role model during the childhood made a man difficult to be a good father. One mother mentioned that her husband struggled to be a good father due to their daughter being a mother's girl.

These results imply that it is expected for a father to spend quite a bit of his time with his children even during regular working days, and not having been able to do so, even though it was for him to satisfy a financial provider role, is a negative factor for being a good father. These results are

reflective of multiple responsibilities expected of a good father as defined by the respondents.

Question 4: How do spousal factors, such as the mother's view of a good father, perceived competence of her husband as a father, and past experience with her own father, relate to the father's efforts to be a good father?

Fathers' Responses

This section analyzes spousal factors that are thought to be influential for a father in trying to be a good father. Analyzed were fathers' perception of their spouses' evaluation on them as fathers in relation to their self-evaluation and their perception of their wives' supportiveness.

Fathers in this study were asked to respond to the 7-point Likert scales (1 = Not at all good, 7 = Very good) for self-evaluation of their efforts in being a good father, their perception of how their spouses rate them as fathers, and their spouses' supportiveness in their efforts to be good fathers, all of which were accompanied by qualitative comments explaining their ratings.

For 20 of the 23 fathers, there was no incongruity in the ratings between their self-evaluation and their perception of their spouses' rating, and their comments were positive in general. Of these 20 fathers, three fathers rated themselves 7 and thought that their wives rated them also 7, nine fathers rated 6 for both ratings, seven fathers rated 5, and one father rated 4. Of these 20 fathers, all 12 fathers whose ratings were 6 or higher also rated 6

or higher for their wives' supportiveness.

For instance, Respondent #1m rated himself 6 for his being a good father and he thought his wife would also rate him 6, and he then stated, "My wife knows that I love my children and that I'm willing to help her with her responsibilities if the daily routine changes." He, then, rated 7 for his wife's supportiveness and stated, "My wife likes to see me spend time with the kids. She is always willing to listen to my opinion on anything that involves our family."

Respondent #7m rated himself 7 and he thought his wife would rate him 7. Then he stated the reason for his perception of his wife's evaluation as, "She knows and tells me often that I am a great parent." His rating for his wife's supportiveness was also 7 and stated, "We collaborate on all major decisions and enforce all rules equally." Respondent #9m, whose ratings for himself and his assumption of his wife's rating for him as a father were both 6, stated the reason as, "I know she thinks I'm a pretty good father. We talk about our parenting a lot." His rating of his wife's supportiveness was 7 and explained the reason as, "We both support each other completely."

Two fathers thought that their wives' ratings on them were lower than their self-evaluations and one father thought the other way around. For instance, Respondent #23m rated himself 6 but thought his wife would rate him 4 and stated the reason for why he thought his wife would rate him lower as, "She does not always let me be the father I want to be." His ratings of his

wife's supportiveness was 4 and explained the reason as, "We were raised differently so we don't always agree on how things should be done."

Respondent #8m rated himself 4 while he thought his wife would rate him 6. He stated the reason why he thought his wife would rate him higher than his own rating as, "She gives me a lot of credit." His rating of his wife's supportiveness was 7 and he stated the reason as, "She encourages me all of the time."

These results indicate that fathers in this study were likely to take into account their wives' views in their efforts to be good fathers and the wives' encouragements were likely to positively influence the fathers' efforts in trying to be good fathers. Fathers who perceived their spouses as supportive in their efforts in trying to be good fathers were also likely to view themselves as successful in being good fathers.

Mothers' Responses

This section analyzes mothers' responses related to the factors that influenced their good father views. Mothers in this study were asked to state what they thought has influenced their good father views.

Almost all mothers mentioned past experience with their parents, particularly their own father, as one of the major factors that influenced their good father views. Some examples are "From my parents. My father was always working, so my mother would have to fulfill both sides (male and female) of our parenting" (Respondent #1f); "Of course my perception of a good

father comes from my own father and how I was raised” (Respondent #2f); “I think I got it from the way my dad was with us and I want my kids to experience the same things I got with my dad” (Respondent #19f); and “My own father. My dad was always kind and supportive, as a father should be” (Respondent #23f). Some other factors mentioned by the mothers include religion, husband, TV, and parenting classes.

Mothers in this study were also asked to rate their relationships with their own fathers (1 = Not Good at all, 7 = Very Good). They were also asked to describe how their past experiences with their fathers might have influenced them in their expectations on their spouses/partners as being a good father.

Their ratings varied from 1 to 7 (mean = 5.00, SD = 1.859). Of the 23 mothers, 12 mothers rated 6 or higher, eight mothers rated 3-5, and three mothers rated 2 or lower. Some of the qualitative comments provided by these mothers described how their experiences with their own father have influenced their expectations on their spouses as fathers. For example, Respondent #10f who rated 7 for her relationship with her own father stated her perception of the influence of her experience with her father on her spouse’s efforts in being a good father as the following:

Big influence! I have very high expectations for my partner. But I know that we are not automatically made perfect parents just because we have a child. The key is a desire to be better and do better and to be aware of what we are doing. I feel my husband

has that desire to learn and do better and I can see the progress he is making. He is becoming a great father and I'm very happy with that.

