Father Involvement in Parenting Young Children:

A Content Analysis of Parent Education Programs in BC

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1994

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the area of Early Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

Supporting parenting capacity, as well as the importance of positive father involvement, have received an increasing amount of attention within research, public policy and the media. This content analysis of 17 formal parent education programs offered in BC analyzed program materials for content regarding father involvement in parenting young children. Program directors answered contextual questions about their program in a telephone interview and shared program materials for analysis. Father involvement content was not significantly included in most programs, though all were offered to fathers. Four programs included specific content regarding father involvement and most included fathers in the parenting examples and images. One of the limitations of this study is that the analysis was made on the intended curriculum rather than what happens during program delivery. The implications of a lack of father involvement content found and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Over the years I have worked with many, many families - as a child care provider, a preschool teacher and a director of programs. My education and over fourteen years of professional work experience have taught me that families benefit greatly from resources aimed at strengthening parenting capacity, though the type of resources and when those resources are needed varies greatly from family to family. My personal experience as the mother of two young children has solidified my belief that parenting is not simple or innate but is one of life's most challenging and rewarding experiences.

When my son was born in 2003, my partner and I entered into the complicated and ever-evolving parenting dance. Being a feminist, I had always envisioned parenting as a partnership, and that parenting tasks and behaviours would not be limited by gender. Two years into being a parent, I was shocked to realize that, while I truly wanted my partner to be a highly involved father, I expected that involvement on my terms and judged it against my own parenting. As fatherhood researcher Andrea Doucet (2006) observed, parenting is often a "mother-led dance" (p. 229) and we can play a significant role in how fathers are involved with their children. In acknowledging this self-discovery, I recognized there was much I needed to learn about parenting from a father's perspective, not just for the benefit of my own family, but for those families I will work with in the future. My drive to learn more about father involvement and to understand better the related issues from multiple perspectives, led me to question what parents in British Columbia were being taught about father involvement.

As such, I developed this research study as a content analysis of formal parent education programs in BC in order to ascertain what information is included, or not, about fathers and their involvement with parenting their young children.

Families in Canada

During the second half of the twentieth century in Canada, we have seen numerous changes in our society that have affected how we think about families. Today, many children are raised in families that look very different than a "traditional model" of two parents (i.e., a mother who stays at home to raise the children and a father who works outside the home to provide financially for the family) living with their biological or adoptive children. Now family life includes separation, divorce, remarriage, common-law relationships, same-sex relationships, as well as single parent households (Bibby, 2004; Daly, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2002, October). As our definition of family has expanded, so too has our concept of normative family behaviour. With the increased recognition of diversity in our post-modern society, the notion of a universal definition of family and normative parenting practices has been dramatically tested.

Fathers

When we think about the changes that have occurred for families over the last fifty years, a significant one has been what Daly (2004) refers to as "shifting gender practices in the culture of parenting" (p.11). In part, this shift has been the result of women's increased participation in the workforce after they have children (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000) and a push for more egalitarian parenting practices in the wake of feminism (Pleck, 2004). In Canada, gender differences in the division of labour are "steadily diminishing" (Marshall, 2006) as

women increase their participation in the paid labour force and men increase their participation in unpaid housework and child care.

This parenting gender shift is often reported in various sources of Canadian media. Newspaper articles herald fathers as "more" involved than the fathers of previous generations (Beck, 2005; Involved dads feeling invisible, 2006; Nyhan, 2006; Owens, 2006) and inform us of the increased number of fathers taking parental leave to be home with their newborn infant (Canadian Press, 2003). Magazine articles address various aspects of father involvement and co-parenting issues (Hoffman, 2005 March, 2005 April, and 2006 June), as well as work-family struggles (Daly & Hawkins, 2005). Articles found on magazine websites introduce many parents to pointers on how fathers can be involved with their children as well as information as to why they should be involved (Brott, 2006; Fathers matter, n.d.; Keer, 2005; Lorinc, 2002; MacDonald, n.d.). A father quoted in an Alberta newspaper typifies the sentiment of the "new father" found in much of the media reporting:

> I like to see my kids develop and that's just something I wouldn't want to miss ... they are growing up too fast . . . . I can't imagine fathers who didn't change diapers and do stuff with their kids - they're missing a lot. (Beck, 2005, p. a7)

Studies have examined how the representation of fathers has changed in popular culture by looking at father images in comic strips (LaRossa, Jaret, Gadgil & Wynn, 2000), in magazine articles (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993 as cited by Quinn, 2006), and in children's literature (Quinn, 2006). Researchers found a shift in the portrayal of fathers to that of a nurturing, "new father".

Father research.

Just as the conceptualization of what it means to be a father has changed in Canadian popular culture, so too has it shifted within various fields of research. Today,

the discourse on fatherhood is broad, rich and continuing to evolve. In Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda's (2004) introductory chapter to the fourth edition of *The role of the father in child development*, they state

> substantial progress has clearly been made by scholars over the last 30 years. Hundreds of studies have enriched the empirical literature, while theorists have elaborated and refined the conceptual frameworks designed to elucidate fatherhood, father-child relationships, and paternal roles. (p. 1)

There is even now a scholarly journal devoted entirely to fatherhood and related issues, the American journal *Fathering: A Journal of Theory and Research about Men as Parents* published by Men's Studies Press.

While we do not have as rich a portrait of fatherhood in Canada as researchers do in the United States (Dubeau, 2002), Canadian fatherhood scholarship has been given substantial encouragement with the formation of the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA). FIRA is a "national alliance of researchers, community organizations and fathers dedicated to the development and sharing of knowledge on father involvement" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, n.d.b., p. welcome). Focused on "an agenda of research that is uniquely Canadian" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, n.d.a., p. introduction), FIRA began a five-year research program in 2004, in an effort to raise awareness about the benefits of father involvement and its barriers within a variety of family contexts, and to "engage fathers and those who work with fathers in a process of developing community-based strategies for change" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, n.d.a., p. introduction).

There is an abundance of research about the effects of father involvement and a growing recognition of the importance of both indirect and direct paternal involvement (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004). (For a comprehensive summary of the research evidence see Allen & Daly, 2004; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000.)

Research regarding the effects of father involvement tends to focus on three main areas: (a) the effects on children; (b) the effects on mothers and the co-parental relationship; and (c) the effects on fathers themselves and their adult development. I would assert that father involvement also has an effect on society in general, and that research is beginning to address those issues as well (Doucet, 2004, 2006; Gavanas, 2004). (A more detailed and further discussion about the effects of father involvement is presented in Chapter 2.)

Parenting.

Due in part to the many changes and challenges facing families today, there has been tremendous growth in education and support resources available to parents (Mann, 2006). Research evidence continues to link parenting practices and outcomes for children, impacting the development of programs and services for parents (Miller & Sambell, 2003; Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004). Also, there is increasing recognition that effective parenting is not innate and that parenting education has a role to play (Cunningham et al., 1993 and Golding, 2000 as cited in Miller & Sambell, 2003, p. 33). Parenting today is "viewed by professionals and policy makers as highly significant politically, economically, educationally, socially and for the mental health of the nation" (Miller & Sambell, 2003, p.32). In the BC Parenting Vision Working Group's (2006) document *Towards a BC provincial strategy for supporting parenting capacity*, they boldly state "parenting is probably the most important public health issue facing our society" (p. 1). While we have seen growth in parenting resources here in Canada, it is only the beginning of what is needed. As Dr. Russell (2003b) points out:

> In a society the purports to value the role of parents, we provide woefully few opportunities for parents to become truly educated about parenting and child development. Even worse, we have not created an environment that is conducive to enhancing parenting skills. (p. 69)

Father initiatives.

The development and implementation of resources for parents is one way to support parenting capacity (BC Parenting Vision Working Group, 2006). With the recognition that positive father involvement is important to families (Allen & Daly, 2004; Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000), some of the development that has occurred within family resource programs has aimed "to promote the involvement of fathers with their children aged 0 to 12 years" (Bolté, Devault, St.Denis & Gaudet, 2001, p. 15). In 2005, Devault, Gaudet, Bolté and St-Denis found 251 organizations in Canada that provide activities, services, resources, and programs specifically for fathers. Those who develop or manage family programs are supported with relevant father involvement information through the National Project Fund on Fathering website (National Project Fund on Fathering, n.d.). Those interested in accessing father involvement initiatives can link to father involvement contacts in different regions in Canada through the Canadian Father Involvement Initiative website (BC Council for Families, n.d., p. links). These initiatives are an important part of the work needed "in terms of implementing concrete measures that support a fatherhood in which fathers feel valued, mothers feel reinforced, and children can reap the benefits" (Dubeau, 2002, p. 31).

Initiatives in BC.

While the majority of fatherhood research and program initiatives in Canada occur within the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, work in BC is contributing to the field. Of the 80 fatherhood articles written by Canadian researchers identified by Dubeau (2002), 10 of the articles came from BC (p. 7). ON and QU each had 33, while AB, NS, and NB each had one (p. 7). BC's contribution amounts to over 12% of the

articles published at the time of Dubeau's review. A similar percentage, 13%, of the projects and programs that Devault, Gaudet, Bolté, and St-Denis (2005) identified as promoting the involvement of fathers came from BC (p. 9). ON had 30%, QU had 55% and the Prairies had 2% (p. 9).

One of the strongest resources for parent initiatives in BC, including father involvement, is the BC Council for Families (BCCF). The BCCF operates the Father Involvement Network-BC (BC Council for Families, n.d.), has provided professional development opportunities with the *Changing Fathers, Changing Practice* workshop sessions (Father Involvement Network-BC, 2006, April), hosted the 7th Annual Fathers Symposium in November 2006 (Father Involvement Network-BC, 2006, October a), and recently produced a series of brochures on fatherhood that are available for purchase (Father Involvement Network-BC, 2006, October b). In May 2006, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development announced it would provide the BC Council for Families $2 million worth of grants for various parent support services, including $366,000 to establish a Centre for Excellence for Parenting Education and Support (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2006).

Rationale

The first set of results from the five-year research project that the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA) began in 2004 "shows that, regardless of background, dads are involved or want to be involved in the lives of their children and are eager to talk about their experiences" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006, p.1). Given the gender shift in parenting practices today (Daly, 2004), it is important to examine how this is reflected in parent education programs. Considering the new funding for the BC Council for Families, this is an opportune time to assess

whether parent education programs in BC include father involvement in their content, if they adequately capture the rich body of fatherhood research emerging from Canada and elsewhere, and if they take into account the complexity, "cultural embeddedness and variability" (Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Raikes, 2002, p. 2) of fathering today.

Though father research is an abundant and increasing field, this particular aspect of research has not been explored here in BC, to my knowledge. I have not found any comprehensive or collated data to date that tells us what kind of information parents receive about father involvement through the various formal parent education programs currently running in BC. In a review of the parent education and support programs in Greater Victoria, the Parenting and Education Support Task Group (2004) reported an absence of content analysis of parenting programs in general.

Klein and White (1996) identify four common types of interventions within family social science: "therapy, education, social policy, and social movements" (p. 42). I have chosen to look closely at the education component of family interventions by examining parenting education programs. While I have chosen to examine formal education, it is not my intention to say that this is the only or the best form of intervention for working with parents. I recognize that each type of intervention does not exist in isolation, and that each can inform and affect the others. I believe parents can benefit from a variety of education and support resources including informal information sharing, support groups, online resources, as well as formal education.

I chose to examine parent education programs because of the increasing focus on parenting resources (BC Parenting Vision Working Group, 2006; Mann, 2006; Miller & Sambell, 2003; Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004), including the financial commitment that has been made to establish a Centre for Excellence for Parenting

Education and Support here in BC (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2006). I chose to examine father involvement because of the interest in this area within popular culture (e.g., Beck, 2005; Brott, 2006; Canadian Press, 2003; Daly & Hawkins, 2005; Fathers matter, n.d.; Hoffman, 2005 March, 2005 April, and 2006 June; Involved dads feeling invisible, 2006; Keer, 2005; Lorinc, 2002; MacDonald, n.d.; Nyhan, 2006; Owens, 2006) and within research (e.g., Allen & Daly, 2004; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). I chose to do a content analysis of the materials used in formal parent education programs because texts provide a set of ready-made data, and are an information source that can both reflect and generate social phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2004).

This study adds to the body of Canadian research about fathers and father involvement as well as to the body of research regarding parenting education. It has the potential to act as a platform for future research, including an evaluative study of father involvement information found in parenting programs and the study of father involvement in parenting education classes aimed at expecting parents. It also has the potential to help direct a more coherent approach in parenting education in regards to father involvement. This is particularly important, considering the money that is to be invested in the establishment of a centre for parenting education in BC. "Fathers need to know that both family and society value their role. Their positive contributions are essential to the well-being of the family and are a vital component in raising children" (My daddy matters because, n.d.b, p. 7). It is my belief that parent education programs are an important venue for that message to be heard.

Project overview

The purpose of this study is to try to ascertain what information about fathers' involvement with their young children is, or is not, included in formal parent education programs offered in BC. This was not an evaluation of parent education programs for their effectiveness. Also, this was not a study examining the involvement of fathers in programs. (For more information about issues regarding fathers' involvement in family services see Bolté, Devault, St.Denis & Gaudet, 2001; Daly & Hawkins, 2005; Devault, Gaudet, Bolte, & St-Denis, 2005; Green, 2003; Hoffman, 2001; *Involved dads feeling invisible*, 2006; Schock & Gavazzi, 2004.)

To maintain a reasonable scope for the project, and in light of the current political focus on parent education here in BC (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2006), my search for parent education programs was limited to programs offered in BC at the time of my study. I define young children as children between the ages of zero and six. I limited the study to programs for parents of children in that age range as most programs and government positions in BC define early childhood as such (e.g., Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005; First Call, 2003). As well, in light of findings from Canada's *National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth* that saw parents' responsiveness to their children decline steadily as their children get older (Chao & Willms, 2002, p. 164), I wanted to see what parents are being told about father involvement at the parental stage when they seem the most responsive. (A more detailed description of the program criteria for participating in the study is presented in Chapter 3.)

Who is a father?

The definition of fatherhood for many researchers, social science practitioners, and families is expanding socially (Garbarino, 2000 as cited by Palkovitz, 2002; McBride & Lutz, 2004). Becoming a father is about much more than biology. A man may biologically father a child, but that does not guarantee that he will *be* a father. In the mid-20th century, it was Margaret Mead who articulated the notion of fathers being a social construction (as cited by Hewlett, 2000 and Morman & Floyd, 2006). As Palkovitz (2002) points out, the decision to be a social father "can be made independent of biological status" (p. 121) as well as independent of residential or legal status. "Today it is common place for fatherhood to be practiced across households and across bloodlines" (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001, p. 384).

According to the 2001 General Social Survey, there are 4,271,000 married or common-law couples with children and 209,000 fathers who are lone parents (Statistics Canada, 2002, July, p. 5). Therefore, we can estimate that in Canada, there are approximately 4,480,000 fathers living with children. Some fathers raise children within step-families (Statistics Canada, 2002, July, p. 5) and some raise children within common-law same-sex relationship families (Statistics Canada, 2002, October, p. 4). These statistics give us an idea about the number of residential fathers there are in Canada, but they do not account for the number of non-resident fathers who remain involved in their children's lives. Also, we know through Statistics Canada that a small proportion of children in Canada live with their grandparents or other relatives (Statistics Canada, 2002, October, p. 7) and not with either parent. For the purpose of this study, I define the term father to include "biological and social fathers, residential

and non-residential, legal fathers and men with no legal fathering rights" (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 121).

What is father involvement?

Probably the most influential description of father involvement in research has come from Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1987). Their typology characterizes father involvement as interaction, availability and responsibility (p. 125). Interaction is described as the "shared activities" (p. 125) between a father and a child such as playing or feeding. Availability refers to the physical and psychological availability of fathers to be involved. Responsibility is the "anxiety, worry, contingency planning" (McBride & Rane, 1997, p. 175) that fathers engage in about their children. While Lamb et al.'s, typology has been highly influential, work from other researchers over the last twenty years has helped to broaden the definition of father involvement.

One of the main criticisms of Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine's (1987) characterization is that the typology did not sufficiently take into account that ethnicity, religiosity, and socio-economics would present themselves as factors impacting fathers' involvement (Palkowitz, 1997). It has been criticized for its focus on measuring the observable and countable behaviours of fathers (Palkovitz, 1997) and neglecting the cognitive and affective domains of involvement (Palkovitz, 2002). It has also been criticized for not adequately including provision as a form of father involvement (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). Christiansen and Palkovitz caution that, "focusing on one aspect of involvement at the exclusion of other areas of involvement limits the context in which all paternal involvement occurs" (p. 102).

For the purpose of this study, the term "father involvement" refers to the positive involvement a father has with his children (Pleck, 1997) and includes

"behavioural and affective dimensions and cognitive elements" (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p. 76). Father involvement includes direct and indirect involvement (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004) and is "likely to vary across time, developmental periods of both parents and children, and in relation to other components of the social ecology and life circumstances" (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 213). Father involvement is not a "monolithic experience" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006, p.1). It "occurs under many conditions and many family contexts, depending on factors such as age, ethnicity, marital status and sexual orientation" (p.1). (A more detailed discussion of the definition of father involvement is presented in Chapter 2.)

What is formal parent education?

For the purpose of this study, I define formal education programs as "manualised programmes with centrally-monitored, systematized delivery" (Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004, p. 120) rather than drop-in or informal support services. These programs have an established content that can be identified in an outline or program materials for the instructor, as well as possibly for the participants. The intent and content of the programs are established prior to the program's delivery and they do not significantly change each time the program is offered to suit the needs of a particular group of participants. The length of time it takes to implement programs did not matter for the purpose of this study. Programs could be offered over a series of weeks, during a weekend, or within a two-hour workshop.

Formal parent education programs can have a variety of goals and intended outcomes. For the purpose of this study, I chose to examine programs whose content focused primarily on parent outcomes: parenting skills; parenting attitudes and beliefs; parenting knowledge and understanding; emotional and mental health; and social

support (Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004). Programs that are essentially focused on child outcomes, such as some family literacy programs, were not included. (A more detailed definition of formal parent education programs is presented in Chapter 3 in the description of the program criteria.)

Methodology.

The purpose of this research was to ascertain what kind of information about father involvement was included, or not included, in formal parent education programs offered in BC at the time of the study. To achieve this aim, I chose to conduct a content analysis of the materials used in formal parent education programs. "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). I also chose to conduct an interview with the individual program directors to understand the intention of the program and its intended audience - what they are trying to say and to whom they are saying it. A simple interview was developed to retrieve basic information from program directors to understand the programs' contents in context (Krippendorff, 2004).

In order to have the most representative sample for my study, I did an extensive search for formal education programs offered in BC. I searched for organizations, community groups and individuals who might offer formal parent education programs through a variety of family resources and electronic databases. It was my aim to have one example of each type of formal parent education program in my study that I could find operating in BC at the time of my search. When I determined that an organization, community group or individual offered a program that met the criteria of my study, I spoke with the director of the program on the telephone

about the study and the requirements of participation. (See Appendix A for the script to recruit participants.) If a program was offered at multiple sites, I chose to ask for participation if it was determined that the organization uses the set program content, as it was designed, in their implementation of that program.

The content regarding father involvement was tracked and tallied as well as analyzed for possible meanings within various contexts (e.g., the context in which the program was created; fatherhood research; parent education research and design; the image and reality of parenting). In gathering my data, I looked for themes to emerge about what was, and was not, included about father involvement in the program content as well as how that content was portrayed. I read the texts for codes that were focused around my four main research questions:

1. Is father involvement included in the program content? If so, what does the content include?

2. How is father involvement defined and described in the program content?

3. What approach to father involvement is taken in the program content?

4. What factors, if any, are included in the program content that address what contributes and/or deters the involvement of fathers?

