

**Exploring the experiences of first-time fatherhood: A social
constructionist study**

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my brother, whose diverse and intense experience as a first-time father was the inspiration for this study. Secondly, to all the first-time fathers who feel they are misunderstood and misrepresented. I hope that this study will assist in giving them the recognition they so rightly deserve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge THANK YOU goes out to everyone who knows me:

Your words of encouragement and compassion gave me strength;

Your experience and knowledge kept me on the right track and most of all

Your ever-strengthening belief in me gave me peace of mind...

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SUMMARY

Historically there has been many changes to the construction of fatherhood. These changes have not been linear and most significant changes took place during the twentieth century. Four ways of being and acting as a father (i.e., Discourses) have been identified: the father as moral overseer; the father as distant breadwinner; the father as sex-role model, and the new nurturant father. Previous studies have indicated that men's experiences of fatherhood are very diverse and multifaceted. Fathers may experience intense feelings of elation and happiness, as well as depression and anxiety. Results even indicated that some fathers experienced physical symptoms such as morning sickness or hormonal changes, similar to what the mother could experience. There is also a distinction between three phases: pre-natal, the birth, and post-natal.

However, there is a significant gap in the available knowledge related to the subjective experience of fathers, particularly in the South African context. This study is an exploration from within a social constructionist framework, of the experiences of first-time fatherhood. Using a multiple-case study design, the aim was to explore and answer the question: "How do men experience first-time fatherhood?" A qualitative approach to research was applied and three first-time fathers were recruited applying purposive and snowball sampling strategies for interviews that were conducted during May to June 2003. The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, which requires the participants to build a collage and participate in a semi-structured interview, was utilized for data collection. Data were analysed by way of thematic analysis, based on transcriptions and translations of the interview material.

Three major themes emerged from the data: responsibility, feelings and thoughts and relationships. Collectively, ten sub-themes were extracted from the interviews.. With regard to responsibility, the three first-time fathers indicated that they associated aspects such as financial, emotional and educational provision as primary concerns of first-time fatherhood. Thoughts and feelings ranged from feelings of happiness and elation, stress and anxiety, to confusion and helplessness, as well as a sense of a loss of freedom. In terms of relationships, family, marriage, and the father-child relationship, emerged as significant in their overall experience of first-time fatherhood. These themes and the sub-themes were identified in both the collage and interview material collected for each father.

The utilisation of the ZMET and a qualitative approach based in a social constructionist perspective proved useful in eliciting the more intimate experiences of first-time fatherhood. The project was, however, limited because only white male subjects were involved, and themes related to masculine stereotypes in the construction of the father's reality of first-time fatherhood, and the gender of the baby, could not be explored. Further research on the topic is therefore proposed to explore the richness of the topic and to offer context-specific constructions of the multiple realities of first-time fatherhood.

Keywords:

1. Collage making
2. Discourse and discourse
3. First-time fatherhood
4. Metaphor probe
5. Post-natal
6. Pre-natal
7. Social constructionism
8. Triad comparison
9. Triangulation
10. Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique

Verkenning van die eerste-vaderskap ervaring: 'n Sosiaal-konstruksionistiese studie.

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OPSOMMING

Histories was daar baie veranderinge in die konstruksie van vaderskap. Hierdie veranderinge was nie liniêr nie en die meeste veranderinge het gedurende die twintigste eeu plaasgevind. Vier maniere van die wese en optrede van 'n vader (d.i. Diskoerse) is geïdentifiseer: die vader as die morele toesighouer; die vader as die verwyderde broodwinner; die vader as die seksrol-model en die nuwe versorgende vader. Vorige studies het aangetoon dat mans se ondervindings van vaderskap baie uiteenlopend en veelledig is. Vaders mag intense gevoelens van verrukking en geluk, sowel as depressie en angs ervaar. Resultate het getoon dat sommige vaders selfs liggaamlike simptome soos oggend-naarheid en hormonale veranderinge, soortgelyk aan die moeder, ervaar het. Daar is ook 'n onderskeid tussen drie fases, naamlik pre-nataal, die geboorte en post-nataal.

Nietemin, is daar 'n betekenisvolle leemte in die beskikbare kennis in verband met die subjektiewe ervaring van vaders, veral in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Hierdie studie is 'n verkenning vanuit 'n sosiaal-konstruksionistiese raamwerk van die ondervinding van eerste-vaderskap. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n veelvuldige gevallestudie-ontwerp, was die doel om die vraag: "Hoe ervaar mans eerste-vaderskap?" te verken en te beantwoord. 'n Kwalitatiewe bebedering tot navorsing is toegepas en drie eerste-vaders is gewerf met die toepassing van doelbewuste en sneeubal steekproefstrategieë op onderhoude wat gedurende Mei en Junie 2003 gevoer is. Die "Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique" wat van die deelnemers verwag om 'n collage te bou en deel te neem aan 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud, was gebruik om die data in te samel. Data is deur middel van

tematiese analise, gebaseer op transkripsies en vertalings van die ondehoudmateriaal, ontleed.