Respondent #13f rated 3 for her relationship with her own father and stated the influence as the following:

My father was abusive. I don't want that for my son. My dad never took quality time for me and that is something I always wanted. So I want my son to have the same father love, special love is what I mean.

Respondent #14f rated 1 and stated the influence as, "I choose to be with a person with a very different personality than my father." Respondent #16f rated 6 and stated the influence as "My relationship with my dad was wonderful so I want my children to have that type of relationship with their father."

Respondent #17f who rated 4 stated the influence as the following:

My father worked all the time and when he got home in the evening he sat down and watched TV and on the weekends he worked around the house. There was no time for kids. I believe that I do not have a lot of patience for my spouse taking time for himself and always expect him to be doing something because of my upbringing.

These results indicate that past experience particularly with their own

fathers was likely to be one of the major influences for mothers in their construction of good father views as well as their expectations of their husbands in being good fathers. Mothers who had wonderful experiences with their fathers were likely to expect the same high quality in their husbands for their fathering efforts. Mothers who had poor experiences, on the other hand, expect their husbands not to act like their own fathers and they try to influence their husbands to act how they wished their fathers to have acted.

Question 5: To what extent are good father views and associated factors expressed by the fathers and mothers consistent with good father views and associated factors described in current literature?

Good Father Views

Following the processes of the constant comparative method, responses of the participants to the question that asked them to describe their good father views were analyzed, as a result of which 238 comments were identified. Focusing on the descriptive content of the comments (the meaning of verbally expressed ideas), these comments were classified into eight categories: involvement, expressed affection, child-centeredness, mentor, guardian, prerequisites for being a good father, caretaker, and parental equality. These categories emerged in this study are not identical to those described in current literature. However, many of the comments included in each of these categories compare with the elements of a good father mentioned in previous studies.

Comments in the involvement category were expressive of the importance of a father spending time with and sharing daily activities with his children. This view that values paternal involvement in the child's daily life is consistent with the good father views proposed by many scholars and researchers (e.g., Biller, 1993; Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent, & Hill, 1993; Palkovitz, 2002; McBride & Rane, 1997; Sanderson, 2000; Miller-Scher, 1997). Doherty, Kouneski and Erickson (1998) who promoted *responsible fathering* also included being involved in child-rearing as one of the domains for being a responsible father.

Being a male role model, one of the elements in the mentor category in this study, was also consistent with current literature that revealed the importance of a father as a figure to be modeled (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003). To be available or to be present, one of the elements consisting of the prerequisites for being a good father category, was also mentioned as one of the important properties for responsible fathering proposed by Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998).

Comments in the guardian category indicated the importance of father as protector, provider, and disciplinarian. These elements were also discussed in previous studies as part of father roles. For instance, Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) stated that, even though providing role of the father was made less visible by many societal changes, being a good provider remains one of the important father roles, which is considered to be a form of paternal

involvement having a significant impact on child development. Providing watchful protection for the mother-infant dyad as the head of household was stated in current literature as one of the qualities of being a good father that remains to be important (Diamond, 1997). Although quality similar to this was mentioned by the respondents in this study, the idea of the head of household was not explicitly mentioned.

Comments in the parental equality category in this study emphasized the importance of both parents engaging in all aspects of parenting equally. This view is consistent with gender-neutral, equal parenting proposed by Deutsch (1999). However, it must be noted that comments in the parental equality category were found only in the response of female participants.

Comments in the expressed affection category in this study emphasized the importance of paternal love. Many of these comments described the importance of fathers to be explicitly expressive of their parental love in order for their children to be well conscious of their being loved. Some respondents indicated, by choosing the expression *unconditional love*, that paternal love needs to be the ultimate condition, and some mothers indicated this idea to be their central construct of what it means to be a good father. There have been previous studies that mentioned paternal love as one of the factors that affect child development (e.g., Thisdelle, 1996; Jain & Jain, 1998). Summers and colleagues, who examined how low-income fathers construct their roles for being a good father, identified four types of roles (providing a stable

environment, teaching, physical interaction, and emotional support), and mentioned providing love as one of the examples of emotional support. The meaning which the comments in the expressed affection category in this study convey, however, was not included as a major element of good fathering in other good father views provided in current literature despite their multi-categoricalness.

Associated Factors

Current literature has provided many factors that were found to be associated with paternal parenting. This section focuses on analysis of the participants' perception on three factors: father identity, quality of marital relationships, and child characteristics.

Father identity.

Fathers in this study were asked to rate (1= Not at all, 7 = Very much) how much thought they have given to what it means to be a good father. Their responses ranged from 2 to 7 (mean = 5.65, SD = 1.555). Of the 23 fathers, 17 fathers (73.9%) rated 6 or higher, while 4 fathers (17.4%) rated 3 or lower. These fathers were asked also to provide qualitative explanation. Some examples of comments whose ratings were high are "It is important to me to be a good father" (#18m, rating = 7), "Fatherhood has always been a goal" (#12m, rating = 6), "I always look for more ways to help me as a father" (#9m, rating = 6), and "I probably think about it more than most guys. Even long before I was a father I thought about it" (#13m, rating = 6). Some examples

of the response by the fathers whose ratings were low are “I never really thought about it” (#19m, rating = 3), and “I am comfortable with the way I father my children” (#20m, rating = 2).