Chapter summary

With today's broadened definition of family, the notion of universal and normative parenting practices has been dramatically tested. This is particularly true in terms of how we view fathers and their involvement with their children. Shifting gender practices in parenting (Daly, 2004) have helped to evolve the image of fathers into a "new" and "more" involved parenting figure than fathers of the past. With substantial development in fatherhood research, we not only know more about the importance of

positive father involvement than we did 40 years ago, but we are beginning to better appreciate that the experience of fathering is multifaceted and complex. Given the continuing growth and development of parent education resources, including a Centre for Excellence for Parenting Education and Support in BC, the purpose of this study is to try to ascertain what information about fathers' involvement with their young children is, or is not included in formal parent education programs offered in BC. To do this, I developed a content analysis whereby the program content regarding father involvement was tracked and tallied, as well as analyzed for possible meanings within various contexts.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Prior to proceeding with this research study, an extensive review of the literature regarding father involvement as well as parent education was completed. Aspects of father involvement that were explored include: how it is defined and how the definition has developed over the years; how it is approached within research; the various effects of father involvement; and its possible determinants. The following topics are included in the examination of the parent education literature: the need for parent education; the correlation between parenting practices and child outcomes; the outcomes of parent education on parenting practices; and parent education and fathers.

Defining father involvement

Throughout history most fathers have been involved with the raising of their children in some capacity. The varied contributions fathers have made to their children's development and well-being, as well as the importance society has placed on those contributions, have varied greatly. How fathers involve themselves, and the reasons for their involvement, "reflect the prevailing beliefs and anxieties of the age" (Pleck, 2004, p. 52) and culture.

Fathers in the White Protestant population living in the British Colonies acted as the moral guide for the family and were often educators to their sons (Pleck, 2004). For White, middle-class fathers, these roles carried through into the 20th century. The call for increased paternal involvement that emerged mid-century was in part to protect "sons from falling into evil ways" (p. 39) and an antidote to maternal overprotection. Fathers' involvement was also deemed necessary to help promote socially sanctioned

gender roles. "What family experts envisioned was the injection of male presence into the family, not a fundamental reassessment of male and female gender roles" (Weiss, 2000, as cited by Pleck, 2004, p. 41). It was not until the 1970s and the rise of feminism that the call for increased father involvement became a push for egalitarian parenting.

Many people living in Canada would agree with anthropologist Barry Hewlett's (2000) observation that today's prescribed role for fathers, a parenting partner, is "relatively unique in human history" (p. 66). Messages within popular culture herald today's dads as "more involved with their children than fathers from generations past" (Beck, 2005, p. a7). Newspaper and website articles describe fathers participating in prenatal classes, taking part in the daily care of their children from infancy and becoming involved in their children's schooling (Beck, 2005; Canadian Press, 2003; Lorinc, 2002). We are regularly reminded in the media how important it is for fathers to "be there" for their children (Beck, 2005; Brott, 2006; Fathers matter, n.d.; Hoffman, 2005, March; Involved dads, 2006). While some researchers have questioned whether the conduct of fathers has changed as much as the image of fathers (Hochschild, 1989; LaRossa, 1988), most adults believe that fatherhood has changed dramatically from their childhood experience of fathering.

With today's expanded role for fathers, defining father involvement is not necessarily a straightforward or simple task. Definitions can vary, depending on whom you ask. Individual fathers, organizations and groups for fathers, as well as researchers and fatherhood scholars can have their own, often conflicting, interpretations of what being an involved father entails (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). Within the field of fatherhood research, the most influential definition of father involvement has come

from Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1987). Their typology characterizes father involvement as interaction, availability and responsibility. Interaction is described as the "shared activities" (p. 125) between a father and child, such as playing or feeding. Availability refers to the physical and psychological availability of fathers to be involved. Responsibility is the "anxiety, worry, contingency planning" (McBride & Rane, 1997, p. 175) that fathers engage in about their children. Pleck (2004) describes their typology as "an academic response to feminist demands that husbands and fathers share equally in the responsibilities of child raising" (p. 42). While Lamb et al.'s, typology has been highly influential in fatherhood research, it has been criticized on several fronts. It is these criticisms that have led many researchers to try and broaden the conceptualization of father involvement.

Who is included in the definition of father involvement?

A major criticism of Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine's (1987) three main dimensions of father involvement has been that they did not sufficiently account for the impact culture, religion, and economics would have on a father's involvement with his children (Palkowitz, 1997). "Most of what we know about father involvement comes from investigations of middle-class men of European descent" (Tammis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002, p. 605). In response to the need to learn more about the diversity of fathering in Canada and the unique needs and experiences of certain fathers (Dubeau, 2002), The Father Involvement Research Alliance of Canada is working on research that is focused on "seven specific groups of fathers: separated/divorced, immigrant, young, aboriginal, gay, new fathers and fathers of children with special needs" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006, p. 1). A recent father initiative in BC led by Dr. Jessica Ball (Asterisk Productions, 2007) is the development of a DVD, with booklet

guide, of interviews with six First Nations fathers talking about the experience of becoming and being a father. The fathers interviewed share their stories in the hopes of inspiring other fathers in their parenting, and also family service practitioners in how they include fathers in programs and services. The DVD and booklet guide have been designed for community and educational use. Researchers elsewhere are also exploring what father involvement means within different cultural contexts (e.g., Parke, Coltrane, Brothwith-Duffy, Powers, Adams, Fabricius, Braver, & Saenz, 2004; Roopnarine, 2004).

According to the 2001 General Social Survey (GSS), 42.9% of couples with children in Canada are "in-tact" families (Statistics Canada, 2002, July, p. 5), "a family in which all children in the household are the biological and/or adoptive offspring of both members of the couple" (p. 8), and 5.7% are step-families. According to Statistics Canada (2002, October), 34,200 couples in Canada identified themselves as living in a same-sex common-law relationship (p. 4), with 15% of the female same-sex couples living with children and 3% of the male same-sex couples living with children (p. 4). Families headed by a female lone-parent amount to 11.1% and 2.4% of families are headed by a male lone-parent (Statistics Canada, 2002, July, p. 5). For divorced couples with children, joint responsibility is more common now and accounts for 42% of custody cases in Canada; therefore children may be more likely to live with a mother after a divorce but many fathers remain legally connected to their children (Ambert, 2005, p.9). According to Statistics Canada (2002, October), in 2001 "a small proportion of children, about 1%, did not live with at least one parent, for the most part staying with other relatives" (p. 7). Almost half of those children (0.4%) lived in the same household as their grandparents and without their parents (p. 7). University of Guelph family relations professor Kerry Daly rightly states, "we can't talk about father

involvement as a monolithic experience . . . . Fathering occurs under many conditions and many family contexts, depending on factors such as age, ethnicity, marital status and sexual orientation (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006, p.1).

What does the definition of father involvement measure?

The focus in fatherhood research has generally been on the direct involvement of fathers, measuring observable and countable behaviours (Palkovitz, 1997) and neglecting the cognitive and affective domains of involvement (Palkovitz, 2002). Researchers have begun to broaden their exploration of father involvement to include "behavioural and affective dimensions and cognitive elements" (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p. 76), such as what paternal involvement means to fathers (i.e., Daly, 1996; Dienhart 2001; Doucet 2004; Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Geisbrecht, 1999) and fathers' expectations of being a parent (i.e., Beaton, Doherty & Rueter, 2003; Cook, Jones, Dick, & Singh, 2005). One of the aspects of fathering that Paquette, Bolté, Tourcotte, Dubeau and Bouchard (2000) measured in their observations were evocations, which encompassed "instances in which the parent talks to others about the positive aspects of the child and/or about pleasant times spent together" (p. 225). They assert that, "evocations are an indicator of the psychological presence of children in the father's cognition" (p. 225).

While the direct involvement of fathers with their children, "through their behaviour and the attitudes and messages they convey" (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004, p. 8) has been a focus of most fatherhood research, the indirect involvement of fathers, "their effects on other people and social circumstances that bear on children's development" (p. 9), has begun to receive more attention. Recognizing that indirect influences are "pervasive and perhaps more important than direct learning represents

another of the major conceptual revolutions marking the 30 years of [fatherhood] scholarship since the first edition of [*The Role of the Father on Child Development*] was prepared" (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004, p. 9).

As well as acknowledging the importance of indirect involvement, Palkovitz (1997) highlights that father involvement is not static or predictive, but "likely to vary across time, developmental periods of both parents and children, and in relation to other components of the social ecology and life circumstances" (p. 213). Recent research has examined fathering experiences over time (Wood & Repetti, 2004) as well as adult children's perspectives of being fathered (Dick, 2004; Krampe & Newton, 2006; Morman & Floyd, 2006). Other researchers have looked at father involvement in the context of the family in terms of the father and mother's relationship (Cummings, Goeke-Morey & Raymond, 2004; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Pleck & Stueve, 2004).

Just as emotional support has often been overlooked in father involvement research, so too has economic support (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Christiansen and Palkovitz (2001) assert that the exclusion of provision from most father involvement research is due to the good provider role being an assumed responsibility, often an invisible task, rife with negative connotations, and inadequately conceptualized simply as earning money through work. They also caution that, "focusing on one aspect of involvement at the exclusion of other areas of involvement limits the context in which all paternal involvement occurs" (p. 102). In E.H. Pleck's (2004) review of the American good-dad, bad-dad complex, she comments that the "long history of concern about the deadbeat dad is an indirect way of revealing the centrality of the breadwinner role to American fatherhood" (p. 52). She goes on to say:

> the most important aspect of the father's role throughout American history has been his role as provider and protector. Not only was a father seen as having

this responsibility, but the government also staked out a role to play in requiring a father to fulfill his breadwinner responsibility. (p. 52)

The burden of responsibility for breadwinning in our culture belongs quite exclusively to fathers. As Daly and Hawkins (2005) point out, within the work-family politic, women who work in the paid labour force after having children are discussed in terms of women choosing to go back to work. "The discourse of 'choice' has never been applied to men" (p. 2). The assumption that men will work outside the home and provide for their family remains strong.

Believing that Doherty, Kouneski and Erikson's (1998) overview and conceptual framework for responsible fathering minimized the importance of provision to children's well-being, Walker and McGraw's (2000) critique states that "men's financial contributions matter for both residential and non-residential children, and that currently, these contributions have a greater impact on children than any other impact of fathers' involvement" (p. 565). Doherty, Kouneski and Erikson (2000) contend that the research does not stand up to Walker and McGraw's notion that provision has the greatest impact of all types of father involvement, though they agreed with Walker and McGraw's statement regarding the importance of provision to the well being of children. They caution that, "putting forth the position that a father's breadwinner role is his paramount contribution to his children's lives" (p. 571), without the most compelling of evidence, diminishes the promotion of responsible fathering overall.

Another significant contribution to broadening the conceptualization of father involvement came from researcher J.H. Pleck (1997) when he asked "How good is the evidence that fathers' *amount* of involvement, without taking into account its content and quality, is consequential for children, mothers, or fathers themselves?" (p. 66). When we talk about the benefits of father involvement, it is grounded in the

assumption the involvement is positive (Pleck). More father involvement is not better if it comes in the form of poorly functioning parenting (Palkovitz, 2002).

Broadening the conceptualization of father involvement has led researchers to develop more comprehensive father involvement scales (Dick, 2004; Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz and Christiansen, 2002; Krampe & Newton, 2006; Palkovitz, 1997). Scales have been developed that address the adult child's perceptions of their childhood relationship with their father (Dick, 2004; Krampe & Newton, 2006). Other instruments have included measures that look at cognitive domains such as thought processes and planning (Hawkins et al., 2002; Palkovitz, 1997), mother support (Hawkins et al, 2002; Krampe & Newton, 2006), family of origin influence (Krampe & Newton, 2006) and aspects of nurturing such as praise and affection (Dick, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2002). These new scales are tools that have the potential to help researchers learn more about many aspects of father involvement, in a variety of contexts, and from multiple perspectives.

Father involvement definition.

For the purpose of this study, the term "father involvement" refers to the positive involvement a father has with his children (Pleck, 1997). This includes observable behaviours, as well as affective and cognitive domains of involvement. Father involvement is both direct and indirect (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). It is "likely to vary across time, developmental periods of both parents and children, and in relation to other components of the social ecology and life circumstances" (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 213). Father involvement "occurs under many conditions and many family contexts, depending on factors such as age, ethnicity, marital status and sexual orientation" (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006, p.1).

Approaches to father involvement research

One of the challenges facing fatherhood research, as Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley and Raikes (2002) point out, is that there is no one grand unifying theory about fathers and their involvement with their children. In Klein and White's (1996) introduction to family theories, they highlight six frameworks: exchange; symbolic interaction; family development; systems; conflict; and ecological. In Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth and Lamb's (2000) review of fatherhood scholarship at the end of the twentieth century, they found many research perspectives including social constructivism, developmental psychology, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and poststructuralism. In McBride and Lutz's (2004) overview of parenting programs developed specifically for fathers, the frameworks they found used were: ecological theory, microstructural theory, behavioural theory, social learning theory, psychosocial theory, empowerment philosophy, relationship-focused philosophy, client centred approach, context change-relationship change philosophy, and the Lamb multidimensional model of paternal involvement. While researchers view their subjects through a particular theoretical lens, Daly (2003) questions whether any of our formal theories comprise the theories by which families actually live:

> Our accounts of family reality are often divorced from space and place. Instead of presenting our results as near universal experiences that have no spatial roots, we need to attend to the nuances and idiosyncrasies that accompany a family's place-based reality. (p. 782)

Comparative framework.

When the lived experience of families is explored, paternal involvement is often viewed through a mother template (Palkovitz, 1997). This approach to father involvement is within a comparative framework, whereby fathers' involvement and abilities are "invariably described and evaluated . . . by using women's performance of

the mother role as the model or standard" (Day & Mackey, 1989, p. 401). Validity

concerns arise "when researchers rely on methods derived from theories centred on

the mother as 'the parent'" (Roggman, 2004, p. 228). In Fleming and Tobin's (2005)

content analysis of child-rearing books, while gender-neutral words such as "parent" or

"you" were used, they often implied mother and were actually not inclusive of both

parents. Even researchers use the term "parent" in the description of their work and

research findings, when in fact all of their participants were mothers (e.g., Dallaire &

Weinraub, 2005; Jacobson & Engelbrecht, 2000; Miller & Sambell, 2003). Family

studies researcher Lori Roggman (2004) states that,

> Theories about fathers and their influence on children are needed that link
> meaningfully with other theories about child development and parenting, that
> generate relevant constructs and links between constructs, and that suggest
> fruitful new directions for research. (p. 229)

Daniel Paquette (2004) offers a "true father theory", as opposed to an

"alternate-mother" one, about the father-child relationship derived from his research at

the University of Montreal. Though not without its criticism (Roggman, 2004; Tamis-

LeMonda, 2004), Paquette's work is an important example of research focused on

fathers without the maternal lens.

From deficit to generative.

Examining father involvement primarily through a maternal lens, fathers often

fall short of the mother standard. This has in part fuelled what has been described as a

deficit paradigm. The deficit paradigm situates fathers as "uninvolved, uninterested,

unskilled and unmotivated to perform their proper paternal role" (Hawkins & Dollahite,

1997, p. 7). Within this paradigm, attention to fathers remains focused on the negative

and fails to describe the positive attributes and contributions of many fathers. In

Fleming and Tobin's (2005) content analysis of child-rearing books that were published

since 1990, they found that "when fathers were depicted, they were portrayed in a negative fashion 30.7% of the time" (p. 20). This is not to say that there are not problems within fathering (i.e., neglect, decreased presence, abuse) and valid reasons to explore them within research. However, as Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) articulate, "a perspective of fathers as generally deficient in their paternal role is not the best place to begin to understand and encourage better fathering" (p. 3).

A deficit paradigm stands in stark contrast to a generative perspective on fatherhood involvement. Based on Erikson's (1950, 1982 as cited in Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1997) concept of generativity, generative fathering is "fathering that meets the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing ethical relationship with them" (p. 20). Rather than situate fathers as "uninvolved, uninterested, unskilled and unmotivated" (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997, p. 7) as a deficit paradigm does, generative fathering assumes that men have "the obligation and the ability within themselves to be good fathers" (Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1997, p. 20).

Multiple perspectives.

As Palkovitz (2002) states, "there are no widely accepted conceptual frameworks of paternal involvement that have been translated into extensively used, psychometrically reliable and valid measures" (p. 124). This is in part due to the multidisciplinary interest in father involvement (McBride & Lutz, 2004; Palkovitz, 2002). Fatherhood scholarship generated from a range of disciplines has at times led to theoretical divides (Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Though the lack of a unified theory presents challenges to researchers, there are potential benefits to viewing fatherhood from a multidisciplinary perspective, as many researchers are calling for (e.g., Adams,

2004; BC Parenting Vision Working Group, 2006; Cabrera et al, 2000; Daly, 2003; Day & Lamb, 2004; Dubeau, 2002; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Roggman et al, 2002; Schoppe-Sullivan et al, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002).

While Marsiglio and Cohan (2000) approach father involvement with a sociological lens, they recognize that to get the fullest picture of fathers and their involvement with their children, and to understand what this means to fathers, families and society in general, the "sociological perspective is ultimately realized when it is integrated with other disciplinary perspectives" (p. 76). In McBride and Lutz's (2004) overview of the status of parenting programs designed for fathers in the US, they concluded that the multidisciplinary approach has been beneficial to researchers and practitioners in their understanding of fathering behaviour. "Given the grassroots nature of fatherhood programs, it is important to investigate and apply a variety of models to help determine which approaches are most successful in reaching various groups of men" (p. 451).

The effects of father involvement

There is an abundance of research about the effects of father involvement (for a comprehensive summary of the research evidence see Allen & Daly, 2004; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). The research regarding the effects of father involvement has tended to focus on three main areas: (a) the effects on children; (b) the effects on mothers and the co-parental relationship; and (c) the effects on fathers and their adult development. As well as those three areas, I would suggest that, while not always specifically stated as such, research studies point to the effects that father involvement has on society in what researcher Andrea Doucet identifies as a "slow process of critical resistance" (2004, p. 2). The effects of paternal involvement can be presented in

isolation or as linked and reciprocal (Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz, & Christiansen, 2002).

On children.

Research points to father involvement influences on child development outcomes including greater cognitive competence and academic success, resilience and adaptability, social competence and empathy (see Allen & Daly, 2004 for a comprehensive summary of the research evidence). While researchers have examined the effects of father absence on child development outcomes, little is known in research about the effects of non-resident fathers' involvement on children's development (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000). We also know very little about the significance or dynamics of paternal roles in adulthood (Hewlett, 2000), though research has begun to include the adult child's perspective of being fathered (Dick, 2004; Krampe & Newton, 2006), acknowledging that memories, even recreated memories, can impact the adult child's relationship with their own family.

Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth and Lamb (2000) point out that to understand which dimensions of father involvement most influence child outcomes researchers and "theorists must ask complex questions about patterns of influence on child development" (p. 129). They go on to say that "it is important to note that there is no evidence linking parental involvement per se (i.e., amount) with desirable outcomes" (p. 130). Citing many research studies from the 1980s, Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) observe that, "the extent of paternal involvement may have been less significant (so far as the effects on children are concerned) than the reasons for high involvement and the parents' evaluations thereof" (p. 8). They go on to state that,

Parental warmth, nurturance, closeness are associated with positive child outcomes regardless of whether the parent involved is a mother or a father. The important dimensions of parental influence are those that have to do with parental characteristics rather than gender-related characteristics. (p. 10)

On the co-parental relationship.

Palkovitz (2002) credits fatherhood research pioneer Michael E. Lamb (1997) with addressing father involvement within the broader family system. "[Lamb's] summary reflects the interdependent nature of fathering relationships with other relational contexts" (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 131). Many researchers have explored father involvement within the family context focusing on mothers and the co-parental relationship (e.g., Crouter, Bumpus, Head & McHale, 2001; Cummings, Goeke-Morey & Raymond, 2004; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Pleck & Stueve, 2004; Winsler, Madigan & Aquilino, 2005). Based on their review of the research, Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) found that a high degree of paternal involvement allowed both parents to do "what was rewarding and fulfilling for them" (p. 8). This could create a family context where both parents feel good about their relationship "and the child care arrangements they had been able to work out" (p. 8).

On fathers.

There has been much less focus in fatherhood scholarship on the effects of father involvement on fathers themselves and their adult development. Eggebeen and Knoester's (2001) exploration of fatherhood as a transformative event in the lives of adult men found differences between men with children and men without children in their social and familial connections, as well as in their work lives, but not in the psychological or health dimensions they used. Palkovitz, Copes and Woolfolk (2001) found that "through assuming responsibility for fathering and continued involvement in child rearing, the fathers in [their] study perceived significant changes in their life

course and personalities" (p. 49). Examining the different life courses fathers could take, Juby and Le Bourdais (1998) found that men are increasingly having to adapt their parental role – through remarriage, in step families, as a non-resident father – and that more qualitative research is needed to assess "how fathers adapt to these more complex trajectories" (p. 174).

On society.

Recognizing the complexities of fathering includes seeing the birelational nature of father involvement (Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz, & Christiansen, 2002). Just as fathering relationships exist among other relational contexts (Lamb, 1997 as cited by Palkovitz, 2002), they also exist within the context of a particular society. Research is beginning to highlight how the actions of fathers who are increasingly involved as primary caregivers and co-parents in their children's lives, have an effect on society. Two Canadian researchers, Anna Dienhart and Andrea Doucet, have both produced work that hints at the potential for theoretical and political change by learning from and including the voices of caregiving fathers.

In Dienhart's study (2001) of 18 couples who both agreed the father took an active role in parenting, she interviewed the couples separately and together about various aspects of their parenting. She termed their co-parenting as "tag-team parenting". Key findings included zeroing in on the components of specialization and interchangeability in successful tag-team parenting, the necessity for parents to value their respective different approaches, and the importance for men to be "in the trenches" and for women to let go of the "gatekeeper role". Doucet's research study (2006, 2004) with 118 fathers, who self-identify themselves as primary caregivers, showed fathers engaged in a process of reconstructing the meaning of both work and

family and it highlighted the complex intersections that exist between work, home,

community and masculinity. Both groups of fathers are working outside of what has

traditionally been regarded as a father's "role" and I believe, as co-parents and as

primary caregivers, both groups are engaged in what Doucet (2004) calls a "slow

process of critical resistance" (p. 2). Doucet's research, in particular, suggests the need

for a wider conception of domestic labour and a move beyond current theorization of

masculinity:

> Fathers do not put their masculinity on the line but rather are actively
> reconstructing masculinities to include aspects of traditional feminine
> characteristics. Fathers' narratives . . . are filled with visible and inchoate
> contradictions, which tell how fathers are both determined to distance
> themselves from the feminine but are also, in practice, radically revisioning
> masculine care and ultimately our understanding of masculinities. (Doucet,
> 2006, p. 237)

While the stories shared by the fathers in Doucet's research may not be the

lived experience of every father, or the majority of fathers in our society, we are

reminded of this "new" involved father regularly in articles and images that appear in

the media (e.g. Beck, 2005; Canadian Press, 2003; Involved dads feeling invisible,

2006; Nyhan, 2006; Owens, 2006). Marsiglio and Cohan (2000) observe that with the

increase in gay fathers, single fathers, non-resident fathers and step-fathers, the

institutional and normative features of fatherhood today is "increasingly nebulous" (p.

78). They contend that "individuals have experienced greater leeway in constructing

their own normative realities without relying on pre-existing templates" (p. 78).

Determinants of father involvement

As father researchers have worked to better understand the effects of father

involvement, research examining the determinants of father involvement has also

evolve over the last thirty years. Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine's (1987) model of

influences focused on motivation, skills and confidence, social support and stresses, and institutional factors, and researchers continue to use this model when examining the determinants of father involvement (e.g., McBride & Rane, 1997; Marsiglio, 2004). While Lamb et al. (1987) have given us a strong model as a basis to categorize and examine factors that influence father involvement, I believe the model essentially addresses influences at a micro level and does not sufficiently take into account influences at the macro level (Klein & White, 1996). Looking at father involvement, we have to take into account the "cultural assumptions about the roles of fathers and why paternal involvement is highly desirable" (Hewlett, 2000, p. 61). As such, I will discuss influences of father involvement at the macro level as well as those that fit into Lamb et al.'s model of father involvement determinants.

Motivation, skills and confidence.

Research has found fathers' desire to spend time with their children (Daly, 1996; Stockley & Daly, 1999) to be a motivating factor for their involvement. Daly found not only the desire to spend time with the children but also that it was an expectation that fathers held: good fathers were to spend quality time with their children. Being available for, and a role model to their children were also aspects of "good fathers" characterized by both fathers and sons in Morman and Floyd's study (2006) of what it means to fathers and sons to be a "good father". Fathers' motivation to be involved in their childrearing can be influenced by their attitudes (Beaton, Doherty & Rueter, 2003), their personal expectations (Cook, Jones, Dick & Singh, 2005), their conceptualization of fatherhood (Giesbrecht, 1999), and their perception of their fathering role (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Marsiglio & Cohen, 2000). Other research that has examined self-messages, attitudes and beliefs of fathers, found that egalitarianism

(Bulanda, 2004), a favourable attitude toward the paternal role (McBride & Rane, 1997) and the "centrality of the nurturing role" (Rane & McBride, 2000, p. 359), support a father's skills and self-confidence to be involved. Reflected appraisals, how men and their actions are perceived by others and reflected back to them, can impact how they see themselves as a father, potentially affecting their confidence and skill development (Marsiglio & Cohen, 2000).

Social support and stresses.

Social support and stresses from "significant others – mothers, relatives, friends and workmates" (Lamb et al, 1987, p.133) can include the perceived judgement of a spouse (Dienhart, 2001), a father's family of origin (Beaton, Doherty & Rueter, 2003; Krampe & Newton, 2006) and his work peers (Bygren & Duvander, 2006). Research by Paquette, Bolté, Tourcotte, Dubeau and Bouchard (2000) found that a father secure in his social relationships was more likely to "have a warm relationship with his children" (p. 225) and be more involved in a stimulative relationship, such as introducing new activities and creating new games. Research by Maurer and Pleck (2006) also points to the relevance of peers to many fathers and suggests social modeling is a potential predictor of caregiving behaviours. "The more involved fathers perceive other fathers to be, the more they attempt to model that level of involvement" (p. 108).

Many research studies also point to high marital quality (Cummings, Goeke-Morey & Raymond, 2004) and parental conjointness (Daly, 2002; Dienhart, 2001; Pleck & Stueve, 2004;) as positive influences on father involvement. While Paquette, Bolté, Tourcotte, Dubeau and Bouchard's study (2000) did not find a statistically significant correlation between spousal harmony and father involvement, their findings may reflect their sample of participants and they suggest there is a need for future research to

examine the effects of marital quality from participants from a variety of socio-

economic and education backgrounds.

Other factors regarding a spouse's impact have been the influence of women's

employment (Daly, 1996; Rane, & McBride, 2000) and their tendency to control the

family schedule and delegate tasks (Daly, 2002). Maternal gatekeeping is seen by

mnay researchers to be a significant barrier to father involvement (Fagan & Barnett,

2003; Lindsey, Caldera & Colwell, 2005; McBride & Rane, 1997; Maurer, Pleck, & Rane,

2001; Hoffman & Moon, 1999). Specifically, mothers' perception of their partners'

competence (Fagan & Barnett, 2003) and their partners' "investments in parent spouse

and worker roles" (McBride & Rane, 1997, p. 173), mothers' attitudes about fathers'

nurturing (Rane & McBride, 2000), and their beliefs about the role of the father

(McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn, & Korth, 2005) impact the involvement of

fathers. Much of this research has been reported in parenting magazines and websites

articles, including advice for women on how to help fathers be involved and advice for

mothers how not to be gatekeepers (Hoffman, 2001; Keer, 2005; MacDonald, n.d.).

As Palkovitz (2002) states:

[Father] involvement is a component of relationships between a father and a
child. . . . Though the father's primary relationship is in regard to one or more
children, fathering is significantly affected by other relationships, most notably
to the children's mother, other family members, and other persons (e.g.,
friends, neighbors, coworkers). The support and roadblocks that are introduced
through these relationships influence both the culture and the conduct of father
involvement for individual men. (p. 121)

Institutional factors.

The work place environment can act as both a barrier and support for fathers'

involvement with their children (Russell & Hwang, 2004; Stockley & Daly, 1999). In

terms of parental leave, O'Brien (2004) cites Danish studies by Christoffersen (1990)

and Carlsen (1993) that found workplace factors important in determining whether or not fathers took parental leave. More fathers took paternal leave within the public sector and in "predominantly female workplaces" (p. 136). Current research also shows that fathers' workplace situations affect the taking of parental leave (Anderson, Appledorn & Weise, 1996 as cited by O'Brien; Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Daly & Hawkins, 2005; Seward, Yeatts, Amin, & Dewitt, 2006).

Daly (1996) notes that many employers engage in the rhetoric of family first, yet contradictory work demands find fathers needing to put in long hours: "The workplace is not an environment that encourages men to confidently take advantage of any workplace strategies offered" (Daly & Hawkins, 2005, p.4). Stockley and Daly (1999) describe the conceptualization of work and family as "individual time vortexes (i.e., swirling, demanding forces) that compete for the attention and energy of these fathers" (p. 340).

Influences examined at the macro level.

While workplace policies certainly impact father involvement, those policies are developed in a particular context. Support for father involvement related to work could come from workplace policies that encourage both spouses to work and to engage in unpaid caregiving of young children (Brotherson, Dollahite & Hawkins, 2005). They could also be influenced by a legal obligation for employers to ensure parents have flexibility in their work (Daly & Hawkins, 2005). In Canada, since the change to the Employment Insurance Act in 2000, there has been an increase in men's participation in parental leave from 3% to 11% (Marshall, 2006). This increase was noted by Labour Analyst Katherine Marshall (2003) as a "socially significant" change (as cited by Marshall, 2006). This change has the potential to increase fathers' involvement at the

earliest stage of their children's lives as well as impact the support for paternal leave in the work place environment.

The "economy, gender-segregated labor market, and public policies [that target] families" (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p. 77) all impact father involvement and are each shaped by race and ethnic considerations. Cultural expectations also influence father involvement, such as those assigned to men and women about breadwinning and caregiving (Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001). Dominant western cultural messages about materialism (Stockley & Daly, 1999) and the "social meaning and value that is assigned to time spent at work and home" (Daly, 1996, p.471), as well as the tension between "changes in societal expectations for fathers" (McBride & Rane, 1997, p. 191) and hegemonic masculinity (Daly, 2004; Doucet, 2004, 2006), all impact how fathers are involved with their children.

Anthropologist Barry Hewlett (2000) identifies rough and tumble play "as a key factor in understanding father-child attachment" (p. 63) in contemporary U.S. society. I would suggest that this is true in understanding Canadian fathers as well. In Canadian researcher Daniel Paquette's (2004) theory about the father-child relationship, play is central: play is to fathering what nurturance is to mothering. Paquette calls the emotional bond between father and child the "father-child activation relationship", which

> satisfies the child's need to be stimulated, to overcome limits, and to learn to take chances in contexts in which the child is confident of being protected from potential dangers. (p. 202)

Paquette attributes the rough and tumble play of fathers to biology, though Tamis-LeMonda (2004) points to social learning theory as another possible explanation. It is interesting to note Hewlett's study of Aka fathers (1991 as cited by Hewlett, 2000),

in comparison to the father-child play centred involvement. "Aka children are very attached to their fathers despite the fact that Aka fathers do not engage in vigorous rough and tumble play" (p. 63). These "fathers are either holding or within arm's distance of their infants more than 50% of a 24-hour period" (p. 63).

Hewlett (2000) identifies five characteristics of middle-class families that affect the context of father involvement:

1. low infant mortality rates;

2. the absence of regular warfare;

3. the fact that parents' time with children is limited by work schedules;

4. that parents usually have no background in child-rearing until the fist child is born; and

5. that children do not stay with parents when they get married (p. 61).

Parenting education

It is important to note the many types of parent education services, as one style does not meet the needs of all. Services may be targeted to a particular population or for a particular need. For example, targeted programs may be designed to support an immigrant community, those who are living in poverty, young parents, people who have suffered abuse, those experiencing maternal depression, gay parents, and parents of children with behaviour problems or special needs. Other programs are developed with a universal audience in mind, focusing on parenting issues such as parenting style and behaviour, child development information and father involvement (Mann, 2006). Sparling (1980) highlights five advantages to parenting education: (a) it is inexpensive when compared to other services; (b) it can be delivered redundantly to increase its effectiveness; (c) it preserves the autonomy of the receiver; (d) it can be

used before problems occur; and (e) it can be used as a compatible element in a total program of family services (as cited by Jacobson & Engelbrecht, 2000, p. 140). As reported by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development,

> A major challenge facing Canadian policy-makers, researchers and practitioners alike is the development and evaluation of parent education initiatives that will reach all parents, boost their parenting confidence, improve their parenting practices and provide support in raising healthy, well-adjusted children. (Peters, 2007, p. 1)

Call for parent education and support resources.

To better understand the education and support needs of parents, The Greater Victoria Early Childhood Coalition conducted focus groups with parents in the Greater Victoria area. One of the findings of this research was that parents commented on a need for "programs, information and support particularly for families of toddlers and preschoolers" (The Parenting and Education Support Task Group, 2004, p. 13). They also found that "parents expressed a preference for group-based resources as they benefit from the knowledge and experience of other parents like themselves" (p. 10).

Both researchers and practitioners recommend increased opportunities for parent education and support (BC Parenting Vision Working Group, 2006; Peters, 2007; Russell, 2003a, 2003b; The Parenting and Education Support Task Group, 2004). The BC Parenting Vision Working Group (2006) calls for the promotion of positive parenting and the normalization of parenting education and support for *all* parents over the course of their children's growth to adulthood (p. 4). The Department for Education and Skills in England makes a similar recommendation in their 2004 report, *What works in parenting support? A review of the international evidence*:

> Many parents need support at some point in their parenting career and efforts to 'normalize' access to support as a universal right seem likely to generate strong benefits. The message that it is not unusual to need support from time to time needs to be conveyed in policy rhetoric, to help increase rates of access,

especially at critical points for early intervention. (Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004, p. 10)

Parenting practices and child outcomes.

Most parents approach parenting with the best intentions to parent well and with the greatest hopes for their children to succeed, regardless of family type. Daly (2004) points out that "single mothers or single fathers, dual earner parents, step parents and gay and lesbian parents all share in the cultural mandate to support their children, attend to their physical well-being, help them stay out of trouble and push them to achieve" (p. 3). The Canadian *National Survey of Parents of Young Children*, conducted by Invest in Kids, found that 92% of parents think parenting is the most important thing they can do and that 94% said they enjoy being a parent most of the time (Oldershaw, 2002, p. 13). Almost all parents (91%) agreed with the statement, "there is always room for improvement in parenting skills" and most (70%) stated that they had tried to learn more about parenting to prepare for the birth of their first baby (p.95). It is interesting to note that while responses from parents indicated a high commitment to parenting, this "did not directly translate into optimal parenting behaviour with children" (p. 17). Other factors, such as parenting confidence and knowledge, and parents' emotional well-being, likely "influence how appropriately parents will behave with their children" (p. 17).

Findings from Canada's *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) about parenting practices and child outcomes indicate that only a third of parents are using positive, effective parenting skills and that those positive parenting practices have positive effects on children's social and cognitive outcomes (Chao & Willms, 2002, p. 164). Chao and Willms reviewed the 25 items used in the NLSCY parent questionnaire that asked parents about the ways they respond to their child.

The findings also indicate that parenting practices are not strongly related to socio-

economic status or family structure:

> These findings present a serious challenge to the 'culture of poverty' thesis and the widespread belief that the children of poor families do not fare well because of the way they are raised. These findings, based on a large representative sample of Canadian families, show that positive parenting practices have important effects on childhood outcomes, but that both positive and negative parenting practices are found in rich and poor families alike. Thus, good parenting is a concern for all parents. (p. 165)

Parent education outcomes - Does parent education work?

In her literature review on parent education, Betsy Mann (2006) concludes that

"parenting programs do affect the knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values of

parents and that these changes are associated with improved outcomes for children"

(p. 47). Gage and Christensen (1991) found that parents with more "concurrent

socialization experiences (e.g., talking with other parents, professionals, spouse, and

taking parenting classes) reported more personal happiness, greater self-importance,

greater self esteem, more satisfaction with role performance, and more marital

satisfaction and happiness" (as cited by Jacobson & Engelbrecht, 2000, p. 140).

Jacobson and Engelbrecht (2000) found that of the 26% of their study participants who

had attended a "class, group or program about being a parent or taught parenting

skills . . . . all answered that their attendance was helpful" (p. 144). Based on two

studies on a particular parent education program, Wolf and Hirsch (2003) found that

their program participants, though a small sample size, reported improved parental

attitudes, reduced levels of parenting stress and encouragement to use authoritative

parenting practices. Mann, Pearl and Behle (2005) reported a modest gain in parenting

knowledge and improvement in attitude for adolescent parents who participated in

parent education. Anecdotal evidence from educators indicated that participants with high attendance had positive behaviour changes.

While evidence suggests that parenting programs can be advantageous, the report *What works in parenting support? A review of the international evidence*, prepared by Moran, Ghate, and van der Merwe (2004), indicates that more research and evaluation are needed to ascertain how well parenting programs work in conjunction with skills-based training and information-giving programs, and their long term impact on the family (p. 68). As well, "more needs to be known about the differences and similarities in parenting strategies employed by fathers and mothers in order to inform the design of parenting programmes, in terms of both parenting content and delivery style" (Coplin & Houts, 1991 as cited in Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004, p. 101). In Russell's (2003a) review of parent education in Canada, she found that "no program exists that could be identified as comprehensive, structured parent education and support" (p. 79) and that "even among the partial programs that are available, very few are evaluated or based on research [and] most are focused on low income families or families with specific problems" (p.79). A review of Greater Victoria parent education and support programs also found "an absence of reliable research" (Parenting and Education Support Task Group, 2004, p. 13) on the quality or effectiveness of programs. Mann's (2006) literature review on parent education recommends further research in several areas: a) cultural differences in parenting practices in the context of Canadian culture; b) how to attract and engage fathers in programs; c) how programs address the marital relationship and its effect on children; d) why people do not register and drop out of programs; e) home-based parent

education programs; f) barriers to programs' effectiveness; and g) evaluation measures that capture long-term outcomes (pp. 48-49).

Though research tells us that there is work to be done in the development and evaluation of programs for all parents and in the normalization of seeking parental education and support, we know that the need for education and support is there:

> Across the board, parents need help. Too many parents fail to use the positive parenting practices which promote healthy social, emotional and intellectual development. Too many parents lack knowledge about child development and confidence in the parenting role; they are often emotionally worn out and stressed; and they are not receiving sufficient support. (Russell, 2003b, p. 69)

Parent education and fathers.

The strong increase in programs in the US to promote father involvement has coincided with the tremendous growth in fatherhood research (McBride & Lutz, 2004). A similar trajectory has occurred in Canada (Bolté, Devault, St.Denis, & Gaudet, 2001; Devault, Gaudet, Bolté, & St-Denis, 2005; My daddy matters because, n.d.b). There have been many problems identified by researchers with how family resource programs have neglected to involve and support fathers or have done so in a limited capacity (Bolté, Devault, St.Denis & Gaudet, 2001; Daly & Hawkins, 2005; Devault, Gaudet, Bolté & St-Denis, 2005; Green, 2003; Schock & Gavazzi, 2004). Just as parent resource programs have been lacking in their inclusion of fathers in both content and in audience, Fleming and Tobin's (2005) recent research had similar findings regarding the representation of fathers in child-rearing books. Their sample showed that most books categorized as parenting books were actually written for a female audience, with fathers' roles being presented as "peripheral and limited" (p. 20). The authors found that the parenting role for mothers was depicted as "obligatory and primary" whereas the fathers' role was "voluntary and negotiable" (p. 20).

To help practitioners create and implement programs that place fathers in the parenting picture as more than a sideline babysitter, the national project "*My Daddy Matters Because . . .*", funded in part by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), developed a *Father Toolkit* (My daddy matters because, n.d.a). The document, which is available in its entirety online, includes examples of father friendly resources, programs and activities as well as strategies to assess the organization's ability to include fathers, to recruit participants, and to further develop programs. While some organizations have worked to be more inclusive of fathers and their needs, integrating them into existing parenting programs, others have chosen to create and implement father-only resources. In McBride and Lutz's (2004) overview of the status of parenting programs in the US designed specifically for fathers, they cite several researchers (Levine & Pitt, 1995; McBride & Rane, 1997, 2001; Palm, 1997) who believe parenting programs developed for fathers "may be one way to help men more effectively live up to the changing societal expectations for fatherhood" (p. 447). While a fathers-only program can act as "a tool to assist fathers develop their own voice as a parent for their children" (Cornille, Barlow & Cleveland, 2005, p. 53), resources that are designed for parents in general can also positively impact father involvement.