It was also revealed that 84.6% (11/13) of the respondents who rated themselves 6 or higher on their self-evaluation of being a good father also rated 6 or higher on their conscious efforts to be a good father. High ratings and positive comments provided by nearly three quarters of the fathers, along with their high self-evaluation of being a good father, indicate that it is one of the important elements for fathers to be conscious of fatherhood and trying hard to be a better father. These results do not seem to contradict the findings of previous studies that indicated the association between paternal identity and parenting (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998; Miller-Scher, 1997).

Quality of marital relationships.

Respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of their marital relationships (1 = Not at all Good, 7 = Very Good). Responses by the male parents ranged from 4 to 7 (mean = 6.0, SD = 1.087), and those by the female respondents ranged from 4 to 7 (mean = 5.91, SD = 1.041). They were also asked to provide reasons for their ratings.

More than two thirds of the fathers (16/23) rated 6 or higher, while slightly fewer mothers (14/23) rated 6 or higher. Some examples of the reasons provided by the male respondents who rated 6 or higher on their marital relationship quality are “We have a great relationship! We have our

disagreements like everyone but we really communicate well with each other. We are best friends" (#5m, rating = 7), "I think we have a real healthy relationship" (#9m, rating = 7), and "We help each other in raising our children in righteous way. We love and understand each other" (#10m, rating = 6). Examples of the comments by the female respondents are "We have had a wonderful marriage both before and after parenthood" (#9f, rating = 7), "We communicate well and have a lot of fun together and as a family" (#12f, rating = 7), and "We share a lot of things together. If something bothers us we talk about it and we both know how to compromise" (#15f, rating = 6).

Participants' responses were also examined in a pair by combining the ratings of both parents in each family (possible lowest score = 0, possible highest score = 14). The rating ranged from 8 to 14 (mean = 11.91, SD = 1.857). Of the 23 couples, six couples (26.1%) scored 14, while six couples (26.1%) scored 10 or lower.

These results were compared with the participants' responses to Question 2 in the survey that asked male participants to rate themselves using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all Good, 7 = Very Good) for being a good father; and that asked female participants to rate their husbands for being a good father. These ratings of the father and the mother in each family were also combined (possible lowest score = 0, possible highest score = 14). The scores ranged from 9 to 14 (mean = 11.87, SD = 1.392). While two couples scored 14, five couples scored 10 or lower. The ratings of the good father

evaluation and the marital quality were then compared. Both couples who scored 14 on the good father evaluation also scored 14 on the marital quality. More interestingly, all five couples who scored 10 or lower on the good father evaluation also scored the lowest on the marital quality rating. Qualitative comments by these respondents whose ratings of the marital quality were low also were reflective of their ratings. For instance Respondent #4m (self-evaluation rating = 4, marital quality rating = 4) stated, "Problem is she complains all the time about everything. So it puts me in a bad mood. I like being together and doing things together when she isn't complaining." Respondent #4f, his spouse (evaluation rating of her husband as a father = 5, marital quality rating = 5), stated, "I love my husband a lot but feel he can be very selfish. I also feel I can't really talk to him about things. He does help out around the house but not as much as I'd like. I don't feel I am appreciated by him."

Respondent #11m (self-evaluation rating = 5, marital quality rating 4) stated, "Having the children has taken the focus off the spouse, and put it on the children. I think this changes the relationship not always for the better in the short term, but long term it will get better I believe." Respondent #11f, his spouse (evaluation rating of her spouse as a father = 5, marital quality rating = 4), stated, "We are spending little time together with the time demands of two young children. We also argue about money too much."

These results do not seem to contradict the findings of previous studies

that pointed out marital quality as one of the factors that are associated with paternal parenting (e.g., De Luccie, 1995; Mansfield, 2005; Bumpass, 1990; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Bradford, 2002; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998).

Child characteristics.

Male parents were asked to rate (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much) their perception of influence of their children's gender on their efforts to be a good father. They were also asked to provide explanation for their ratings as well as their perception of other child factors that influenced their efforts to be a good father.

Their ratings ranged from 1 to 6 (mean = 2.04, SD = 1.870). Nearly 70% (16/23) of the respondents rated 1, while 17.4% (4/23) rated 5 or higher. It did not seem that these ratings were related to the gender or the age of their children.

Most of the comments provided by the fathers who rated 1 were short and they stated that gender did not matter in their efforts to be a good father. A few examples of the comments are "I really don't see it being a factor" (#5m), "Gender has no influence" (#12m), "It doesn't matter. I have a boy and a girl. I take them both fishing, we all play football or we all play with Barbies" (#19m), and "Gender does not make any difference to me" (#21m).

Fathers who rated higher tended to provide a more detailed explanation. Two fathers who rated 6 indicated that they feel more

comfortable parenting their sons than daughters as they know more about them and more to share with them. One father who rated 6 indicated that because boys and girls have goals and outlooks that were influenced by their genders, they needed to be treated differently. Responses of these fathers are provided in the following as they are expressive of their honest feelings about their fathering experience.

“I spend more time with my son. Because he likes sports like I do. I gravitate to do more with him. I try to play games with my daughter, but it seems more difficult to play for extended time” (#4m). “I would not know as much about a girl and her needs” (#7m). “There is definite difference between boys and girls so they do need to be treated differently. On the surface they need to be treated equally because they blow when they are not. However, they have different goals and outlooks that are influenced by their genders” (#17m).