> Community programs designed to provide education, stimulation and support during infancy and early childhood can include fathers specifically in their programming design and implementation, and address the particular and unique needs of fathers in addition to the more traditional focus on mothers. (Ashbourne, 2006, p. 38)

Depending on the needs of the community being served, this can be achieved with the implementation of fathers-only resources or working to ensure that the parenting programs offered to both mothers and fathers are inclusive of both genders.

Further research in Canada is needed regarding how to attract fathers into family resource programs and how to engage and sustain their involvement in programming (Mann, 2006; Russell, 2003a, 2003b).

Chapter summary

"Scholars are slowly (and not consistently) recognizing the diverse array of family types and sociocultural expectations and demands that shape paternal roles, family processes, and child development" (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004, p. 14). This impacts what we believe and expect father involvement to be, as well as what researchers examine in regards to the effects and determinants of father involvement. There is strong interest, particularly over the last ten years, in research about father involvement and the development of programs that are designed to promote and enhance the positive involvement of fathers.

Parent education research and program implementation has also grown. Policy makers, practitioners, and researchers recognize the importance of parenting and recommend increased opportunities for parent education and support (BC Parenting Vision Working Group, 2006; Peters, 2007; Russell, 2003a, 2003b; The Parenting and Education Support Task Group, 2004). Mann (2006) concludes that "parenting programs do affect the knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values of parents and that these changes are associated with improved outcomes for children" (p. 47). This research study is an opportunity to explore what kind of information about fathers' involvement with their young children is found in formal parent education programs in BC.

Chapter 3

Description of Method and Procedures

The purpose of this study is to try and ascertain what information about fathers'

involvement with their young children is, or is not, included in formal parent education

programs offered in BC. To achieve this aim, I chose to conduct a content analysis of

the materials used in formal parent education programs and to interview the program

directors.

Content analysis

Parenting is a social phenomenon. Parents receive messages from many

sources about what it means to be a parent and the appropriateness or

inappropriateness of certain parenting behaviours, skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Parent

education classes are one such source and their materials are an accessible set of raw

data to be analyzed. In this study, I examine the raw data found in the texts of formal

parent education classes for any content regarding one aspect of parenting, father

involvement. While I tracked and tallied the type of father involvement content that

was present in and absent from the texts, this study is more than a quantification of

data. Texts, in this case the materials used in parent education classes, can both reflect

and generate social phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2004). As such, the data were

analyzed for possible meanings within various contexts (e.g., the context in which the

program was created; fatherhood research; parent education research and design; and

the image and reality of parenting).

> Abductively inferring contextual phenomenon from texts moves an analysis
> outside the data. It bridges the gap between descriptive accounts of texts and
> what they mean, refer to, entail, provoke, or cause. It points to unobserved
> phenomena in the context of interest to an analyst. (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 85)

Content analysis has grown and developed since it was first used as a methodology in social sciences research (Krippendorff, 2004). In this study, I use content analysis in a way that Krippendorff describes as rhetorical, with a focus on "how messages are delivered, and with what (intended or actual) effects" (p. 16). In Bauer's (2000) description of "classical content analysis" (p. 132), a coding frame is established and tested prior to analysis and the texts are interpreted only in light of that coding frame. Rhetorical analysis however, "encourages content analysis accounts to emerge from readings of texts" (p. 16). As such, a coding frame was not established prior to reading the texts. Instead, I interpreted the text in light of the research questions and developed codes from the reading of the texts. (A more detailed and further account of the analytical procedures used in the content analysis is presented later in this chapter.) I looked for themes to emerge about what was and was not included about father involvement in the program content, as well as how that content was portrayed. I read the texts for codes that were focused around my four main research questions:

1. Is father involvement included in the program content? If so, what does the content include?

2. How is father involvement defined and described in the program content?

3. What approach to father involvement is taken in the program content?

4. What factors, if any, are included in the program content that address what contributes to and/or deters the involvement of fathers?

There are several advantages to using content analysis in this study. This method uses already existing raw data (Bauer, 2000) and is less obtrusive (Krippendorff, 2004) than if I surveyed program directors about father involvement

content. A survey of directors would be more time-consuming for the participants, whether it was done through an interview, a questionnaire or a focus group; as well such approaches would provide data about the program's content through each director's lens. A content analysis eliminates trying to filter out the directors' perspectives of the content and its intent. Done well, content analysis is a public, systematic method that can provide a set of well-documented procedures for others to follow (Bauer, 2000).

Interview

An integral element of content analysis is to understand the context of the written material (Krippendorff, 2004). To understand the intention of the program and its intended audience - what they are trying to say and to whom they are saying it – a simple interview was developed to retrieve basic information from program directors to help place the participating parent education program into context. The interview was designed to take place over the phone as it is a personable way to retrieve information and is generally more time efficient for the participants, as well as the researcher, than completing a written questionnaire. Also, as directors of programs that are offered to the public, there was an assumption made that the directors are familiar with answering questions about their programs over the phone, as it is something they do as part of their job.

The phone interview was intended to retrieve general information about the program. To help determine if the interview questions were clear, appropriate and sufficient, they were piloted twice, once with a Director of an organization offering services and programs to parents, and once with a facilitator running a parent program. (See Appendices F, G, and H for the recruitment and interview scripts for the

pilot study.) All of the questions were easily answered during the pilot. Both pilot participants responded that the questions were straightforward and made sense. Neither experienced any problems understanding the questions over the phone and both said they were sufficient for gathering basic program information. As such, there were no changes made to the interview questions in the main study. The questions for the director interviews were:

1. What is the name of the program?

2. Who is the sponsoring agency of the program?

3. Where is the program offered?

4. How is the program facilitated?

5. What is the length of the program?

6. Who is the program offered to? Is this who typically participates in the program?

7. What are the goals of the program?

8. Are materials included for the program participants? If so, what kinds of materials?

Study participants

The aim of this study was to examine the content of formal education programs in BC for parents of young children. As there are multiple types of programs and services designed to support parents and strengthen their capacity to parent, clear and succinct criteria for participation needed to be developed prior to contacting directors of programs. With the criteria established, I attempted to locate all of the formal parent education programs being offered in BC at the time of my study, and recruit one example of each parent education program to include.

Program criteria description.

To maintain a reasonable scope for the project, and in light of the current

political focus on parent education in BC (Ministry of Children and Family Development,

2006), I limited my search to programs that were offered in BC at the time of my

study. I also limited my search to programs designed for parents of young children,

between the ages of zero and six, as most programs and government positions in BC

define early childhood as such (e.g., Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia, 2005;

First Call, 2003). As well, research findings such as those from Canada's *National*

Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth, show that parents' responsiveness to their

children declines steadily as their children get older (Chao & Willms, 2002). As such, it

seemed appropriate to examine what parents are being told about father involvement

at the parental stage when they seem the most responsive.

I also limited participation to programs identified as formal education rather

than drop-in or informal support services. Moran, Ghate, and van der Merwe (2004)

refer to these programs as "manualised programmes with centrally-monitored,

systematized delivery" (p. 120). I looked for programs with an established content that

was identified in an outline, in the program materials, or in a manual for the instructor

(as well as possibly the participants) that remains consistent every time it is offered.

Programs that change their curriculum content based on who participates and on

information requests from the participants were not included. The length of the

program was not a factor. Programs could be offered over a series of weeks, a

weekend, or a single workshop.

Participation was also limited to programs with content that focuses primarily on

parent outcomes; that is, parenting skills, parenting attitudes and beliefs, parenting

knowledge and understanding, emotional and mental health, and social support

(Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004). Programs that are essentially focused on child

outcomes, such as some family literacy programs, were not included. Programs that

were offered to both parents and children were also not included as they were beyond

the focus of this project.

In summary, the participation criteria were that parent education programs

were:

1. offered in BC at the time of my study;

2. designed for parents of young children, between the ages of zero and six;

3. formal education programs rather than drop-in or informal support services;

    a. with content that is identified in an outline or program materials;

    b. with content that does not change each time the program is delivered

        based on who participates and what the participants request; and

4. focused primarily on parent outcomes.

Locating formal parent education programs in BC.

In order to have the most representative sample for my study, I did an

extensive search for formal education programs offered in BC. I began my search

electronically to locate organizations, groups, or individuals that might offer formal

parent education or could refer me to those who did. I started with the BC Ministry of

Health's website, which led to the websites of BC's five health authorities: Northern;

Interior; Fraser Valley; Vancouver Coastal; and Vancouver Island. These websites

linked me to the contact information of health clinics/centres throughout the province.

The five health authority regions also provided my framework for collating the

information I found during my search.

I searched the BC government's online resource for Child Care Resource and Referral Services (CCRR), www.childcarechoices.ca, and located the contact information for programs in each region. This website also provided me with some information about the kinds of parenting services offered through some of the CCRR programs. The link for the Vancouver Island region, www.islandfamilyinfo.ca, led to more programs and contact information by searching their two links, "Education" and "Children's Programs". Another electronic resource where I located several organizations that potentially offered parent education classes was the website for the BC Association of Family Resource Programs. Through their Directory, I found a list of family resource programs for each region.

I also looked to the BC Council for Families (BCCF) for parent education information. The BCCF coordinates the facilitator training for the *Nobody's Perfect* parenting program and through their website, I retrieved a list of organizations that currently offer *Nobody's Perfect* in BC. I also looked at websites for the BC government initiative *Success by 6*. Several areas, West Kootenays, the Lower Mainland, and Southern Vancouver Island, listed early childhood development projects and their sponsoring organizations. As well, I found contact information for many community service organizations, which often run or sponsor programs for families, on the website for Information Services Vancouver through their links "Information and Referral Services in BC" and "BC Community Information Directories".

My search for formal parent education programs was greatly helped by the use of the electronic search engine Google. I looked for neighbourhood houses in BC through Google and was able to locate a list of neighbourhood houses with their contact information. I also placed the names of resources I had already gathered, such

as child development centres listed on the BC Association of Family Resource Programs'

database, into Google. This often led me to a website for the resource where I could

find more information about the programs and services they offered to families.

Whenever I could, I used the websites of the organizations, community groups,

and individuals providing services to families, to ascertain whether or not they offered

formal parent education programs that met the criteria of my study. As it was not

always possible to locate all of the information I needed on websites, I contacted many

program directors via email or telephone to ask whether they offered formal parent

education for parents of children aged zero to six, or if they might know who did. I also

emailed and telephoned organizations to verify the program information I had received

on the web, particularly the list of Nobody's Perfect agencies I retrieved from the BCCF

website, and to find out if they offered any other formal parent education programs.

Searching electronically and contacting individuals via email or telephone was an

efficient way not only to ascertain where formal parent education programs were

offered, but whether or not the programs met the criteria of my study. Often this

contact led to other resources to try, such as community centres and counselling

centres.

As I gathered resources and contact information, I entered the data into a list

organized firstly by the five Health Authority regions of BC. Each region was then

divided into service delivery areas and each service delivery area was broken into cities

or towns. This helped to organize the data and minimize inputting names and contact

information more than once. This was useful as resources were often listed on several

sites, many times under different names. Organizing the data in this manner also

helped to piece together a picture of service delivery in each region. This was

particularly important as services for families are not operated the same way and by the same organizations region by region. As I am relatively unfamiliar with most of the regions in BC and their services for families, it was necessary for me to research each area as thoroughly as possible. With this list, I was also able to track my contact with organizations, community groups and individuals, the information I received from them about their programs and their suggestions for finding other programs. As well as maintaining a list of programs that were offered in each region through various organizations and groups, I also put together two tables listing programs offered in BC, one ordered by program name, and one ordered by the cities that offer that program.

In summary, I searched for organizations, community groups and individuals who might offer formal parent education programs through the following resources:

- BC Government, Ministry of Health and five regional health authorities;
- Child Care Resource and Referral programs;
- BC Association of Family Resource Programs;
- BC Council for Families;
- *Success by 6* initiatives in BC;
- Information Services Vancouver;
- Google search engine;
- neighbourhood houses;
- child development centres;
- community centres; and
- counselling centres.

As I found resources to contact in my search for parent education programs that met the criteria of my study, I organized my data in three formats:

1. a list of contacts ordered by region;

2. a table of programs offered in BC ordered by location; and

3. a table of programs offered in BC ordered by program name.

Recruitment to participate.

It was my aim to have one example of each type of formal parent education program operating in BC at the time of my search that I could find, participate in my study. Asking for participation was straightforward when the parent education program offered was by only one organization, community group or individual. As I expected, however, there were several parent education programs that were offered in many locations, run by different facilitators, and by different organizations. As these programs have a set content and are delivered by trained facilitators, nothing would have been gained in terms of content analysis regarding father involvement if each of the organizations running the same program participated. Moreover, inclusion of multiple sites of the same program might have skewed the results of the content analysis. As such, only one example of each program was chosen for analysis.

Asking programs to participate in this study occurred throughout the process of my search for potential programs to recruit. When it was determined that an organization, community group or individual offered a program that met the criteria of my study, I spoke with the director of the program on the telephone about the study and the requirements of participation. (See Appendix A for the script to recruit participants.) If a program was offered at multiple sites, I chose to ask for participation if it was determined that the organization uses the set program content, as it was designed, in their implementation of that program. Participants were selected if they

met the study's program criteria, followed a set content when implementing the program, and were willing to participate.

If a director expressed interest in participating, I sent her/him an email that included consent to participate information, general information about the research project and all of the relevant contact information for the study (see Appendix E). The email also included a request for a convenient time and day that I might telephone them and conduct a brief interview. Once I heard back from the director with a date and time to be interviewed, they were listed as a participant in the study. When I found more locations of a particular program in my subsequent search, they were added to the program list, but not contacted for participation.

During the recruitment process, I was met with a few unanticipated challenges. I underestimated the length of time that it would take to contact organizations and individuals about programs and the difficulty in reaching people by either telephone or email. When I did speak with directors, it was at times challenging to get across the purpose of my study clearly, specifically that I was looking for parent education programs, not just programs about fathers. A few directors believed that their programs did not meet the criteria of my study, though based on what I had read about their programs, to me it seemed as though the programs did. In these situations, I went with the director's view of the programs and as such they did not participate in the study, nor did I include these programs on my list of formal parent education programs found in BC. Many directors were quite protective of their program and defended its usefulness to all parents. Some were reluctant to share materials and participate for fear of being judged and for fear that their program would have "negative" findings. It is possible that some of these obstacles would have been

minimized had I met with the directors face to face during the recruitment stage, as well as for the interview, rather than spoken with them over the telephone. If I were to conduct this study again, I would try to connect with directors about their programs in a face-to-face meeting, where at all possible.

Data collection and analysis

Participants in this study agreed to answer contextual questions about their particular parent education program and share the parent education program materials for analysis. Participants were interviewed over the telephone about the program, which took no longer than fifteen minutes. Participants were also asked to be available for a second phone interview, up to thirty minutes in duration, to expand on or clarify content information found in the materials. To collect data from the phone interviews, I took written notes and then entered the answers into my computer.

Participants were also asked to share any written program materials (i.e., outline, manual, worksheets, handouts, brochures) to be analyzed for content regarding father involvement. As most programs were offered by non-profit organizations with limited budgets, I offered to reimburse the participating programs for expenses related to sharing the program materials with me (e.g., photocopying, postage). Materials from the program were either picked up by myself or were sent to me electronically or through the mail. Some directors shared the materials with me by photocopying them and letting me borrow the materials. A few programs located outside of Greater Victoria (where I live) that used DVD's, CD-ROM's and video tapes, were not willing to risk sending these expensive materials to me through the mail. Some directors requested that I purchase the materials for myself, as they were available publicly. I did purchase two programs' parent handbooks, but I did not

purchase the programs' DVD materials due to the very high cost. I also downloaded one program's handout materials from their website.

There were several different kinds of program materials that were provided for the content analysis. I had parent manuals/workbooks for nine of the programs, facilitator manuals for three, handout materials for three, a video for one, four DVD's for one, and three programs provided the agendas/notes for each session. This provided some challenge to analyzing the data, particularly in regards to the agendas that were provided with little other materials to analyze. Follow-up questions were asked to help clarify the course content in these situations. It is possible that looking at the same type of program materials, such as parent manuals, would have been simpler but that would have left out several programs that provide parents the opportunity to reflect on their parenting, and build knowledge and skills. It would have also limited the results of the study to those organizations that can afford to purchase materials such as parenting workbooks. Small grass roots organizations that often develop their own materials to meet the needs of their community could have been missed.

The data retrieved through both the phone interviews and the program materials were only used for the purpose of this study and were not made available to anyone but myself. All of the notes and program materials were kept at my home and in my office. The interview answers and the data from the program materials were entered into a conventional word processing (Microsoft Word) computer program on my personal home computer. I did not use any computer software for content analysis, such as NUD*IST or ATLAS/ti, but coded via "paper and pencil" and transferred the data into my computer for analysis. I was able to sufficiently answer my questions by coding and analyzing in this method. I do not believe using a program such as

NUD*IST or ATLAS/ti would have taken less time to analyze the material, nor would it have resulted in a more comprehensive analysis. I believe given the nature of this study, a rhetorical content analysis with the coding frame having emerged from the texts rather than be predetermined, coding via "paper and pencil" was a logical choice.

Developing the coding frame.

Each set of program materials was read or watched in full. Items about fathers/father involvement were noted. Content that included uncles and grandfathers was also noted. As I reviewed the content involvement notes, a preliminary coding frame emerged. As I re-read the materials, several times, codes became increasingly clear regarding the research questions. I continued to work at refining the coding frame by reviewing the materials and notes. During this process I added some codes and merged others into one.

Established first were the codes for what was included in the father involvement content: images; examples; research; and strategies, tips and tools. How father involvement was defined and described in the content was developed into eight codes: (a) discipline; (b) caregiver; (c) cognitive processes; (d) play partner; (e) provider; (f) emotion coach; (g) support child's mother; and (h) teacher/role model. The approach to father involvement was coded as either: comparative; deficit; generative; additive; or mixed. There were seven codes that emerged for content addressing father involvement barriers and supportive factors: (a) willingness to learn; (b) parenting team; (c) reflection; (d) gatekeeping; (e) emotions; (f) self-nurture; and (g) philosophical shift. (See Appendix I for a list of the codes and their definitions.)

Once the coding frame was established and, prior to my analyzing the data, an outside coder reviewed the codes. This was done to ascertain how well the codes were

defined, whether there were any codes missing, whether codes were repetitive, and whether or not the coding frame could be used by someone else to find the same data. The outside coder reviewed one of the participating program's materials with the established coding frame. We discussed her findings and experience. She found the codes easy to follow and the definitions understandable. She did not find any content areas that I missed nor did she suggest any changes to the coding frame.

Data analysis

Once the coding frame was established, I re-read through the material notes to pull out the coded data. I then began to organize the coded data into tables, one program at a time. I then reviewed the interview questions and added the contextual information for each program into tables. In the end, I had seven tables, three that listed the programs' basic information, including answers to the interview questions, and four that listed the data for each research question. I then read through the data by codes, rather than by individual programs, and identified themes that emerged from the data.

Study limitations

While I bring my researcher self to my field of study, I am also the mother of two young children. Father involvement, particularly developing a shared parenting system, is an aspect of family life that is very current and important for me. I also bring my childhood experiences and perceptions of parenting to this study. I was raised in a two-parent family, with my mother as the primary caregiver to her four children. My childhood experience of what parenting looks like, often conflicts with my adult aspirations of what parenting can be. In Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley and Raikes' (2002) overview of challenges facing fatherhood research, they point out that

the current interest in studying fathers, important as it is for understanding children's well-being, family life, and adult male development, suffers from the highly politicized climate that gives rise to some of that interest (Marsiglio et al., 2000). There is a tendency often not fully realized even by the researchers themselves to define the population of interest in keeping with the researcher's own political views about what constitutes fatherhood. (p.17)

I was committed to exploring my biases and judgements as they arose in this proposed study and worked to be aware of my researcher subjectivity through an on-going process of self-reflective writing. I kept a notebook with my thoughts and observations throughout the research study and regularly read through the notebook to review my notes.

One of the main limitations in conducting a content analysis is subjectivity because individual researchers draw their own sample of texts to analyze and develop their own coding frame (Bauer, 2000). It is possible that other researchers would have found and chosen a different sample of formal parent education programs. To minimize the subjectivity in the sample chosen for this study, I strove to define the criteria of participation clearly and simply. I also searched for formal parent education programs through a variety of resources in an effort to gather as rich and representative a sample as possible. It is possible that I missed programs in my search.

The coding frame used in this study was developed emergently. While it is simpler to read a whole body of texts for thematic distinctions working alone rather than within a team of researchers, challenges do arise in the reliability of the study (Krippendorff, 2004). I attempted to mitigate these challenges by defining the terminology and codes used as clearly and simply as possible. I also piloted the interview questions and tested the coding frame with an outside coder. It is my belief that given the clearly outlined definitions and objective procedures of this study, other

researchers would be able to reconstruct the process though they may offer other valid readings of the texts (Bauer, 2000).

One of the main limitations of this study was that the analysis was made on the intended program content rather than what actually happens during the program. As I did not observe the programs or interview participants, I do not know for certain that the intended program content is always shared with the participants. Also, it is possible that father involvement information could be shared during a program even if it was not included in the intended curriculum. Father involvement information could evolve out of the natural flow of conversation during the program or facilitators could add materials about father involvement that were not included in the original program design, and as such, not listed in the program material that I analysed. The results of this study cannot be interpreted as an evaluation of the programs, an account of content delivered during a program, or an assessment of program participants' perspectives. The results of this study are limited to an analysis of the content regarding father involvement within the design of each participating parent education program.

Chapter summary

The purpose of this project was to examine parent education programs offered to parents of young children in BC for their content regarding father involvement. In my efforts to achieve this, I:

1. sought and received the approval to conduct this research study from the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria (see Appendix L);

2. searched for formal parent education programs in BC that are offered to parents of children aged zero and six and that focus primarily on parent outcomes through a variety of community resources and electronic databases;

3. piloted my interview questions with one director of an organization offering services and programs to parents, and one leader of a program offered to parents (See Appendices F, G, and H);

4. recruited participants, the directors of parent education programs and the programs' materials, over the telephone and via electronic mail (See Appendices A and E);

5. interviewed directors (See Appendices B and C) over the phone and received parent education program materials to complete a thematic and referential content analysis of programs;

6. maintained written notes and computer files, and kept all data secure at my home, in my office and on my personal computer; and

7. analysed the collected data for father involvement content, focused on the four main research questions, within a variety of contexts (e.g., the context in which the program was created; fatherhood research; parent education research and design; the image and reality of parenting).

An overview of the findings from the analyzed data are presented in detail in Chapter 4 and discussed in regards to implications in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter begins with an overview of the parent education programs in BC
that met my criteria for inclusion that I found in my search for research participants. A
description of the 17 programs that participated in the study highlights the programs'
area of focus and to whom the programs were offered. Research findings include a
general overview of the father involvement content that was found, as well as a
description of father involvement definitions, of approaches to father involvement, and
of determinants of father involvement that were found in the programs' materials. A
brief exploration of how the various roles of fathers in parenting their young children
were presented in the program content in line with both a "new" father image and a
more "traditional" one is also included.

Programs in BC

In my search for programs to include in my research study, I looked for
organizations, community groups and individuals who might offer formal parent
education programs through a variety of resources (see Chapter 3 for details about the
program criteria and the program search). Through my search, I found a total of 26
different formal parent education programs that met the criteria of my study. (See
Appendix K for a complete list of the different programs that were found.) Each region
in BC offered more than one kind of formal parent education program. Table 1
indicates the number of different programs found in each region. Many of these
programs were offered in more than one location (e.g., city, town, community
organization). The number of locations, where programs could be found in each region,
is also listed in Table 1. It is important to note that I found many programs and

services for parents throughout BC that did not meet the criteria of this study (e.g., support groups, parent-child programs, drop-in programs, information sessions, health clinics, home visitation programs, intervention programs, etc.) and that these 26 programs do not represent the only form of support and education for parents in each region.

Table 1

Parent Education Programs Found in BC

Region	Different Programs	Locations
North	9	25
Interior	10	52
Fraser	8	32
Vancouver Coastal	6	49
Vancouver Island	11	35

As previously noted, while I searched for formal parent education programs through a variety of resources in an effort to gather as rich and representative a sample as possible, it is possible that I missed programs in my search. It is possible that conducting another search for formal education programs in BC would result in different totals. These differences could be accounted for in several ways: the development of new programs since the time of my search; programs no longer being offered since the time of my search; and programs assessed by different people as meeting, or not meeting the criteria of my study. As indicated in Chapter 3, one of the main limitations in conducting a content analysis is the subjective nature of individual researchers drawing their own sample of texts to analyze (Bauer, 2000). While I strove to minimize the subjectivity in the sample chosen for this study by defining the criteria of participation clearly and simply, it is possible other researchers and program

directors would assess some programs differently than myself and the directors with whom I spoke.

Research study participants.

Of the organizations with which I was able to connect, and whose programs were deemed to meet the criteria of my study by both myself and the director, 18 agreed to participate. Of these 18 programs, two programs were withdrawn due to their program materials being incomplete (one was still in development and the other was in process of being copyrighted). One program was withdrawn due to the facilitator and myself reassessing the program and its fit with the study criteria. Two of the programs that I located, both widely used in and outside of Canada, I could not connect with a director willing to participate in this study. I have included these two programs in the study, as their materials are publicly accessible. For one of these programs, I purchased the parent workbook to analyze. For the other, I downloaded all of the program handout materials that were available on the program's website. There was not an interview conducted for these two programs. In total, 17 programs were analyzed for this study. (See Appendix J for a detailed list of participating programs.)

The majority of the programs (n=8) focused on the development of parents' skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in dealing with their children's behaviour. Three of the programs, while they addressed parenting skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in regards to dealing with their children's behaviour, focused on the parent's relationship with each other. Two of the programs focused on the importance of developing healthy attachments between parents and children (one focused on infants, the other on children of any age). Two programs were focused on what it means to be a father and addressed parenting skills, knowledge, attitudes and

behaviours in regards to dealing with their children's behaviour in the context of fathering. Two of the programs were general parenting programs that included sections on dealing with children's behaviour, safety, and child development information (ages and stages). (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Description of Parent Education Programs (N=17)

Focus	Number of Programs	Offered To
General	2	2 - Either parent, or together
Dealing with children's behaviour	8	6 - Either parent, or together 2 - Either parent, or together, and professionals who work with children
Parent's relationship	3	2 - Parenting couple 1 - Either parent, or together
Fathers as parents	2	2 - Fathers only
Attachment	2	2 - Either parent, or together

Of the 17 programs, 12 are designed for the parents to attend either separately or together (two of these programs identified that they were open to professionals who work with children as well, though they it was typically parents who participated in the program). Of the three programs that focused on the parent's relationship, two are designed for the mother and father to attend together (one of these programs noted that it did not matter if they were co-residence parents, or separated or divorced parents). The other program that focused on the parent's relationship is offered to mothers, fathers, or both parents to attend together, whether parenting as co-residence parents, or as separated or divorced parents. Two of the programs are offered only to fathers. (See Table 2.) Through my search, I did not find any formal parent education programs that were offered only to mothers, though I did find mothers-only support groups and resource information.

Of the 17 programs analyzed for this study, eight of them are offered in several locations by different organizations and facilitators, some in more than one region. (See Appendix K for the regions where programs are offered.) Three of the programs were found to be offered in only one location in BC, though they are all programs that have tools (i.e., videos, handout materials, books) and/or facilitator training and are offered elsewhere. The remaining six programs were found in only one location in BC and have been developed by the organization and/or facilitators that offer the program.

Father involvement content

The primary finding of this study was that very few of the participating formal parent education programs have any substantive amount of father involvement content included. Of the 17 programs analyzed, only four had content that specifically addressed the involvement of fathers in parenting their young children: *Bringing Baby Home*; *Fathers Parenting Program*; *Nobody's Perfect*; and *Nurturing Fathers*. The *Fathers Parenting Program* and *Nurturing Fathers* programs are both designed for and offered to fathers only. *Bringing Baby Home* is offered to the parenting couple and *Nobody's Perfect* is offered to either parent, separately or together. Two of the programs, *Parenting Together* and *Same Page Parenting,* both addressing the parenting relationship, had no specific father involvement content in the materials provided. This is not to say that aspects of father involvement could not emerge during program delivery; however, it was not included as part of the intended curriculum indicated on the programs' outline and handouts.

The remaining programs included fathers in the parenting examples and/or images used, though very little else in the way of specific father involvement content. Again, it is possible for discussions regarding father involvement to emerge during

program delivery. However, as evident in the materials, the intended curriculum of these programs does not include specific father involvement information. Two minor exceptions are found in two of these programs. Included in the facilitator's manual for *Right From the Start*, are two father specific resources listed under "suggested resources", that facilitators could include on a resource table for group participants (Niccols, Jeffels, Hutchinson, MacKay, Ricciuti, McFadden et al., 2006). *The Parent Child Connection* program mentions the changing roles for men and women in our society, including fathers' increased involvement in "household responsibilities" (p. 7), in the chapter "Building Bridges Over Conflict" (unpublished parent manual).

Father involvement defined and described.

Of the programs analyzed, none had an explicit definition of father involvement. Most programs, through the examples and images used, imply different dimensions of father involvement. Table 3 summarizes the dimensions of father involvement found in parent education programs, broken down by those implied through parenting examples and images, and those more fully described in the written material or the agenda for group discussion. (See Appendix I for definitions of the codes used for dimensions of father involvement.) Fathers were generally described in terms of directly interacting with their children: disciplining; caring for; teaching; playing; and nurturing. "Interaction" is one of the characterizations of father involvement in Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine's (1987) father involvement typology. Most dimensions of father involvement found in the programs' content are observable behaviours. This is indicative of fatherhood research, which has typically focused on quantifiable and observable behaviours between fathers and children (Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz & Christiansen, 2002; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Palkovitz, 1997).

Table 3

Dimensions of Father Involvement Found (N=17)

Dimension of Father Involvement	Referenced by parenting example/image	Referenced by written material/discussion
Discipline	11	2
Caregiver	8	4
Teacher/role model	7	3
Play partner	8	2
Emotion coach	8	3
Provider	4	3
Cognitive Processes	0	2
Support Mother	0	1

Twelve of the programs put fathers in a caregiving role. Images and examples of fathers as caregivers included fathers cooking for their children, changing infant's diaper, feeding an infant, carrying an infant, putting a child into a car seat, brushing a child's teeth and tucking a child into bed at night. The *Fathers Parenting Program* and *Nurturing Fathers* both include time in the program agendas for fathers to discuss the varying aspects of caring for their children. In the *Bringing Baby Home* parent workbook it states that, "Father involvement may include diapering, feeding, bathing, or simply playing with the baby" (Gottman & Gottman, n.d., p. 13).

Ten of the programs showed examples of fathers teaching and role modelling. Images included fathers helping with homework, teaching how to tie shoelaces, pointing out where to safely ride a bike, and showing how to brush teeth, wash dishes, fold laundry and wash the car. Written examples also included fathers asking children probing questions and modeling how to think through problems. For example, in *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* (1982), a father responds to his daughter, "That's an interesting question. What do you think?" (p. 143) *Bringing Baby*

Home included examples of teaching behaviours from "helpful dads", such as "Give only enough information to get your child started" (Gottman & Gottman, n.d., p. 94), and "harmful dads", such as "Giving a lot of information in an excited manner" (p. 94).

   Bringing Baby Home also included tips for fathers on how to become successful "Emotion Coaches". Behaviour from "helpful dads" included noticing, acknowledging, and empathizing with the full range of children's emotions, as well as helping children put language to their emotions. Ten other programs make reference to fathers being an "emotion coach to their children". For example, *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* provided written parenting examples with fathers actively listening, acknowledging their children's feelings and helping their children put language to emotion. In the *Parenting Wisely Program Workbook*, problem 5 outlines how Dad can help his son, who seems upset about not getting along with his friends, by actively listening, using "I statements", and giving his son "specific praise". Other programs showed fathers in a nurturing role in the program's images, such as the photographs accompanying information about "your child's feelings" at different ages and how parents can respond in the "Feelings" booklet for *Nobody's Perfect* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005).

   Thirteen programs included fathers in the images and/or examples regarding discipline. The programs for fathers had sessions exploring discipline, behaviour management, and consequences. The rest of the programs referred to fathers disciplining through a parenting example or image. None of the programs referred specifically to one of fathers' roles as being a disciplinarian or showed fathers as a disciplinarian more than mothers. All three programs designed for the parenting couple and *Right From the Start*, did not go into this dimension of parenting.

Ten of the programs include references to fathers as play partners for their children. Most of these come through images and examples of dads and children interacting through play, such as reading together, making diaper changing fun, taking the child's lead, exploring at the beach, and giving mom a break by playing with the kids for awhile. In Session 1 of the *Nurturing Fathers* program, under the "unique role of fathers" section, fathers' rough and tumble play with their children is mentioned. In the parent workbook for *Bringing Baby Home*, it states:

> Fathers have a unique role in their child's development. Through play with dads, infants learn to explore, to be independent, and to regulate emotions, to calm down, to self-soothe and to have fun. (Gottman & Gottman, n.d., p. 13)

This program referred to the play between fathers and children as something special they can do, and that it is different than the way mothers play with children. The program states that fathers' play encourages "more independence and exploration in their kids" (p. 92) and mentions research findings that state, given the choice, 2/3 of 2 ½ year-olds will choose dad instead of mom for play. The ideas about the importance and uniqueness of father-child interactions through play reflect the research done by Paquette (2004) and Paquette, Bolté, Tourcotte, Dubeau and Bouchard (2000).

Seven of the programs make reference to fathers as providers. *The Incredible Years*, *The Parent Child Connection*, *Side Stepping the Power Struggle* and *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)* show fathers as a provider in a short written parenting example or a cartoon image. *Nobody's Perfect* (Hein, 1995), mentions the possibility fathers may worry about their ability to provide for their children and includes strategies to help with money problems. The *Fathers Parenting Program* lists "provider" as one of the items in the handout "What is a Father?", which is also an agenda item for discussion. The agenda for Session 2 of the *Nurturing Fathers* program

includes as topics time to reflect on how being a father is more than providing as well as how to balance time, work and family.

Two of the programs, *Bringing Baby Home* (Gottman & Gottman, n.d.) and *Nobody's Perfect* (Hein, 1995), refer to fathers' cognitive processes as part of involvement. Both programs mention fathers' worries about their children, such as for their health and safety and their future well-being, and in regards to providing for their children, both today and in the future. *Bringing Baby Home* also had fathers planning ahead, developing parenting plans for how he will stay involved and areas where he can be the "expert". These aspects fit into the third characterization of father involvement by Lamb et al. (1987), "responsibility". Only one program, *Nobody's Perfect*, made reference to father involvement including providing support to the child's mother. The lack of programs that included references to fathers' indirect forms of involvement (i.e., provision, worrying and planning, and supporting mothers) reflects the neglect of cognitive and affective domains of involvement in father research (Palkovitz, 2002).

Approaches to father involvement.

Of the 15 programs that had some father involvement content, most implied father involvement through the use of parenting examples and images. Four of these programs, *Kids Are Worth It*, *The Power to Parent*, *STEP* and *Triple P Parenting*, presented their material representative of both mothers and fathers rather equally. These programs provide much of the material in gender-neutral terms, without any great variance in the number of father or mother references. The facilitator's manual for the *Triple P Parenting* group program makes several points to include both parents

equally (Markie-Dadds, Turner & Sanders, 2003, p. 55, p. 76, pp. 76-77, p. 77). It is

also mentioned in the parent workbook:

> Parenting is easier when both parents (where applicable) and other carers agree on methods of discipline. Parents should support and back up each other's parenting efforts. Before you use new strategies, discuss the plan with your partner and anyone else in a caring role with your child. (Markie-Dadds, Turner & Sanders, 2005, p. 62)

In these four programs, based on the materials that were analyzed, the

approach to father involvement does not appear additive, comparative or from a deficit

perspective. As there was no specific father involvement content in any of these

programs it is difficult to say with certainty that the approach to father involvement

was from a generative perspective; however, from the examples that were included,

fathers were shown as nurturing and competent fathers who cared about participating

in the parenting of their children.

Of the remaining programs that did not include a substantial amount of specific

father involvement content but did have fathers included in the parenting examples

and/or images, their approach to father involvement appears mixed. While fathers

were often shown able to positively interact with their children, their inclusion in the

program content, as reflected in the materials analyzed, often appeared additive and

sometimes based on a mother standard. This comes through in the language used, the

research and references provided and the number of parenting examples and images

of fathers used, compared to that of mothers.

The program *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk* is

offered to both mothers and fathers. The book (Faber & Mazlish, 1982) uses gender-

neutral language such as parent. In the introduction to the book, the authors wrote

that they would alternate between the use of male and female gender throughout the

book. As such, there are 29 parenting examples illustrated through cartoon images using mothers and 26 using fathers. However, in terms of the parenting examples included in the written material of the book, mothers are referenced nearly twice as much as fathers.

The programs *Active Parenting - 1, 2, 3, 4 Parents!* and *Parenting Wisely* are offered to mothers and fathers and both programs' parent workbooks use gender-neutral language, such as parent. In *Active Parenting - 1, 2, 3, 4 Parents!* (Popkin, 1998), mothers and fathers are presented almost equally in the parenting examples included in the workbook (five fathers and six mothers), though not in the photographs of parents (four fathers and 21 mothers). In the *Parenting Wisely* parent workbook (Gordon, 2004), the opposite is true. There are more cartoon images of fathers than mothers included (six fathers and five mothers) yet fathers are clearly represented in four of the written examples, compared to 12 written examples with mothers. As well, in the *Parenting Wisely* workbook, there are 13 "practice exercises" that start off the scenario with "you" or "your" but three of these imply that mom is the target audience: "got into your makeup and jewelry without permission" (p. 83); "taking money from your purse" (p. 95); and

> Your 6 and 8 year-old boys argue and whine every time they are asked to get ready for bed, pleading to stay up and watch more TV. Their father usually ends up losing his temper and shouting at them to get them to bed. (p. 89)

The programs *Side Stepping the Power Struggle* and *The Parent Child Connection* focus on parenting skills regarding children's behaviour. The programs are offered to both parents to attend separately or together, as well as to professionals who work with children. Both programs use gender-neutral language, such as parent and partner. There were 16 images of fathers used in *Side Stepping the Power*

Struggle compared to 34 images of mothers. One of the program chapters, "I Gotta Be Me!", had no images of fathers at all (though there were six with mothers). Similarly, *The Parent Child Connection* had 15 images of fathers, as compared to 24 images of mothers, though there were more equal representations of mothers and fathers in the written examples (23 mothers and 19 fathers). One of the section titles in the "Learning to Listen" chapter of *The Parent Child Connection* is "The Dirty Dozen – Mom's Responses". Another section starts with:

> We birth them, change them, feed them, burp them, drive them, listen to them, clean for them, spend our money on them and so on. Stress runs high because most of us aren't just parents; there are many other obligations to fill as well. Often a simple decision to cut down on volunteer work or answering the phone can cut down the stress levels that often plague our households. Simplifying is a term we often hear being used today and one that sounds complicated! (unpublished parent manual, p. 28)

The implication is that "we" means mothers, as mothers are the parent who "birth them".

The *Right From the Start* program focuses on infant-parent attachment. Gender-neutral language, such as "parent" and "partner", is used throughout the facilitator's manual. One of the video clips used in this program is a parenting example with a father, though the other seven examples are of mothers. The facilitator's manual also included three images of fathers, one photograph on the front cover, and two cartoon images inside. The research studies on attachment listed in the facilitator's manual are based on mother-child attachment - maternal interactive behaviour, maternal deprivation, mother-infant dyads, a meta-analysis on maternal sensitivity and infant security (Niccols, Jeffels, Hutchinson, MacKay, Ricciuti, McFadden, et al., 2006). Research about fathers and attachment, such as Lamb's (2002) *Infant-Father Attachments and the Impact of Child Development*, were not included. Two father

specific resources were, however, included in the "suggested resources": Marzollo and Trivas' (1993), *Fathers and Babies* and an article from *Canadian Living*, Keating's (1997, November), *Why Dads Matter*.