Respondent #15m who rated 5 indicated the difference in his being more protective of his daughter than his son. Respondent #2m rated 4 and stated, “I tend to be a little harder on male children.” Also, one respondent (#3m) commented that child’s temperament was much more important than gender.

Female parents were asked to rate (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much) their perception of influence of their children’s gender on their husbands’ efforts to be a good father. Their ratings ranged from 1 to 7 (mean = 2.61, SD = 2.083).

While slightly more than 50% (12/23) of these mothers rated 1, 21.7% (5/23) rated 5 or higher. Their ratings did not seem to be related to their children's gender or age.

Some of the mothers who rated 1 provided no comments and those who provided comments tended to be short, which stated that either gender does not make any difference to them or their husbands were equally good fathers to both their sons and daughters. Some of the examples of the comments by the mothers who rated 1 on their perception of their husbands' efforts in being a good father are as follows: "My husband has been very consistent in treating our girls and our son the same. All rules apply the same" (#1f). "My husband is an equally good father to my son and daughter" (#12f). "It does not affect him at all. They are treated equally" (#19f).

Mothers who rated 5 or higher tended to provide a more detailed explanation. For instance, response by Respondent #4f who rated 7 was 135 words long, which expressed that her husband was much tougher and less affectionate with, and very critical of their son, due to his seeing a great potential in their son, while their daughter was the father's princess who could do no wrong in his eyes. Her husband, as introduced previously, also rated high (rating = 6) and commented that he spent more time with his son than with his daughter.

The other four mothers who rated 5 or higher had children of only one gender in the family (Two families had sons only and the other two had only

daughters). Respondent #11f (rating = 7) has two sons and no daughter but thought that her husband loved to play *boy* games such as wrestling, riding bikes, and playing with cars. Respondent #13f (rating = 6) who has one son also thought that her husband did more with their son because he was a boy and thought that her husband would play less frequently if they had a daughter. Respondent #20f (rating = 5) who has two daughters and no son thought that her husband would be more involved and play more if they had a son. It is interesting, however, that all but one of the husbands of these four mothers rated 1 or 2 and stated that gender of their children did not matter.

It was found that the majority of parents, both fathers and mothers, in this study thought that gender of their children did not influence paternal parenting. This is inconsistent with the findings of previous studies that indicated more father involvement with sons than with daughters (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002; Harris & Morgan, 1991). However, approximately one quarter of the parents in this study perceived that their children's gender influenced paternal parenting and their comments confirmed more father involvement with sons than daughters as stated in the previous studies (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002; Harris & Morgan, 1991).

Summary

This chapter included the findings related to each research question introduced in Chapter 1. By analyzing the participants' survey responses, good father views of the fathers as well as those of the mothers, differences

and similarities between the views of the fathers and those of the mothers, factors associated with the fathers' efforts in being a good father, and consistency between the findings of this study and current literature were presented. The next chapter presents discussion, implications, and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The following sections summarize, discuss, and draw conclusions about the findings provided in the previous chapter. The implications of the findings and the limitations of this study are also discussed.

Theoretical Perspectives

Ecological perspectives were utilized in conceptualization and construction of this study. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1997) emphasizes, along with the multilevel systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem) in identifying environmental factors, impact of proximal processes, stable continuous interaction involving the developing person within the microsystem. It also emphasizes contribution of biological factors of the developing person, such as ethnicity, age, and temperament. These elements and the general systems components (structural, dynamic, governing, information processing, interrelationship, disruptive, and life process components) which were incorporated into an ecological perspective proposed by Griffore and Phenice (2001) were taken into consideration in focusing on factors to be examined as well as in the process of data analysis and understanding of the findings.

When focusing on the father, marital relationships and spousal supportiveness are examples of proximal processes. The father's work and the direct source of information related to his fathering efforts belong to the

microsystem, mother (his wife)-child relationship belongs to the mesosystem, mother (his wife)-her father relationship belongs to the exosystem, and socio-cultural influences such as gender-neutral views belong to the macrosystem. Father characteristics identified and categorized into the prerequisites for being a good father category as well as age of the father are part of the biological factors.

The number of children in the family and the family structure such as whether there is a stepchild in the family are examples of structural components. Communication and learning experience mentioned by some of the participants are information processing components. Interdependence and supportive actions mentioned by the participants in this study are considered as interrelationship components and inflexible work schedule and disagreement on parenting practice between the father and the mother in the family as disruptive components. Comments expressed by the participants that belonged to the expressed affection category are examples of dynamic components. Change in work conditions and family size are considered to be life process components.

Utilization of these perspectives enabled the data analysis process to be multi-level which helped identify interrelatedness among the factors. For instance, utilizing the bioecological perspective, in examining female parents' good father views, past experience with her own father, a proximal process for the mother, was found to be influential in how she constructed what it meant

to be a good father as well as her expectations of her husband as being a good father. In examining factors influencing fathers' efforts in being a good father, quality of marital relationships, outcome of the impact of the proximal process, was found to be influential in how the fathers perceive their competence in being a good father.