The Incredible Years program focuses on parenting skills to prevent child behaviour problems. The handout materials for both the basic and advanced programs include gender- neutral language throughout. However, in some of the appendices - self- monitoring checklist, evaluation sheet, satisfaction questionnaire – there is a logo, a cartoon image of a mother (a stick figure with a skirt) and two children (smaller stick figures) all holding hands standing in a line, in the top corner of the page. This logo also appears on the Parent-Child Social Coaching handout and on their website beside the program's name. In the communication handouts, the Refrigerator Notes for Self Talk has another cartoon image, this time of a woman dressed as a super hero with a large SW on her chest. There were no figures in the handout materials that represented fathers or males.

There were two parenting examples in the program handout materials that mentioned fathers. One was in the "Effective Limit Setting" handout on the page labelled "clear commands". One of the examples included was, "tell your father about it". Another parenting behaviour example that included fathers was the example identifying "non-constructive thoughts". This example was found in the "Misbehaviour" section of the basic program and the "Communication" section of the advanced program. The non-constructive thoughts that are provided position the mother as the primary caregiver and the father as the family provider:

> Jack never helps. All I get is work, work, work. I fix the food, take care of the house, the kids, everything. Boy would I like to throw this at him.
> After working ten hours, I'm tired and frustrated. When I get home, all I get are hassles. The kids interrupt and yell, and Joan criticizes me. This place is a mess.

What does she do all day? I feel like screaming or walking out of here. (Webster-Stratton, n.d.a)

Much of the research material that is referred to in the program handouts is mother-based research. In the "Readings" section in the handouts about "play", 10 of the 33 research articles listed have mother or maternal listed in their title (Webster-Stratton, n.d.b). None of the readings reference fathers and play with young children. This is particularly interesting given the connection between fathers and play in our society (Hewlett, 2002; Paquette, 2004). Other mother-based research was included in the "Readings" sections in the handouts about "praise", "misbehaviour", and "limit setting", though there were no father specific resources listed.

Of the 11 programs that included fathers mostly through the use of images and parenting examples, seven referenced fathers less often than mothers and at times implied mother as the target audience, even though the use of the gender-neutral term parent was used throughout. These findings are similar to those of Fleming and Tobin's (2005) content analysis of child-rearing books, where mothers were referred to three times more often than fathers, and the term parent was synonymous with mother. As Daly says of the fathers interviewed for research studies by the Father Involvement Research Alliance (2006), "Fathers are well aware that mothering and parenting are used interchangeably" (p. 2).

Of the programs that included specific father involvement content, three approached father involvement from a generative perspective: *Bringing Baby Home*; *Fathers Parenting Program*; and *Nurturing Fathers*. Based on Erikson's (1950, 1982 as cited in Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1997) concept of generativity, generative fathering is "fathering that meets the needs of children by working to create and maintain a developing ethical relationship with them" (p. 20). Generative fathering

assumes that men have "the obligation and the ability within themselves to be good

fathers" (Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1997, p. 20). Examples of this generative

perspective include treating fathers as experts about their own parenting (*Fathers*

Parenting Program), acknowledging that fathering is not better or worse than

mothering but just different, and reflecting on the joys of fathering (*Nurturing Fathers*).

The parenting workbook for *Bringing Baby Home* states, "We know dads want to be

involved" (Gottman & Gottman, n.d., p. 92). It goes on to say:

> We know fathers are fit to care for babies: dads are just as competent as moms
> in knowing what to do when their baby cries. In one study, fathers held their
> infants and rocked them in their arms more than mothers, and equalled them in
> talking, kissing, and exploring (counting toes). (p. 92)

The approach to father involvement reflected in the parenting booklets for

Nobody's Perfect was mixed. In this program, parts of the content were written in a

generative framework, such as "fathers are important" (Hein, 1995, p. 6). There was

an element of a comparative approach when fathers were referred to their child's

mother as a potential source of advice and learning. Primarily this program read as an

additive approach to father involvement, where fathers are sideline participants and

helpers. The specific father information is contained in a separate booklet (Hein, 1995)

that has been added to the regular program materials (this is unique to the *Nobody's*

Perfect program in BC). In the other booklets, mothers were presented as the more

responsible parent. For example, they were primarily the parent found in the examples

attending to children's health issues, 11 out of 12 cartoon examples, (Minister of Public

Works and Government Services Canada, 1997b) and organizing childcare, 8 out of 10

cartoon examples, (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997d).

Determinants of father involvement.

Only the four programs that had specific content regarding father involvement, *Bringing Baby Home*, *Fathers Parenting Program*, *Nobody's Perfect* and *Nurturing Fathers*, addressed the possible factors that contribute to or detract from father involvement. (See Table 4 for summary of the findings.) Of these four programs, *Bringing Baby Home* and *Nobody's Perfect* pointed to fathers being open to learn, such as to try new things and ask for help, as factors that would contribute to positive father involvement.

Nobody's Perfect and *Nurturing Fathers* refer to nurturing the self as an important aspect of staying positively involved. *Nobody's Perfect* mentions it in the *Parents* booklet (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997d) in terms of feeling good about what you do and in the *Fathers* booklet (Hein, 1995), to be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes. *Nurturing Fathers* dedicates time to exploring self-care (how to care for the self, and how not caring for the self impacts one's ability to parent well) in session four of the program.

Three of the programs, *Bringing Baby Home*, *Nurturing Fathers* and *Father Parenting Program*, included information and strategies that encouraged fathers to reflect about fathering. The *Fathers Parenting Program* asked father participants questions such as:

> How have you changed, as a person, since becoming a father? Which parts have been inspiring, been challenging? Being a father - what is this? What does it mean for you? How has fathering changed over the years? How would the ideal father parent? (Unpublished workshop agenda handout)

Bringing Baby Home included an exercise that had fathers imagining how they want to be involved as a parent and creating a plan of action to make that vision a reality. In their examination of parents' prenatal expectations of father involvement and

their postnatal behaviour, Cook, Jones, Dick and Singh (2005) found that fathers'
personal expectations are substantial predictors of involvement, such as feeding,
bathing, changing the infant, playing and reading to the infant. Both *Nurturing Fathers*
and *Bringing Baby Home* asked fathers to reflect on their relationship with their father,
and how their experiences of being fathered effects their fathering today. This is akin
to research that has examined the relationship between a father's family of origin and
his involvement with his children (Beaton, Doherty & Rueter, 2003; Krampe & Newton).

Working as a team, such as co-parenting and communicating well with both the
child's mother and the children, was addressed in the programs designed for both
parents, *Bringing Baby Home* and *Nobody's Perfect* but was not included in the
agendas of the programs designed specifically for fathers, *Fathers Parenting Program*
and *Nurturing Fathers*. Researchers have found that parental conjointness has a
positive relationship with father involvement (Daly, 2002; Dienhart, 2001; Pleck &
Stueve, 2004). *Nobody's Perfect* also addressed the challenges faced by fathers when
the parenting team no longer exists. Legal issues surrounding the parents not living
together and strategies for fathers were included. There is a long history of research,
particularly in the United States, examining the father absence and divorce (Lamb &
Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Separated and divorced fathers make up one of the fatherhood
research clusters that are part of the Father Involvement Research Alliance's five-year
program of collaborative activities between university and community partners that
began in January 2004 (Father Involvement Research Alliance, n.d.a).

All four programs mentioned fathers' emotions as possible deterrents for father
involvement. *Nobody's Perfect* addressed how to manage anger in the *Fathers* booklet
and *Fathers Parenting Program* and *Nurturing Fathers* included sessions that explored

anger and anger management. Both *Bringing Baby Home* and *Nobody's Perfect* addressed the possibility of fathers feeling fear about becoming a father/being a father (surrounding the magnitude of the job/responsibility of fathering), and *Bringing Baby Home* mentioned the possibility of paternal depression (i.e., after the baby is born).

A possible barrier to involvement was discussed in terms of the philosophical shift that occurs after becoming a parent in the *Fathers Parenting Program, Bringing Baby Home* and *Nobody's Perfect* programs. *Nobody's Perfect* referred to fatherhood as a "life changing experience" (*Fathers* booklet, p. 14) and also pointed to the possibility of feeling more stress and feeling tied down as a result of becoming a father. This is reflective of the research done by Palkovitz, Copes and Woolfolk (2001) through interviews with 40 fathers, where "nearly one-third of the sample expressed the theme that fatherhood can be experienced as a major changer of lifestyle or self-concept (p. 61). Both *Nobody's Perfect* and *Bringing Baby Home* referred to the possible strain becoming a parent can have on the couple's relationship.

Three of the programs alluded to mother gatekeeping, when mothers are the expert and control the issues related to children, as a barrier to father involvement. *Bringing Baby Home* pointed out that new fathers feel left out of the "society of women" from which new mothers so often receive support. *Nobody's Perfect* suggested to fathers that their child's mother might be a resource for learning about the child's care-giving needs. *Nurturing Fathers* mentioned mother gatekeeping as a discussion point in the "father job description" and "anger management" sections of the course. None of the programs discussed mother gatekeeping in any great detail. In regards to all of the 17 programs that were analyzed, as well as the four that included specific father involvement content, none of the programs specifically mentioned the important

role that mothers can play in shaping father involvement, something McBride and Lutz (2004) found in their review of parenting programs targeting fathers in the US.

Table 4

Factors that contribute to or deter from father involvement

	Number of Programs (n=4)
Mother gatekeeping	3
Parenting team	2
Open to learn	2
Reflection	3
Emotions	4
Self-Nurture	2
Philosophical shift	3

The "new" image of fathers

Based on the content analysis of the 17 programs involved in this research study, the "new" image of fathers is being integrated into the parent education materials. Half or more of the programs included images, examples or information about fathers as caregivers and emotion coaches (see Table 3). The presentation of fathers in caregiving and nurturing roles are similar to those found recently in the media (Beck, 2005; Canadian Press, 2003; Involved dads feeling invisible, 2006; Nyhan, 2006; Owens, 2006). All but one of the barriers and supportive factors for father involvement that were found in the analysis also place father involvement within this "new" image: co-parenting; reflection; self-nurture; willingness to learn; exploring emotions; and the philosophical shift in becoming a father (see Table 4). Of the four programs with specific father involvement content, three approached father involvement from a generative perspective, rather than a deficit, comparative or additive approach.

While the "new" image of fathers is finding its way into the content of formal parent education programs, fathers in a more "traditional" role, has not disappeared.

Other aspects of father involvement that were reflected in the material were those of provider, teacher/role model and disciplinarian (see Table 3). These roles have been associated with fathers for some time (Pleck, 2004).

Some of the programs seemed to reflect the tension that exists in our society with the "shifting gender practices in the culture of parenting" (Daly, 2004, p. 11) we are in the midst of. While all of the programs were offered to fathers, and most included examples and images of fathers as interactive and nurturing caregivers, eight programs, nonetheless, appeared to include fathers in an additive and/or comparative approach.

The materials for the *Parent Child Connection*, speak to the changing role for women and men, and that fathers could be stay-at-home caregivers and women the sole providers for families, yet most of the parenting examples and images given are mother based. In *Bringing Baby Home*, it states that, "relationship roles may become more traditional than they were before. This may be a source of strain on the relationship" (Gottman & Gottman, n.d., p. 12). The program discusses fathers wanting to be there for their children but also addresses the fact that some fathers may withdraw (and why that may be) from their infants. The suggested remedy is to "keep fathers involved" (p. 13) with activities such as diapering, feeding, bathing and playing. While the program includes a lot of information and images of fathers caring for and nurturing their infants, part of the "new" image of father involvement, it also places a lot of focus on father-child play (p. 13, p. 24, p. 27, p. 42, p. 91, p. 92), a more "traditional" expectation of fathers (Pleck, 2004).

Both of the programs designed for fathers have created opportunities when participants might explore the tension between "new" and "traditional" expectations of

paternal involvement. In the *Fathers Parenting Program*, participants are asked to reflect about what it means to them to be a father and how they perceive fatherhood to have changed over the years. *Nurturing Fathers* includes "The Unique Role of Fathers" and "Characteristics of an Involved Father" in the agenda and participants are asked to work in small groups to create a fathering job description.

Chapter summary

After an extensive search I located a total of 26 different formal parent education programs that met the criteria of my study, of which 17 participated in this research. Two of the programs had no specific father involvement content and four had a substantive amount. Specific father involvement content showed up in three different types of formal parent education programs: (a) for fathers-only, focusing on them as parents; (b) for the parenting couple, focusing on their relationship in the context of parenting; and (c) for either parent to attend together or separately, focusing on general parenting knowledge and skill building. The overall finding was that specific father involvement content is not significantly included in most formal parent education programs currently run in BC, though they all offer their program to fathers and most include fathers in the program materials through, at the very least, their parenting examples and images.

Chapter 5

Summary and Implications

The purpose of this study was to try to ascertain what information about fathers' involvement with their young children is, or is not, included in formal parent education programs offered in BC. My research questions were:

1. Is father involvement included in the program content? If so, what does the content include?

2. How is father involvement defined and described in the program content?

3. What approach to father involvement is taken in the program content?

4. What factors, if any, are included in the program content that address what contributes to and/or deters the involvement of fathers?

I conducted an extensive search for programs in BC and located 17 programs to participate in the study. I interviewed directors about the context of their program and they shared their program materials with me so I could conduct a content analysis. The majority of programs had very little content regarding father involvement. Of the 17 programs, four included content that specifically addressed fathers' involvement in parenting their young children. Three of these programs approached father involvement from a generative perspective, while the other program's approach was mixed (comparative, additive and generative).

The majority of programs had fathers in the parenting examples and images found in the materials analyzed, though with little else in the way of specific father involvement content. The inclusion of fathers appeared additive and based on a mother standard in some of these programs. The image of fathers as nurturing caregivers was

reflected in most of the programs, though to varying degrees. The more "traditional"

roles associated with fathers, such as being a play partner, a disciplinarian, teacher/role

model and provider, were also present in most programs.

Reflections

As outlined in Chapter 3, I experienced a few unanticipated challenges during

the recruitment process. I also met with some challenges during the data analysis.

Many of these challenges stemmed from the limited amount of specific father

involvement content I found. When I began to receive materials to analyze, I made

notes on each program, tracking any content that referred to fathers. I did not track all

of the references to mothers in the first program, as this was not one of my research

questions. As I continued to read through programs, and so little father involvement

content was emerging, I began to question whether or not programs had an unequal

amount of mother words, images, and examples compared to fathers. I was unable to

look back at the first program I had analyzed to count the number of mother images in

comparison to the number of father images, as I had already sent the materials back to

the program director. If I were to do this study again, I would include comparing father

references to those referring to mothers as part of the overall research design. This

would allow comparison of the father involvement information found (or not found)

with the context of information and references found for mothers.

Analyzing the data was also challenging because I was essentially analyzing two

sets of data: (a) data derived from specific and detailed father involvement

information, and (b) data derived from a reference in parenting examples, images and

brief notes. At times, it was difficult to bring these two sets of data together and find a

cohesive to way describe the findings. I had to return regularly to my research

questions to ensure I was not straying from the intentions of my study in an effort to bring more data in for analysis.

Lack of father involvement content

Both mothers and fathers take formal parent education classes. According to a parenting poll conducted by the BC Council for Families with 753 parents in BC, 32% of parents have taken parenting classes (Solk, 2007). Research also tells us that fathers want to be involved in parenting their children (Father Involvement Research Alliance, 2006). Yet, of the 17 out of 26 programs I found in BC whose content I analyzed, only four specifically addressed father involvement. *Nurturing Fathers* and the *Fathers Parenting Program* were created locally and are only offered in one location. *Bringing Baby Home* can potentially be offered in more than one location, as outside facilitators are trained and equipped to deliver the program, though it was only found offered in one location in BC. Of the four programs with specific father involvement content, only one, *Nobody's Perfect*, is offered throughout BC. *Nobody's Perfect*, however, is not a universal program but a targeted program offered to parents of children aged 0-5 who meet two out of the five indicators: young; single; socially, geographically or linguistically isolated; low income; or lacking in formal education. Based on the content analysis of the 17 participating programs, few parents in BC have access to a formal parent education program that includes information regarding father involvement in parenting their young children.

One of the limitations of this study was that the analysis was made on the intended program content rather than what actually happens during the program. Future research could include observing groups to see what, if any, father involvement information emerges during a program, either as facilitated by the intended curriculum

or from added materials or discussion not part of the program's original design. Also, this research study was designed to analyze the content of formal parent education programs, as such, exploring the possible reasons as to why father involvement is not included in the majority of programs offered in BC was beyond the scope of this study. Future research could survey program facilitators, directors and developers about the inclusion of father involvement content in formal parent education programs. Examining why father involvement is, or is not, included would be particularly salient, considering the lack of father involvement content that was found in this study. Lack of financial resources and lack of male or qualified staff to implement programs were two of the main obstacles identified by agencies surveyed through the Canadian research project, *My Daddy Matters Because* . . . (n.d.b) in regards to the development and implementation of programs designed to support father involvement. It would be beneficial to better understand whether the inclusion of father involvement content in formal parent education programs meets similar obstacles, or whether other obstacles specific to formal parent education programs are identified.

Fathers on the periphery

As outlined in chapter four, based on the content that was provided for the 17 participating programs, four programs had specific father involvement content and 11 primarily included fathers in parenting examples and images. Of the 15 programs that had some kind of father involvement content, the approach to father involvement in more than half (n=8) appeared additive and sometimes based on a mother standard. As Daly and Hawkins (2005) point out, it is important that father information is not additive. Researchers indicate that family service programs in general must be designed and implemented with the needs of fathers in mind if we want fathers to

participate (Bolté, Devault, St.Denis & Gaudet, 2001; Devault, Gaudet, Bolté & St-Denis, 2005; McBride & Lutz, 2004; My daddy matters because, n.d.a). The parenting information found in the participating parent education programs may be very valuable, and just as applicable to fathers as it is to mothers; however, if we want fathers to receive the information that is provided, they need to "see themselves" in the material.

Understanding better how best to meet the needs of fathers through parent education is another avenue that would benefit greatly from further research (Mann, 2006; Moran, Ghate & van der Merwe, 2004; Russell 2003a, 2003b), as much of what we know about what "parents' needs" from parent education comes from research studies surveying mothers (e.g., Jacobson & Engelbrecht, 2000; Miller & Sambell, 2003). One of the preliminary findings that emerged from the five-year research program conducted by the Father Involvement Research Alliance (2006) is that fathers perceive that the terms "mothering and parenting are used interchangeably and that services often only focus on mothers' needs and ignore fathers' needs" (p. 2). Brotherson, Dollahite and Hawkins (2005) state that:

> Thompson and Walker (1991) have noted, "Once women and men become parents, they tend to do different things with and for their children and relate to their children in different ways" (p. 91). This insight suggests the complexity that underlies the experience of parenthood for both mothers and fathers and the importance of understanding the unique and similar aspects of the parental experience for men and women. (p. 2)

Neglecting to include father involvement information and including fewer images and examples of fathers than mothers within the program content, creates the impression that fathers' involvement in parenting their children is "peripheral and limited" (Fleming & Tobin, 2005, p. 20). It could be argued, however, this reflects the reality of who participates in parent education programs. As the parenting poll conducted by the *BC Council for Families* indicated, more than twice the number of

women than men participate in parent education programs (Solk, 2007). While fathers are increasingly taking on less than "traditional" paternal roles, such as taking parental leave with their newborn (Marshall, 2006) or being their children's primary caregiver (Doucet, 2006), mothers still do more of the "household and caregiving" duties than fathers, even if they work outside the home, (Marshall, 2006) and report increased stress as a result of fathers not being as involved in the partnership in raising children (Bibby, 2004). If we include father involvement information and ensure programs present fathers in the parenting examples and images equal to those of mothers, are we presenting formal theories about families (what is good for them), rather than reflecting the theories by which families live (Daly, 2003)?