When utilizing an alternative ecological perspective, participants' responses contained comments belonging to all six general systems components. The focus of analysis, however, was on dynamic, information processing, interrelationship and disruptive components. Some participants mentioned the importance of paternal love and having been able to reserve physical and mental energy for father involvement after a long working day. These are dynamic component factors influencing paternal parenting. Comments by some fathers related to fathers' perception that indicated positive impact of collaborative marital relationships and mutual supportiveness on their fathering efforts are examples of interrelationship components. Disruptive components include factors perceived by the participants to have hindered them in pursuing to be good fathers, such as work responsibilities that interrupted them from engaging in father roles and work overload due to multiple roles fathers were expected to play.

These findings suggest that factors associated with paternal parenting are multilevel as well as multi-categorical and these factors are interrelated. The following section discusses and summarizes the findings related to good

father views.

Good Father Views

Good father views were examined for both fathers and mothers in relation to how they described what it meant to be a good father. As a result of the analysis that focused on the descriptive content of the comments (the meaning of verbally expressed ideas) in the participants' responses, eight categories emerged: involvement, mentor, guardian, child-centeredness, expressed affection, prerequisites for being a good father, caretaker, and parental equality. Two of these eight categories (caretaker and parental equality) were identified only in the responses of the mothers. It seems that the mothers' views were more likely to be multi-categorical than those of the fathers.

Multi-categoricalness of the good father views suggested by the participants in this study is consistent with the good father views previously proposed by many scholars (e.g., Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; McAdoo, 1993).

In regard to quality of parenting, two views exist in current literature. While one school of thought suggests that parenting needs to be only good enough (Scarr, 1992; Harris, 1998), the other school suggests that parents need to strive to be as good as they could possibly be (Hannush, 2002; Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998). However, all the respondents in this study shared the view that parents need to try their best to be as good a parent as

they could possibly be.

Some of the comment categories emerged in the analysis process in this study were not identical to classifications of father roles or good father views discussed in previous studies. However, examination of the components of each category, suggested the findings in this study were comparable with what has been available in current literature. Importance of father involvement, suggested by many researchers (e.g., Offer, 2003; Stom, et. al., 2000; Palkovitz, 2002), were shared with both the fathers and the mothers in this study. Parental roles traditionally associated with father responsibilities previously suggested, such as provider (Miller-Scher, 1997), protector (Diamond, 1997), and disciplinarian (Holland, 1994), were also found in this study.

Ideas similar to the comments identified in this study that belonged to the child-centeredness and the expressed affection categories were also mentioned in the previous studies (e.g., Holland, 1994; Summers et. al., 2006). However, while these ideas were central to some of the parents, particularly female parents, in this study, it does not seem to be part of the major components of the good father views proposed and encouraged by many scholars at the moment. It is possible that parents, especially female parents, as part of their good father views becoming multi-categorical, increasingly perceive it is critically important for parents to provide their children emotional support by expressing their parental love. According to the

participants' responses regarding their past experience with their own fathers, it is also possible that these parents wished their fathers to be more expressive of their parental love and hope to make sure that they as parents provide and clearly express ample parental love to their children..

Comments equally prevalent among the parents of both genders belonged to the prerequisites for being a good father category. Fathers as well as mothers thought it important for a father to have acquired sufficient knowledge related to child development and also personality traits such as patience and open-mindedness. This view is congruous with what Sclafani (2004) suggested.

Some responses included comments in the parental equality category that emphasized that there should be no difference between mothering and fathering, the idea supportive of the gender-neutral parenting approach proposed by Deutsch (1999). Mothers who contained comments in the caretaker category also emphasized the importance of a father actively participating in traditionally viewed maternal tasks such as feeding milk and changing diapers. However, these views were expressed only by the female respondents. Socio-cultural changes that have taken place in our society, such as gender-equality, feminist perspectives, and dual-earner families, may have impacted mothers' views of what a good father should be like.

It was also revealed that while fathers considered parental roles traditionally associated with fathers, such as provider or protector, as an

important part of their paternal responsibilities; mothers, though they did include these roles as part of father responsibilities, tended to view that it is more important for fathers to be involved in their children's everyday life and being expressive of their love than being a major provider in the family.

Fathers may be aware of their spousal views that stress the importance of paternal involvement. However, they seem to struggle to meet their spousal expectations due to being a major provider being central to their good father views.

Both the fathers and mothers shared a large part of their good father views. However, what they thought of as central to their views were not the same. While the fathers expressed the mentor and the guardian category as being a very important part of their father responsibilities, the mothers' views were more child-centered, and being expressive of parental love and actively involved in their children's upbringing were more important elements for a father to strive to be a good father.

Factors Associated with Paternal Parenting

The findings indicate that fathers in this study were likely to view that one of the key influential elements on their paternal parenting efforts was whether or not they were able to find ample time and energy for their children to satisfy multiple father roles while they try to fulfill a provider role, as they tended to see a provider role as one of the key roles even if their spouses worked fulltime. This finding is consistent with the literature by Miller-Scher

(1997) that a traditionally expected father role as a provider remains to be the important paternal roles. Unless gender-neutral, parental equality becomes more popular, it may be difficult for fathers not to view themselves as a major provider in the family.

Numerous studies have described spousal influence on paternal parenting (e.g., Beitel & Parke, 1998; Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; De Luccie, 1995). The findings in this study also indicate that spousal factors were associated with fathers' efforts to be a good father. Fathers who perceived their spouses to be supportive of their trying to be good fathers were likely to perceive themselves to be successful fathers. Mothers in this study reported that their good father views were heavily influenced by their childhood experience with their own fathers, based on which they constructed their expectations of their husbands' roles as a father. Mothers who respect gender-neutral parenting practice are very likely to expect their husbands to be actively involved in parenting behaviors traditionally associated with mothers, such as changing diapers, feeding and reading a bedtime story. Fathers who are neglectful of these tasks would, therefore, receive poor evaluation.

As presented in the previous chapter, it was also revealed that two couples who scored the highest in the good father evaluation rating also scored the highest on the marital quality rating and five couples who scored the lowest on the good father evaluation rating also scored the lowest on the

marital quality rating. Qualitative comments provided by the respondents whose ratings were low were reflective of their low ratings. These results suggest that quality of marital relationships was associated with fathers' perception of their competence in being a good father as well as their spouses' perception of their husbands' for being a good father. This is also consistent with current literature that stated quality of marital relationships as a factor that influenced paternal parenting (e.g., De Luccie, 1995; Mansfield, 2005; Bumpass, 1990; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Bradford, 2002; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). These findings indicate that fathers' perception of themselves as being a good father is linked to several spousal factors. Therefore, it is critically important to take spousal factors into consideration when examining paternal parenting.

Also examined was impact of father identity on fathers' efforts to be a good father. More than 80% (11/13) of the fathers perceived themselves as successful fathers when they rated high for their consciously giving a thought to what it means to be a good father. This is consistent with previous research findings that reported associations between father identity and parenting (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998; Miller-Scher, 1997). Considering the fact that parenting skills need to be acquired since they are not instinctive in nature (Smith, 2005), it seems reasonable to assume that fathers' efforts and competence in being a good father are related to their having thought consciously of what it means to be a good father.

According to the findings on impact of child's gender on fathering efforts, the majority of the parents, both the fathers and the mothers in this study perceived that their children's gender had no influence on paternal parenting. This is incongruous with the findings of previous studies that suggested that fathers were likely to be more involved with their sons than daughters (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002; Harris & Morgan, 1991). Being consistent with the findings in the previous studies, some fathers as well as mothers in this study, though not many, reported their views that gender of their children influenced the fathers' efforts to be a good father. It may be possible that many fathers, knowing the tendency that they are likely to be more involved with their sons, consciously try to treat both sons and daughters equally. Also, there may be other factors that were not considered in this study, such as parents' age, education level, ethnicity, and past experience, that might be related to the difference revealed in this study regarding the participants' perception on impact of child's gender on fathers' parenting efforts.

Multiple factors were revealed to be influential to paternal parenting. Some fathers focused on their own personality and work conditions, while others focused on marital relationships and spousal supportiveness. Although perception of the participants on the influential factors varied to some extent, it is believed that it is very important for the findings in this study related to factors influencing paternal parenting to be incorporated when examining

what it means to be a good father.

Implications of the Findings

This study revealed that good father views described by the parents, both the fathers and the mothers, were multi-categorical. Some parents thought it important to be involved and being a role model, while others thought it important to be a provider and well informed of developmental needs of the child. Still others thought it critical for parents to love their children unconditionally and being expressive of their parental love. However, the degree of multi-categoricalness of their views varied. While there were eight categories identified in descriptions of good father views, good father views of the majority of the parents contained three or four categories. Introducing a variety of good father views would help parents broaden their views, which would help them become more competent parents who are well aware of multiple responsibilities they are expected to take.

It was revealed that there were some differences in good father views between fathers and mothers. Also revealed was influence of spousal factors on paternal parenting, such as spousal supportiveness on and evaluation of her husband in his efforts to be a good father. What is expected of a father changes along with various social and cultural changes. The findings in this study are reflective of voices of fathers and mothers who consciously try to be good parents. It is believed that introducing these findings to those who serve as advocates of quality of family life and parenting, such as social workers,

counselors, and educators, would enable them in providing appropriate support to fathers who strive to be better fathers as well as mothers who desire their spouses to become better fathers. It is children in the end, who benefit having parents, who are willing to improve themselves for the happiness of their children.

Limitations of this Study

Considering that this study is qualitative in nature, the sample size (46 parents) may not be extremely small. However, a larger sample size would have allowed more diversity in ethnicity, age, and educational background of the participants. Due to ethnic homogeneity (more than 80% identified themselves as Euro-American), views of ethnic minority parents may not have been well described. Educational backgrounds of the respondents did not seem to represent the population either, as more than 60% (28/46) of the participants had bachelor's degree or higher.

Respecting the anonymity of the respondents, the age was asked in groups (such as 24-46 years old, 37-49 years old, etc.), which restricted age related analysis. The same was true for the respondents' incomes. Had the more detailed demographic information been available, these factors might have played a more active role in analyzing the data.