As Daly (2003) states, researchers cannot present "results as near universal experiences that have no spatial roots, [researchers] need to attend to the nuances and idiosyncrasies that accompany a family's place-based reality" (p. 782). For some fathers, being minimally involved in the daily care and guidance of their children is their lived experience, just as some fathers lived experience is being their children's primary caregiver. Including father involvement content is not to suggest there is a universal experience of fathering, but rather to create opportunities to explore the multi-faceted nature and variability of fatherhood today. It is not my suggestion that to be generative in our approach to father involvement all we need to do is ensure the images and examples of fathers and mothers are equal. As Bolté, Devault, St.Denis and Gaudet (2001) assert, father involvement is not necessarily about achieving a 50/50 split between parents. The goal is equity, rather than "equal and identical measures" (p. 5), based on what is best for a specific family's needs.

Myers-Walls and Myers-Bowman (1999) define parenting education as "any conscious and organized effort to provide parents with information, skills, experiences or resources intended to strengthen, improve or enrich their performance in their parenting role" (as cited by Richardson, Kraynack, Blankemeyer & Walker, 2005, p. 15) Lero, Ashbourne and Whitehead (2006) refer to Richmond and Saloojee's (2005) theory of social inclusion, where individuals are respected and valued and have the opportunity to fully develop their talents and to fully participate in society. They apply this theory to fathers and believe that there are "many ways to support the social inclusion of fathers who have the ability and desire to be positively involved in the lives of their children" (p. 4). I would assert that in their conscious and organized efforts, those who develop and deliver parent education programs, particularly when they are provided to fathers, as all 17 study participants are, must include fathers in their program content in a way that does not sideline their involvement but promotes the inclusion of fathers and the multiple ways they can be, and are, involved in parenting their young children.

One of the limitations in content analysis is that it does not uncover the meanings participants find in the material. I cannot know how fathers or mothers perceived the material covered in each program, particularly the inclusion or lack of father involvement content, through a content analysis. How family service organizations can become (more) inclusive of fathers participating within their agencies and programs has been the subject of other research (Bolté, Devault, St.Denis & Gaudet, 2001; Daly & Hawkins, 2005; Devault, Gaudet, Bolté, & St-Denis, 2005; Green, 2003; Schock & Gavazzi, 2004) and fathers feeling left out of services has also been written about in the media (Hoffman, 2001; *Involved dads feeling invisible*, 2006).

Future research could survey formal parent education program participants specifically about father involvement content (i.e., whether or not it is included, whether they see it as a necessary component, whether or not it applies to their parenting situation). Future research could also examine the extent to which educators, early childhood educators, and other family resource workers are trained regarding father involvement, and could analyze the content used in their training for father involvement material. For example, family service workers at the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque can participate in formal education regarding father involvement. The university added a regular course about fatherhood, offered at the undergraduate and graduate level, as a result of large enrollments for the courses when they were first offered as special-topic courses (Stueve & Waynert, 2003).

We also cannot know through a content analysis whether fathers and mothers identify differently with different program styles and are therefore more apt to use material from certain program styles. It was brought to my attention during an interview with one of the program directors, that a community evaluation of the *Triple P Parenting* program indicated fathers were highly enthusiastic about the program and were receptive to its product rather than process oriented style (director personal communication, May 9, 2007). (At the time of this study, the program evaluation was not yet available for public release.) Higgins (2007) also found this to be true in her implementation of a new fathers program. She found that among the fathers she was working with, they wanted "tools for their tool box" (p. 46), concrete examples rather than just theory.

Who is responsible for including father involvement information?

It could be argued that the amount of father information found in the programs analyzed is sufficient, particularly given the focus of most of the programs, parenting skills for managing children's behaviour. Of the four programs that included specific father involvement content, *Nurturing Fathers* and the *Fathers Parenting Program* are designed for fathers and focus on parenting in the context of being a father; *Bringing Baby Home* is designed for the parenting couple and focuses on that relationship in the context of becoming parents; and *Nobody's Perfect* is a general program designed for either mothers, fathers or the parenting couple to attend. However, with the exception of *Bringing Baby Home*, each of these programs included material that addressed parenting skills for managing children's behaviour. Thus aspects of father involvement as well as managing children's behaviour can be addressed within the same program. Also, as Grusec (2006) points out, "problem parenting" is not necessarily a lack of knowledge or skills about behaviour. As parents' attitudes and beliefs often guide their behaviour, she suggests that instead of programs only focusing on teaching effective strategies for managing behaviour, "other interventions that will alter their schemas and ways of viewing relationships with others so that they are able to parent effectively" (p. 3) are necessary.

Some might suggest that the most appropriate parent education programs to include specific father involvement content are those that are designed for fathers only, such as the *Fathers Parenting Program* and *Nurturing Fathers* that participated in this study. The conceptual framework of responsible fathering developed by Doherty, Kouneski and Erikson (1998) includes several "father factors" (p. 285), (i.e., role identification, knowledge, skills, commitment, psychological well-being, relations with

father, employment characteristics, and residential status), that influence fathering. Opportunities for fathers to explore some or all of these factors may very well be most suited to fathers-only programs. Maurer and Pleck (2006) refer to the importance of social modelling for fathers and that "the more involved fathers perceive other fathers to be, the more they attempt to model that level of involvement" (p. 108). Though none of the programs addressed the influence that peers may have on fathers parenting, this may be an important consideration for the implementation of fathers-only programs.

However, Doherty et al.'s (1998), model also include potential influences that stem from contextual factors, child factors, mother factors, and the co-parental relationship. The authors

> emphasize the pivotal role of fathers, themselves, in appropriating or discarding cultural and contextual messages, in formulating a fathering identity and developing fathering skills with their own children, in working out their feelings about their own fathers, and in dealing collaboratively with their own mother. The social construction of fatherhood is an evolving creation of all stakeholders in the lives of children, and contemporary fathers have a central role in that creation. (p. 289)

Because there are more than just father factors, and there are other stakeholders, particularly the child's mother, parent education that addresses father involvement content must find its way to both parents. Ideally a variety of resources designed for parents – mothers-only, fathers-only, both parents, parent-child – will include some aspects of father involvement information. For fathers to play the "central role" in the creation of how they are going to be fathers, their needs, experiences, and voices must be an integral part of developing, implementing and evaluating those resources.

Some might also suggest that the most appropriate parent education programs to include specific father involvement content are those that are designed for new parents, such as the *Bringing Baby Home* program. As I limited this study to those programs that were offered to parents of children aged 0-6, future research could examine the extent of father involvement content that is found in prenatal education classes. The BC Council for Families' *Experience of Parenting Study* (Solk, 2007) found that, of the 753 parents polled, two-thirds have taken prenatal classes, as opposed to only one-third of parents that have taken parent education classes. Early analysis of focus groups with new fathers, the FIRA New Fathers Cluster research (Bader & Doucet, 2006) points to a need for education and support that help fathers (and the parenting couple in general) transition into parenting. Also, in their survey of programs in Canada that are designed to promote positive fathering, Bolté, Devault, St.Denis and Gaudet (2001) found that one of the success factors for programs was offering them at transition periods for fathers, such as the birth of a child.

It could also be argued that it is not necessary for formal parent education programs to include specific father involvement content, that other forms of support and education could sufficiently direct parents to information that supports the involvement of fathers. Through the public health authorities in BC, parents have access to two books *Baby's Best Chance* (Province of British Columbia, 2005), which is usually available to mothers at the beginning of her prenatal visits, and *Toddler's First Steps* (Province of British Columbia, 2002), which is usually given out at the infant's 6-month immunization appointment. Books such as these would be an appropriate and convenient way to share father involvement information with parents. Handout materials could also be distributed universally through public health or schools, as

Triple P Parenting does with "Tip Sheets" designed for the program's Level 3 intervention (director personal communication, May 9, 2007). Parents can go online and access father education information through various family life education websites (Morris, Dollahite & Hawkins, 1999) and organizations can provide fathers with informal learning opportunities through support groups and drop-in (parent-child) programs (My daddy matters, 2004).

While I chose to focus this research study on the content found in formal parent education programs, that does not mean I do not see the value in other resources for parents. In fact I believe we need a variety of resources - parent-child programs, informal support, information sharing, formal education - to truly support the parenting capacity of all parents. Regardless of whether or not father involvement is adequately addressed in all of these other parenting resources, neglecting to include father involvement content in formal parent education programs is a missed opportunity.

What was missed?

While four programs in BC, of the 17 that were analyzed for this study, included specific father involvement content and most of the others included fathers in the program's parenting examples and images, many aspects of father involvement were minimally addressed or missed altogether. Most of the information and examples of father involvement regarded direct forms of involvement. Few programs included indirect forms of involvement, though researchers are increasingly recognizing its relevance, such as supporting the child's mother and provision (Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz & Christiansen, 2002; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004) as well as the relevance of the cognitive elements and affective dimensions of involvement (Marsiglio & Cohen, 2000).

One of the considerations made in the development of this research study, was to see if formal parent education programs currently offered in BC take into account the complexity, "cultural embeddedness and variability" (Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley & Raikes, 2002, p. 2) of fathering today. While some of the programs (*Active Parenting*, *Bringing Baby Home*, *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen*, *Nobody's Perfect*, *Parenting Wisely*, *Right From the Start*, and *STEP*) included images of fathers from different cultural groups (the *Power to Parent* DVDs showed people of colour in the audience), none spoke to the different approaches to parenting young children fathers from different cultural groups may take. Ethnicity did not present itself as one of the factors impacting father involvement in the content analyzed for this study. One of the program directors I spoke with commented that she was taking photographs of Aboriginal fathers interacting with their children to add to their program materials, as the *Triple P Parenting* program images were not very inclusive (director personal communication, May 9, 2007).

Some programs alluded to the fact that today it is "common place for fatherhood to be practiced across households and across bloodlines" (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001, p. 384). *Same Page Parenting* and *Parenting Together* are both offered to the parenting couple regardless of residential status. *Nobody's Perfect*, *Triple P Parenting*, *Parenting Wisely, and Kids Are Worth It* all mention step-fathers and/or single parenting through parenting examples, though they do not discuss how separation, divorce, remarriages and blended families impact father involvement and effect children (e.g. Green & Moore, 2000). (See Amato & Gilbreth, 1999 for a meta-analysis of nonresident fathers and children's well-being.) Both *Nobody's Perfect* and *Bringing Baby Home* referred to the possible strain becoming a parent can have on the

couple's relationship, though only *Nobody's Perfect* included a section in the *Fathers* booklet about how to work collaboratively with an-ex partner.

As already mentioned in chapter four, most programs neglected to include the important role that mothers can play in shaping father involvement, something McBride and Lutz (2004) found in their review of parenting programs targeted for fathers in the US. None of the programs discussed mother gatekeeping as a barrier to father involvement specifically, though *Bringing Baby Home*, *Nobody's Perfect* and *Nurturing Fathers* alluded to it. The lack of discussion is interesting considering the fact that research has found maternal gatekeeping to be a significant barrier to father involvement (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Lindsey, Caldera & Colwell, 2005; McBride & Rane, 1997; Maurer, Pleck, & Rane, 2001; Hoffman & Moon, 1999). Even parenting magazines and website articles include advice for women on how to help fathers be involved and not to be gatekeepers (Hoffman, 2001; Keer, 2005; MacDonald, n.d). Maurer and Pleck (2006) suggest that, "it may be beneficial to expand [the maternal gatekeeping] discussion to include the ways in which positive expectations can encourage paternal caregiving" (p. 108). They go on to say that:

> it may be more appropriate, particularly from an intervention perspective, to consider the ways in which maternal expectations, or lack thereof, for paternal caregiving influence fathers to become more involved in caregiving, rather than more narrowly focusing on the ways mothers may restrict paternal involvement. (p. 108)

The influence of mothers on paternal involvement is an important aspect of father involvement to address in parent education, particularly given that more women than men participate in programs (Solk, 2007).

The good provider role for fathers was included in the materials of six of the 17 programs that were analyzed for this study. It is interesting that so few programs

included father as provider as an aspect of father involvement. Perhaps this reflects the centrality of the breadwinner role to fathering (Pleck, 2004), which, as an assumed responsibility (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001), needs no mention. It could also reflect the socio-economic status of the intended program participants. Programs targeted to lower socio-economic brackets, such as *Nobody's Perfect*, may include provision as a dimension of father involvement because being able to provide financially for his family holds great importance for these fathers (Pleck, 2004). As previously addressed in chapter 4, *Nobody's Perfect* (Hein, 1995), mentions the possibility that fathers may worry about their ability to provide for their children and includes strategies to help with money problems.

Neglecting to stress that provision is a form of paternal involvement may also have been a conscious effort of program developers to not present fathers in a "traditional" or "stereo typical" role, recognizing that women with children make up a large percentage of the labour force today (Roy, 2006). However, its inclusion is of importance because, as Christian and Palkovitz (2001) argue, provision may be a salient aspect of some fathers' own development when it "is integrated with others forms of involvement . . . and is seen as a way to help meet the needs of the family" (p. 94). It is also an important area to include in terms of balancing work and family demands (Crouter, Bumpus, Head & McHale, 2001; Daly & Hawkins, 2005). Daly (1996) found that of the fathers he interviewed, being a "good father" meant spending time with their kids but that time is a commodity. He noted that fathers did more than simply reallocate time spent at work to time spent at home but had to evaluate the meaning of time; how it is spent and what it is we value. In their critical analysis of the lack of support for fathers and family time flexibility within the corporate culture, Levine

and Pettinsky (2002) examine how fathers (and mothers) must disengage from the rhetoric of "they don't allow that" and actively pursue change in the workplace. This aspect of father involvement (work, family time crunch) was only found in the *Nurturing Fathers* curriculum.

Concluding remarks

Of the 17 programs that were analyzed for this study, only four had any specific content regarding father involvement. Overall, the formal parent education programs that were analyzed for this study did not address the cultural embeddedness and variability of fathering today. The paternal roles included in the program materials that were analyzed essentially spoke to fathering as defined by dominant culture. In our society there seems to co-exist a growing acceptance and expectation that fathers will be highly involved, nurturing, caregivers of their young children and an expectation and assumption that fathers will maintain more "traditional" roles within the family. This was reflected in the program materials with information and parenting examples and images of fathers in "new" paternal roles as well as "traditional" ones.

We are in the process of shifting gender practices within the culture of parenting (Daly, 2004). The parent education programs analyzed seemed to reflect some of the tension that exists within that shift. As parents continue to work through this shift and some fathers continue to create new ways to "be men" and care for their young children (Doucet 2004, 2006), perhaps this will continue to filter into parent education programs. Content can both reflect and project phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2004). The curriculum of parent education programs can be one avenue to both reflect the changing role of fathers and their involvement with their young children, as well as to promote it.

Those who develop and implement programs could work to ensure that their formal parent education programs are inclusive of fathers, at the every least in the parenting examples and images they use, and in the research that supports the program development. They could ask themselves what, if any, specific father involvement content would be appropriate for the focus of their program. Programs could be developed for fathers-only, but programs that are designed for both parents could address various aspects of father involvement as well (e.g., parents' beliefs and attitudes about father involvement, communication and conflict between the parents, mothers' role in facilitating or blocking father involvement).

As Doucet (2006) cautions, we need not look at parenting issues from the perspective of two separate spheres, mothers and fathers, focusing on their differences, such as we see in much of the Father Responsibility Movement in the United States (Ganavas, 2004). She asserts that if we understand fathers on their terms, we have the potential to open up the dialogue between mothers and fathers to better understand each other and the complexity of parenting. This is of particular importance given the shifting gender roles and expectations in parenting today.

With the current complexity and diversity of fatherhood, including multiple perspectives of father involvement within formal parent education programs is necessary if we are going to "support a fatherhood in which fathers feel valued, mothers feel reinforced, and children can reap the benefits" (Dubeau, 2002, p. 31). Writing about public school curriculum, Pinar (2004) questions, "Why is not the school curriculum a provocation for students to reflect on and think critically about themselves and the world they will inherit?" (pp. 186-187). I would assert that the curriculum of formal parent education programs should be a provocation for parents to reflect on and

think critically about the world they hope their children will inherit and how their

parenting will contribute. Father involvement must be a part of the "complicated

conversation" (Pinar, 2004) of parenting and parent education curriculum if we are to

truly support the parenting capacity of all parents.

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Appendix A

Script for recruitment of participants

My name is Denise Hodgins and I am a graduate student in the Department of

Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria. I was wondering if your

organization offers any formal parenting education programs for parents of children

under the age of six. [I'll clarify "formal" parenting education programs if requested.]

[If the Director says none, then ask them if they know of any other

organizations that offer parent education programs. Thank them for their help.

Call ends.]

As part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood

Education, I am conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent

education programs in BC in regards to father involvement. I am interested in finding

out just what kind of father involvement information is, or is not, being shared with

parents through education programs. In my research to date, I have not found any

studies or reports that have collated that kind of information. It is my hope that this

project might help in future development of parent education programs.

I would like to know if you, as Director of an organization that offers parent

education programs, would be willing to participate in this study, *Father involvement in*

parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC. If

you agree, your participation would involve answering some questions over the phone

about your parent education program and sharing any written program materials with

me so that I can analyze them for father involvement content. This is not an evaluation

of the program, but simply an analysis of its content regarding father involvement. An

initial interview would take approximately 10-15 minutes, and a possible second phone

interview, for the purpose of clarifying information about the program and its content, might take approximately 15-30 minutes or less. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. Any written program materials could be sent to me electronically or by mail and I would be happy to reimburse the organization for any costs associated with sharing these materials.

As far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research includes helping to generate a clearer picture than we have now as to how father involvement content is included in parent education programs in BC, which might be of help to your organization's parent education program in the future.

As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. Your name will not be included in the project write-up, though the name of the program will be included, but not its specific location. Only information regarding the content of the program, as it pertains to father involvement, and general information about the program will be used. The interview data and program materials will be kept in my home office and personal computer in locked files. The data will be kept until after my oral examination and the completion of final revisions to my project write-up. Afterward, I will shred and burn the documents and break the computer CD's related to the interviews with the Directors, but as the program materials are public documents, I do not have plans to destroy them at the completion of the study.

I anticipate sharing the research findings of this project with other researchers and front line workers, particularly those working with families, father involvement, and parent education, either through journal articles, conferences, workshops or informal

sharing. I will send you a summary of the research project after its completion as well. I also anticipate sending a summary of this research study and its findings to parent education, family support, and father resource program providers as well as to government agencies and departments involved in the health, welfare and education of families and children.

As a Director of an organization that offers parent education programs, would you be willing to participate in this study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*?

[If the Director says no, then ask them if they know of any other organizations that offer parent education programs. Thank them for their time and help. Call ends.]

I would like to send you a letter of the consent information I have shared with you today as well as my contact information and that of my supervisors and the Associate Vice-President of Research at the University of Victoria. You may contact us if you have any further questions or concerns about this research or want to verify the ethical approval of this study. The email I have for you is _____, is that correct? After you have received my email and read the consent information, if you are still willing to participate in this study, you may email or telephone me with a convenient time and day for me to interview you about your program.

Thank you again for your time.

Appendix B

Interview questions

The phone interview with Directors of parent education programs will be designed to retrieve general information about the program. The general information to be obtained will include:

1. What is the name of the program?

2. Who is the sponsoring agency of the program?

3. Where is the program offered?

4. How is the program facilitated?

5. What is the length of the program?

6. Who is the program offered to? Is this who typically participates in the program?

7. What are the goals of the program?

8. Are materials included for the program participants? If so, what kinds of materials?

Appendix C

Script for interview with directors of programs

This is Denise Hodgins. I am the graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria who is conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement, as part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I spoke with you on [date] about participating in this research and I also emailed you confirmation of our conversation with the contact information for this project. Did you receive this email?

[If the Director did not receive the email, I will reconfirm their email address and tell them that I will resend the email to them.]

We arranged this time for me to interview you over the phone when we spoke. This initial interview should take approximately 10-15 minutes. Is this still a convenient time for you?

[If the Director says no, ask what would be a more convenient, and reschedule.]

I would like to remind you that your participation involves this interview about your parent education program, sharing any written program materials with me so that I can analyze them for father involvement content, and a possible second phone interview for the purpose of clarifying information about the program and its content, which might take approximately 15-30 minutes or less. This is not an evaluation of the program, but simply an analysis of its content regarding father involvement. Any written program materials could be sent to me electronically or by mail and I would be

happy to reimburse the organization for any costs associated with sharing these materials.