This study was designed to examine good father views of parents of intact families. However, taking into consideration that there are many other family forms, it is important to include views of fathers and mothers in

non-intact families, as their views as well as challenges could be quite different from those from two-parent families. It is the researcher's aim to find an opportunity to collect data from respondents of diverse families and incorporate their views into the findings in this study.

Each response was no more than several sentences and the sample size was fairly small. Therefore, use of computer software for qualitative analysis such as NVivo was not utilized. With an increased data set in the future, however, it would be possible to utilize NVivo for data analysis, as it allows matrix analyses as well as graphic presentations of model building,

Conclusions

Descriptions of a good father provided by the participants in this study were diverse. Responses of 46 participants (23 fathers and 23 mothers) that described their good father views were analyzed, as a result of which eight categories emerged. The fathers and the mothers in this study shared most of these categories in their views. However, there were also differences between the fathers and the mothers in what categories they valued over the others. Considering the spousal influence on paternal parenting, it is important to be aware of the differences in how the fathers and the mothers define what it means to be a good father.

Although there were fathers who expressed the importance of being involved in their children's lives and expressive of their paternal love, it seemed to be more popular for the fathers in this study to view the ideas and

roles belonging to the mentor and the guardian categories more important. There were mothers who included in their responses comments belonging to the mentor and the guardian categories. However, it was found that there were many more mothers who included comments belonging to the involvement and the child-centeredness categories. Being expressive of parental love was also emphasized more by the mothers than the fathers. To be openly expressive of loving their children is not good enough. Fathers need to make sure their paternal love was clearly understood by their children. This view, though similar ideas were mentioned previously (Holland, 1994; Summers et. al., 2006), does not seem to have been central to the good father views previously proposed. It may be possible that this is one of the ideas focused to be important due to societal and cultural changes that have taken place in our society in recent years.

Factors examined in this study that were associated with paternal parenting include father identity, spousal supportiveness, marital relationships, and child's gender. Spousal supportiveness, marital relationships, and father identity were likely to be perceived by the participants in this study to be influential in fathers' efforts to be a good father. These findings were congruous with the findings in the previous studies (e.g., Beitel & Parke, 1998; Mansfield, 2005; Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998). While current literature stated that children's gender influenced paternal parenting (Manlove & Vernon-Feagans, 2002; Harris & Morgan, 1991), the majority of

the participants in this study, both the fathers and the mothers reported otherwise.

These findings cannot be generalized to the general population. However, ideas and experiences expressed by the participants in this study are valuable resources for constructing what it means to be a good father. Also, utilization of ecological theories in this study allowed the findings to be useful in broader contexts. Examination of human ecosystems made it possible to focus on ecological processes, the findings of which, such as the patterns of interaction in a family system, are believed to be applicable beyond demographics and social residence of the participants in this study.

It is believed that dissemination of the findings in this study to social service professionals would support them in helping parents to be more competent in raising their children.

Time was the most popular element both the fathers and the mothers in this study perceived to be the key for fathers in their efforts to be a good father. Being well aware of multiple roles they are expected to play, fathers in this study struggled to find time and energy to be with their children while fulfilling a provider role. For some fathers, it is one of their aims to be successful professionally, which tended to create conflict in them, as it also takes extra time and energy to strive professionally while maintaining to be an involved father. As fathers are expected to play more and more roles and to be in charge of multiple tasks, it becomes crucially important for a father to

learn to cleverly allocate his limited time and energy to satisfy all the expected roles and tasks while maintaining high quality of marital relationships. This, however, must not be an easy goal to accomplish, as a father is expected to be good at all these tasks. To be a good father may be becoming more and more difficult, as a father must strive to be a Jack of all trades and also master in all of them.

APPENDIX A

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Initial IRB Application Determination *Exempt*

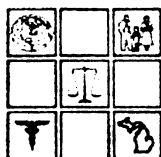
May 4, 2007

To: Robert Griffore
116 Human Ecology

Re: **IRB # X07-473** Category: EXEMPT 4
Approval Date: **May 3, 2007**

Title: VIEWS OF A GOOD FATHER: ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.



The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an **Application for Permanent Closure**.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D.
SIRB Chair

C: Mikiyasu Hakoyama
1000 E. Preston
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

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APPENDIX B



(For Male Parent)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GOOD FATHER?

Reason for Survey

Although there have been many studies about parenting, more of this work has focused on the role of mothers than fathers. As a result, there is less information available to understand the experiences and challenges of fathers. This study is, therefore, designed to increase understanding of what it means to be a good father and what makes it difficult for fathers to be successful in their efforts.

The results from this study will be disseminated to professionals in the field and a summary will also be shared with both the participants and the staff of the HGD Laboratory. It is our hope that everyone will find the results interesting and will have a chance to see how their perspectives and experiences of fatherhood compare – helping fathers be more aware and effective in their parenting roles.

This is an anonymous survey and all questions have been worded to minimize identifying any individual persons or families. Copies of the completed surveys will only be reviewed by members of the research team.

Directions

There are two copies of the survey – one for a male parent and one for a female parent. Each is enclosed in a separate envelope. You and your spouse/partner will be answering similar questions focused on perceptions of the father role. Please make sure that you are completing the correct survey. The survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Once the surveys are completed, please make sure that each is sealed and placed back into the larger envelope and returned to the box in the Human Growth and Development Laboratory. Although there is no specific due date for the survey, please complete and return both surveys as soon as possible, hopefully within 1-2 weeks, so as not to lose or misplace your copies.

Surveys may be completed with either a pen or pencil. Neat writing is appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers and we appreciate your honest thoughts and answers. If you would like more space to answer a question, please continue on the back of the page. Also remember that you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. Please do not discuss your responses with your spouse/partner before answering questions. Remember that this is an anonymous survey, so please **DO NOT** write your name or address on either this survey nor envelope.

Should you have any questions regarding this survey, please feel free to contact either:

Helen Hagens, Ph.D.
Director, Human Growth &
Development Laboratory
167 Wightman Hall
Central Michigan University
Phone: 989-774-3075

OR

Miki Hakoyama
243 Powers Hall
Central Michigan University
e-mail: hakoy1m@cmich.edu

P.S. We hope the enclosed packages of hot chocolate will help you relax while you complete the survey! Thank you for your help with this project.

For Male Parent

1. There are many different opinions about fatherhood and what a “good” father should be. In your own words, please describe what you think a “good” father should be like.

2. As you reflect on yourself as a father, how good of a father would you say that you are?

(Please circle the number.)

Not at all Good

Somewhat Good

Very Good

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Please explain why you give yourself this rating: _____

3. Where do you think your ideas of what it means to be a good father have come from? (What has influenced your perception of what it means to be a good father?)

4. From your perspective, what makes it difficult for you to be as good a father as you would like to be?

5. How do you think your spouse/partner rates you as a "good" father?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

6. How supportive would you say your spouse/partner is in your efforts to be a good father?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

7. How do you rate the overall quality of your relationship with your spouse/partner?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

8. How do you think your spouse/partner's employment status (hours, flexibility, stress level, etc.) influence either her in supporting you or you in your own efforts to be a good father?

9. How would you say your relationship was with your own father?

Not Good at all Somewhat Good Very Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please explain how this might have influenced you in your effort to be a good father: _____

10. Do you think your children's gender influences you in your efforts to be a good father?

Not at all Somewhat Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please explain how gender and/or other factors related to your child might affect you to be a good father:

11. Prior to taking this survey, how much thought have you ever given to what it means to be a "good" father?

Not at all		Somewhat			Very much	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

Background Information (to help describe the participants in this study)

12. How old are you? a. 23 and under b. 24-36 c. 37-49 d. 50+

13. What is your ethnicity? a. African American b. Native American c. Hispanic
d. Asian e. Euro-American f. other _____

14. How long have you been married/lived together with the present spouse/partner?

a. 0-5 yrs b. 6-10 yrs c. 11-15 yrs d. 16-20 yrs e. 21-25 yrs f. 26+

15. How many children ? _____ 16. Gender of your children? _____

17. Age range of your children? _____

18.. Are your children your natural, biological children?

_____ Yes _____ No If no, please explain: _____

19. On a typical work week, how many hours do you put into your employed work including commuting hours?

a. 0 b. 1-10 c. 11-20 d. 21-30 e. 31-40 f. 41-50 g. 51-60 h. 60+

20. What is your approximate individual annual gross income?

a. less than \$20,000 b. \$20,000 -\$40,000 c. \$40,001 -\$60,000 d. over \$60,000

21. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

a. some high school b. high school graduate c. some college d. college graduate
e. master's/post bachelor's training f. advanced graduate degree

End. Thank you very much for your cooperation.



(For Female Parent)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GOOD FATHER?

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P.S. We hope the enclosed packages of hot chocolate will help you relax while you complete the survey! Thank you for your help with this project.

For Female Parent

1. There are many different opinions about fatherhood and what a “good” father should be. In your own words, please describe what you think a “good” father should be like.

2. As you reflect on your spouse/partner as a father, how good of a father would you say that he is? (Please circle the number.)

Not at all Good

Somewhat Good

Very Good

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Please explain why you give him this rating: _____

3. Where do you think your ideas of what it means to be a good father have come from? (What has influenced your perception of what it means to be a good father?)

4. From your perspective, what makes it difficult for your spouse/partner to be as good a father as he would like to be?

5. How do you think your spouse/partner rates himself as a “good” father?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

6. How supportive would you say you are in your spouse/partner’s efforts to be a good father?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

7. How do you rate the overall quality of your relationship with your spouse/partner?

Not at all Good		Somewhat Good			Very Good	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain: _____

8. How do you think your employment status (hours, wages, content, stress, flexibility, etc.) influence you in supporting your spouse/partner's effort to be a good father?

9. How would you say your relationship was with your own father?

Not Good at all Somewhat Good Very Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please explain how it might have influenced you in your expectation on your spouse/partner as a father:

10. Do you think your children's gender influences your spouse/partner in his efforts to be a good father?

Not at all Somewhat Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please explain how gender and/or other factors related to your child might affect your spouse/partner to be a good father: _____

11. Prior to taking this survey, how much thought have you ever given to what it means to be a "good" father?

Not at all Somewhat Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please explain: _____

Background Information (to help describe the participants in this study)

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20. What is your approximate individual annual gross income?
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21. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?
a. some high school b. high school graduate c. some college d. college graduate
e. master's/post bachelor's training f. advanced graduate degree

End. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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