I would also like to remind you that as far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. Your name will not be included in the project write-up, though the name of the program will be included, but not its specific location. Only information regarding the content of the program, as it pertains to father involvement, and general information about the program will be used.

Do you have any questions for me about this project, at this time?

[Interview questions. See Appendix B.]

Thank you again for your time and for agreeing to participate in this research project. I look forward to receiving the program materials from you. If I have any clarification questions about the program materials, I will email you to set up a time to speak over the phone that is convenient for you. Again, you may contact me if you have further questions at dhodgins@uvic.ca or at 250-598-0670. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Margie Mayfield at 250-721-7849 and Dr. Alison Preece at 250-721-7831. In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisors at those phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545.

Appendix D

Script for possible second interview with directors of programs

This is Denise Hodgins. I am the graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria who is conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement, as part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I interviewed you over the phone on [date] and also received your program information on [date]. Through email, we arranged this time speak so that I might ask you a few clarification questions about the program and/or its content. This interview should take approximately 15-30 minutes or less. Is this still a convenient time for you?

[If the Director says no, ask what would be a more convenient, and reschedule.]

I would like to remind you that as far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. Your name will not be included in the project write-up, though the name of the program will be included, but not its specific location. Only information regarding the content of the program, as it pertains to father involvement, and general information about the program will be used.

Do you have any questions for me about this project?

[Interview questions.]

Thank you again for your time and for agreeing to participate in this research project. Again, you may contact me if you have further questions at dhodgins@uvic.ca or at 250-598-0670. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Margie Mayfield at 250-721-7849 and Dr. Alison Preece at 250-721-7831. In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisors at those phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545.

Appendix E

Consent information for participants

To [insert name of Director]:

I am the graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the

University of Victoria who is conducting a research project analyzing the content of

formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement, as part of my

requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I am

interested in finding out just what kind of father involvement information is, or is not,

being shared with parents through education programs. In my research to date, I have

not found any studies or reports that have collated that kind of information. It is my

hope that this project might help in future development of parent education programs.

I spoke with you on the telephone on [date] about participating in my study,

Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education

programs in BC. When we spoke, you expressed interest in participating with your

parent education program in this study. I am sending you this letter to provide you

with a copy of the consent information I shared with you over the telephone and, if you

are still interested in participating, to arrange a time for a telephone interview.

As I stated over the telephone, if you agree to participate in this study, your

participation would involve answering some questions over the telephone about your

parent education program and sharing any written program materials with me so that I

can analyze them for father involvement content. This is not an evaluation of your

specific program, but simply an analysis of its content regarding father involvement. An

initial interview would take approximately 10-15 minutes, and a possible second phone

interview, for the purpose of clarifying information about the program and its content,

might take approximately 15-30 minutes or less. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. Any written program materials could be sent to me electronically or by mail and I would be happy to reimburse the organization for any costs associated with sharing these materials, such as mailing and copying costs.

I would like to reiterate that, as far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research includes helping to generate a clearer picture than we have now as to how father involvement content is included in parent education programs in BC, which might be of help to your organization's parent education program in the future. As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. Your name will not be included in the project write-up, though the name of the program will be included, but not its specific location. Only information regarding the content of the program, as it pertains to father involvement, and general information about the program will be used. The interview data and program materials will be kept in my home office and personal computer in locked files. The data will be kept until after my oral examination and the completion of final revisions to my project write-up. Afterward, I will shred and burn the documents and break the computer CD's related to the interviews with the Directors, but as the program materials are public documents, I do not have plans to destroy them at the completion of the study.

As I stated over the telephone, I anticipate sharing the research findings of this project with other researchers and front line workers, particularly those working with families, father involvement, and parent education, either through journal articles, conferences, workshops or informal sharing. I will send you a summary of the research

project after its completion as well. I also anticipate sending a summary of this research study and its findings to parent education, family support, and father resource program providers as well as to government agencies and departments involved in the health, welfare and education of families and children.

You may contact me if you have further questions at dhodgins@uvic.ca or at 250-598-0670. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Margie Mayfield at 250-721-7849 and Dr. Alison Preece at 250-721-7831. In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisors at those phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545 or at ovprhe@uvic.ca.

If you are still willing to participate in this study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*, I would like to set up a time to interview you. I would appreciate it if you could email or telephone me with a convenient time and day for the interview. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Denise Hodgins

Appendix F

Script for recruiting pilot participants

My name is Denise Hodgins and I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria. I was wondering if your organization offers any programs or services to parents of children under the age of six.

[If the Director says none, then ask them if they know of any other organizations that do. Thank them for their help. Call ends.]

As part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education, I am conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement. I am interested in finding out just what kind of father involvement information is, or is not, being shared with parents through education programs. In my research to date, I have not found any studies or reports that have collated that kind of information. It is my hope that this project might help in future development of parent education programs.

I would like to know if you, as Director of an organization that offers services to parents of young children, would be willing to participate in the pilot of my study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*. If you agree, your participation would involve answering the interview questions that will be used in the study and discussing the questions with me. This will help me determine if the questions are clear, appropriate and sufficient. This interview would take approximately 15-20 minutes.

As far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research includes

helping to generate a clearer picture than we have now as to how father involvement content is included in parent education programs in BC, which might be of help to your organization's parent education program in the future.

As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. As a participant in the pilot study, your name will not be used and your answers to the interview questions will not be included in the project write-up, though your suggestions for improvement or changes may be included. The interview data will be kept in my home office and personal computer in locked files. The data will be kept until after my oral examination and the completion of final revisions to my project write-up. Afterward, I will shred and burn the documents and break the computer CD's related to the interviews with the Directors.

I anticipate sharing the research findings of this project with other researchers and front line workers, particularly those working with families, father involvement, and parent education, either through journal articles, conferences, workshops or informal sharing. I will send you a summary of the research project after its completion as well. I also anticipate sending a summary of this research study and its findings to parent education, family support, and father resource program providers as well as to government agencies and departments involved in the health, welfare and education of families and children.

As a Director of an organization that offers programs and services to parents, would you be willing to participate in the pilot of my study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*?

[If the Director says no, then ask them if they know of any other organizations that offer programs to parents. Thank them for their time and help. Call ends.]

I would like to send you a letter of the consent information I have shared with you today as well as my contact information and that of my supervisors and the Associate Vice-President of Research at the University of Victoria. You may contact us if you have any further questions or concerns about this research or want to verify the ethical approval of this study. The email I have for you is _____, is that correct? After you have received my email and read the consent information, if you are still willing to participate in the pilot of this study, you may email or telephone me with a convenient time and day for me to interview you and discuss the interview questions.

Thank you again for your time.

Appendix G

Consent information for pilot participants

To [insert name of Director]:

I am the graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria who is conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement, as part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I am interested in finding out just what kind of father involvement information is, or is not, being shared with parents through education programs. In my research to date, I have not found any studies or reports that have collated that kind of information. It is my hope that this project might help in future development of parent education programs.

I spoke with you on the telephone on [date] about participating in the pilot of my study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*. When we spoke, you expressed interest in participating in this pilot study. I am sending you this letter to provide you with a copy of the consent information I shared with you over the telephone and, if you are still interested in participating, to arrange a time for a telephone interview.

As I stated over the telephone, if you agree to participate in this study, your participation would involve answering the interview questions that will be used in the study and discussing the questions with me. This will help me determine if the questions are clear, appropriate and sufficient. This interview would take approximately 15-20 minutes.

I would like to reiterate that, as far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your

participation in this research includes helping to generate a clearer picture than we have now as to how father involvement content is included in parent education programs in BC, which might be of help to your organization's parent education program in the future. As a voluntary participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. As a participant in the pilot study, your name will not be used and your answers to the interview questions will not be included in the project write-up, though your suggestions for improvement or changes may be included. The interview data will be kept in my home office and personal computer in locked files. The data will be kept until after my oral examination and the completion of final revisions to my project write-up. Afterward, I will shred and burn the documents and break the computer CD's related to the interviews with the Directors.

As I stated over the telephone, I anticipate sharing the research findings of this project with other researchers and front line workers, particularly those working with families, father involvement, and parent education, either through journal articles, conferences, workshops or informal sharing. I will send you a summary of the research project after its completion as well. I also anticipate sending a summary of this research study and its findings to parent education, family support, and father resource program providers as well as to government agencies and departments involved in the health, welfare and education of families and children.

You may contact me if you have further questions at dhodgins@uvic.ca or at 250-598-0670. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Margie Mayfield at 250-721-7849 and Dr. Alison Preece at 250-721-7831. In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisors at those telephone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of

this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545 or at ovprhe@uvic.ca.

If you are still willing to participate in the pilot of this study, *Father involvement in parenting young children: A content analysis of parent education programs in BC*, I would like to set up a time to interview you. I would appreciate it if you could email or telephone me with a convenient time and day for the interview. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Denise Hodgins

Appendix H

Script for interview with directors to pilot interview questions

This is Denise Hodgins. I am the graduate student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Victoria who is conducting a research project analyzing the content of formal parent education programs in BC in regards to father involvement, as part of my requirements for completing a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I spoke with you on [date] about participating in the pilot of this research and I also emailed you confirmation of our conversation with the contact information for this project. Did you receive this email?

[If the Director did not receive the email, I will reconfirm their email address and tell them that I will resend the email to them.]

When we spoke, we arranged this time for me to pilot my interview questions with you over the phone by asking you the questions and then discussing the questions with me to help determine if the questions are clear, appropriate and sufficient. This interview should take approximately 15-20 minutes. Is this still a convenient time for you?

[If the Director says no, ask what would be a more convenient, and reschedule.]

I would like to remind you that your participation involves answering the interview questions that will be used in the study and discussing the questions with me. This will help me determine if the questions are clear, appropriate and sufficient. This interview would take approximately 15-20 minutes.

I would also like to remind you that as far as I know, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. As a voluntary participant, you

may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case, your data will be returned to you. You may decline to answer any interview question, if you chose. As a participant in the pilot study, your name will not be used and your answers to the interview questions will not be included in the project write-up, though your suggestions for improvement or changes may be included. The interview data will be kept in my home office and personal computer in locked files. The data will be kept until after my oral examination and the completion of final revisions to my project write-up. Afterward, I will shred and burn the documents and break the computer CD's related to the interviews with the Directors.

Do you have any questions for me about this project, at this time?

[Interview questions. See Appendix B.]

Thank you again for your time and for agreeing to participate in this research project. You may contact me if you have further questions at dhodgins@uvic.ca or at 250-598-0670. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Margie Mayfield at 250-721-7849 and Dr. Alison Preece at 250-721-7831. In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisors at those phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4545.

Appendix I

Coding Frame

Father Involvement (FI) Content is Present	
Images	pictures, illustrations, cartoons with father
Examples	fathers used in the example, such as dealing with a behaviour issue
Research	information about FI importance, effects of FI, fathers' roles, etc
Strategies	tips, tools, how to's, exercises, etc
Father Involvement Defined	
Caregiver	caring for child's needs i.e., bathing, diapering, feeding
Teacher/role model	teaching and modeling skills, values, knowledge
Emotion coach	comforting, acknowledging, putting words to emotion, hugging
Provider	financial provision, providing for home, food, clothing, etc
Play partner	playing with children, having fun, being silly
Cognitive processes	worrying, planning
Discipline	guides, puts boundaries, follows through on consequences
Support mother	provide emotional support to child's mother
Approaches to Father Involvement	
Comparative	based on mother standard
Deficit	negative, incompetence, indifference
Generative	nurturing, ability and willingness within themselves
Additive	side line participant, helper
Mixed	more than one approach present
Factors that Contribute to or Deter Father Involvement	
Mother gatekeeping	mother is the expert, mother controls issues related to children
Parenting team	parents work together regardless of residential status, co-parenting
Open to learn	father's willingness to learn new skills, ask for help, take initiative
Reflection	ability to reflect on his skills, behaviour, expectations of role, hopes
Emotions	emotions, such as fear, depression, influencing involvement
Self-Nurture	caring for the self to better care for others
Philosophical shift	becoming a father as transformative act, changes the man

Appendix J

Participating Programs and Program Information

Active Parenting – 1, 2,3, 4 Parents!

Developed By: Michael Popkin, Ph.D. with contributing authors Betsy Gard, Ph.D. and Marilyn Montgomery, Ph.D.

Program Goals: To address basic parenting skills - bonding, preventing problems, boundaries, safety, discipline

Length of Program: 3 weeks, 1½-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents of children aged 1-4

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Manual (purchased)

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Videos, Leaders Guide

Bringing Baby Home

Developed By: Dr. John Gottman, The Relationship Institute in Seattle, WA

Program Goals: Help couples prepare their relationship so they have some coping skills to prepare for the stresses coming into their lives as parents

Length of Program: 2-days

Program Offered To: Couples in their third trimester up to toddler age

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Manual, Facilitator's Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Keeping Fathers Involved Activity Cards

Fathers Parenting Program

Developed By: Local, Program Facilitator

Program Goals: Give fathers the experience of hearing from other fathers and possibly learn different perspectives about parenting and something about themselves

Length of Program: 8 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Any father

Program Materials Analyzed: Overview agenda

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk

Developed By: Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Program Goals: How to listen to, and understand your child's concerns; How to have cooperation in your family without nagging; How you and your child can deal with feelings; How to find alternatives to punishment; How to help your child attain a positive self-image

Length of Program: 6 weeks, 2-hour sessions

Program Offered To: Parents

Program Materials Analyzed: Book - *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* (1982)

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Video/DVD, participant video workbook

The Incredible Years, basic and advanced program

Developed By: Caroline Webster-Stratton

Program Goals: The parent training intervention is focused on strengthening parenting competencies (monitoring, positive discipline, confidence) and fostering parents' involvement in children's school experiences in order to promote children's academic and social competencies and reduce conduct problems.

Length of Program: 12-14 weekly two-hour sessions (Basic); 8-10 weekly two-hour group sessions (Advanced)

Program Offered To: Parents of children aged 2-7 (Basic) and 4-10 (Advanced)

Program Materials Analyzed: Handouts for the parent basic and advanced programs available online at http://www.incredibleyears.com/_jump_resources-group-leader.htm

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: leaders manual, videos, books

Kids Are Worth It

Developed By: Barbara Coloroso

Program Goals: To buffer your kids from sexual promiscuity, drug abuse and suicide and help them grow in increased self-discipline, independent problem solving skills and responsibility.

Length of Program: 6 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents

Program Materials Analyzed: Video – *Winning at Parenting* (1989)

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

Nobody's Perfect

Developed By: Health Canada with the Departments of Health of the 4 Atlantic Provinces, introduced nationally in 1987

Program Goals: Provide parenting education and support, promoting parenting, increasing understanding of health safety and behaviour, self care self esteem , identify support systems, build skills, learn new skills – you are the expert

Length of Program: 6-8 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents of children aged 0-5 who meet two out of the five indicators: young; single; socially, geographically or linguistically isolated; low income; or lacking in formal education

Program Materials Analyzed: 6 Booklets

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: 1 booklet - *Strategies for Parenting Children with FASD* (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)

Nurturing Fathers

Developed By: Local, Program Facilitator

Program Goals: Learn how to nurture kids and yourself, look after yourself = better you are going to be

Length of Program: 12 weeks, 2 ½-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Any fathers

Program Materials Analyzed: Course Outline

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

Parent Child Connection

Developed By: Dr. Allison Miller and Dr. Allison Rees

Program Goals: Raise parents' level of consciousness about responding to and communicating with our children, self-esteem, boundaries in healthy families, our ability to resolve family issues

Length of Program: 8 weeks, 1½-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents and professionals dealing with children of all ages

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: CDs, DVDs

Parenting Together

Developed By: Local, Program Facilitators

Program Goals: Give parents time to be together to talk about parenting and the experience of hearing from other parents, learn different perspectives about parenting, and learn something new about themselves as parents

Length of Program: 6 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Any parenting couple, both have to attend though not necessarily have to live together but are trying to parent together

Program Materials Analyzed: Course Agenda and handout materials

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

Parenting Wisely

Developed By: Dr. Don Gordon, Ohio University

Program Goals: To teach methods for improving relationships within families with younger children, by illustrating typical family situations and the common ways in which parents try to handle them

Length of Program:

Program Offered To:

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent workbook

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: CD-Rom

Power to Parent

Developed By: Dr. Gordon Neufeld

Program Goals: To understand their child from the inside out, to really understand the importance of "right relationships" between parents and children

Length of Program: 8 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Anyone in the community

Program Materials Analyzed: DVD's - *The Vital Connection* and Video Course Handout

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

Right from the Start

Developed By: Dr. Alison Niccols, McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences

Program Goals: Increase parents' knowledge of infant attachment, why positive infant attachment is important, and what role parents play in that

Length of Program: 8 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents with children from prenatal up to 6 months

Program Materials Analyzed: Facilitator's Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Video accompanying guides for parents and professionals in English and French. *A simple gift: Comforting your baby*. Infant Mental Health Promotion Project (www.sickkids.ca/imp).

Same Page Parenting

Developed By: Local, Program Facilitator

Program Goals: To make life as good as we can for our children - we have the power over how we contribute to what goes on in our family - respect our pasts for what it was, that it affects our thinking but that only our actions affect our relationships ~ we have free will to change - explore (and admit and to name) the meaning that we put on other people's actions - figure out new skills to use - consider and understand your child's developmental stage and temperament - make your time with your child and partner more enjoyable - motivate you to make changes

Length of Program: 3 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents, together as a couple who are living together or living separately, or an individual parent, with children of any age

Program Materials Analyzed: Program Agenda, handout materials

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: No

Side Stepping the Power Struggle

Developed By: Dr. Allison Miller and Dr. Allison Rees

Program Goals: understanding your child's individual temperment, children's behaviour, effective discipline, teach responsibility, how to let go of kid issues, and establish limits

Length of Program: 8 weeks, 1½-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Parents and professionals dealing with children of all ages

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: CDs, DVDs

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)

Developed By: Dr. Don Dinkmeyer Jr., Dr. Gary McKay and Dr. Joyce McKay

Program Goals: Learn more about child development, learn practical parenting skills, effective discipline, be more confident as parents, realize not alone

Length of Program: 6 weeks, 2-hour weekly sessions

Program Offered To: Anyone in community

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Facilitator's Manual

Triple P Positive Parenting Program – parenting group

Developed By: Dr. Matthew R. Sanders, Carol Markie-Dadds and Karen M.T. Turner

Program Goals: The program aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. The parenting group program uses an intensive active skills training process to help parents acquire new knowledge and positive parenting skills.

Length of Program: 8 sessions - 5 sessions in group, 3 telephone consultations

Program Offered To: Parents

Program Materials Analyzed: Parent Handbook and Facilitator's Manual

Other Program Materials Not Analyzed: Videos; (There are also other materials for different levels of the Triple P Positive Parenting Program)

Appendix K

Programs Found in BC

Program	Region(s)
Active parenting – 1, 2, 3, 4 Parents! * **	North, Interior
Baby Steps	Vancouver Island
Bringing Baby Home * **	Vancouver Island
Creating Capable and Confident Children	Interior
Fathers Parenting Program *	Fraser Valley
How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk * **	North, Interior, Vancouver Island
Kids are Worth It * **	Vancouver Island
Nobody's Perfect * **	North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Coastal, Vancouver Island
Nurturing Fathers (A) *	Interior
Nurturing Fathers (B)	Fraser Valley
Parent Awareness Program	Vancouver Island
Parent Course	North
Parenting After Separation **	Vancouver Island, Interior
Parenting Isn't Easy (PIE)	Interior
Parenting Together *	Fraser Valley
Parenting Wisely * **	North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Coastal
Positive Parenting	North, Fraser Valley
Right From the Start *	North, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Coastal
Same Page Parenting *	Vancouver Coastal
Side Stepping the Power Struggle * **	Vancouver Island
Strengthening your step/blended family	Interior
Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) * **	North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Vancouver Coastal
The Incredible Years * **	North
The Parent Child Connection * **	Vancouver Island
The Power to Parent **	Vancouver Coastal
Triple P Positive Parenting Program * **	Vancouver Island

* participating programs in this study
** programs with websites

Appendix L

Ethics Certificate of Approval