Drie hoofemas was geïdentifiseer in die data: verantwoordelikheid; gevoelens en gedagtes, asook verhoudings. Gesamentlik het tien sub-emas uit die onderhoude te voorskyn gekom. Met betrekking tot verantwoordelikheid, het die drie eerste-vaders aangedui dat hulle apsekte soos finansieël, emosioneel en opvoedkundige voorsorg as primêre besorgdheid van eerste-vaderskap ervaar. Gedagtes en gevoelens wissel tussen die gevoel van geluk en uitbundigheid, druk en angstigheid tot by verwarring en hulpeloosheid, sowel as 'n gevoel aan verlies van vryheid. In terme van verhoudings kom familie, die huwelik en die vader-kind verhouding as merkwaardig na vore. Hierdie emas en sub-emas was geïdentifiseer in beide die collage en onderhoudmateriaal wat vir elke vader varsamel is.

Die gebruik van die ZMET en 'n kwalitatiewe benadering gebaseer op die sosiaal-konstruksionistiese perspektief, het waardevol geblyk te wees in die uittreksel van die meer intieme ervarings van die ondervinding van eerste-vaderskap. Die projek was egter beperk vanweë die feit dat slegs wit manlike subjekte betrokke was en dat emas in verband met manlike stereotipes in die konstruksie van die vader se realiteit van eerste-vaderskap en die geslag van die baba nie ontgin kon word nie. Verdere navorsing oor hierdie onderwerp word dus voorgestel ten einde die rykdom van die onderwerp te verken en om spesifieke kontekstuele konstruksies van die veelvuldige realiteite van eerste-vaderskap verder te ondersoek.

SLEUTELTERME

1. Collage-bou
2. Diskoers en diskoers
3. Eerste-vaderskap
4. Metafoor-peiling
5. Post-natale
6. Pre-natale
7. Sosiaal-konstruksionisme
8. Drietal-vergelyking
9. Triangulering
10. "Zaltman Metafoorontlokkingsstegniek"¹
[Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique]

¹ Gepatenteerde onderhoudvoeringstegniek.

Abstract

Fathers in Western societies have been, and still are described in current literature as, moral overseers, distant breadwinners, or sex-role models, with a few recent references made to the new nurturant father. Previous studies indicate that the experiences of fatherhood are multidimensional and multifaceted. These experiences range from intense elation to extreme unhappiness. Physical symptoms of pregnancy have also been reported.

Within a social constructionist framework, this study was designed as a multiple-case study utilizing a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of three white South African first-time fathers. Data were collected through the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation technique and analysed by applying thematic analysis. Credibility and trustworthiness were ensured by way of triangulation.

Three major themes emerged from the data: responsibility, feelings, thoughts, and relationships. Ten sub-themes were identified. The three first-time fathers indicated that responsibilities associated with first-time fatherhood concerns aspects such as providing financially, emotionally and educationally. Thoughts and feelings ranged from feelings of happiness and elation, stress and anxiety to confusion and helplessness, as well as a sense of a loss of freedom. Theme three consists of, the family, the marriage relationship and the father-child relationship, each respectively influential in the fathers' experiences.

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PROLOGUE

The tasks which demand a powerful development of muscle and bone, and the resulting capacity for intermittent spurts of energy, involving corresponding periods of rest, fall to the man; the care of the children and all the very various industries which radiate from the hearth, and which call for an expenditure of energy more continuous but at a lower tension, fall to women.

Havelock Ellis

In Man & Woman: a study of human secondary sexual characteristics, 1895, pp. 1-2.

When my brother and his partner fell pregnant, my journey into the realms of fatherhood began. Owing to this experience, my first thought was that the way men feel and think about fatherhood is not as stereotypical and preconceived as the media, and most academic literature, lead us to believe. Mainly, I questioned whether all fathers were incompetent caretakers and uninvolved in childrearing activities. I also questioned the validity of studies that represented the father as an unemotional and always rational being when it came to being a father.

Writing this mini-dissertation was the most difficult task that I have ever attempted. I sincerely hope that I can share what I have learned about first-time fatherhood with you. This study is an exploration from within a social constructionist framework. The research planning and execution is located within a multiple-case study design, often referred to as a collective case study (Tellis, 1997b). The aim of this research was to explore and answer the question: "How do men experience first-time fatherhood?" Subsequently, my objective was to use a qualitative approach to research design, data gathering and data analysis in order to address the aim.

Two basic assumptions guided the design and conduct of this research:

- Fatherhood, and in this context, first-time fatherhood is a socially constructed reality.
- Multiple realities of first-time fatherhood exist.

There were no formal hypotheses to be tested. Rather the design by implication facilitated the generation of hypotheses and the development of leads for new research topics in either qualitative or quantitative projects (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001; Parker, 1994).

At this introductory phase, I would like to take the opportunity to describe how the term fatherhood will be used throughout this mini-dissertation. Tanfer and Mott (1997, p.1) define fatherhood as: “a status attained by having a child and is irrevocable (unless an only child dies)” and fathering as: “including beyond the procreative act itself, all the childrearing roles, activities, duties and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and fulfil.” Subsequently, the term fatherhood was used throughout this study, to mean both the biological act of becoming a father, and the duties and responsibilities associated with being a father.

The term, “discourse”, used often within this work also needs clarification. The term discourse can be used in various ways. In the context of this study, I made use of little ‘d’ discourses and big ‘D’ Discourses as proposed by Gee (1999), simply because it was easier to distinguish between the two when they were used within one text. Briefly, Gee (1999, p.7) explains that discourses are “language-in-use”, whereas Discourses are “ways of being in the world” or “forms of life”. Big ‘D’ Discourses or forms of life were relevant throughout this text, particularly in the literature review. Little ‘d’ discourses, on the other hand, were relevant in the analysis section where discourses, which together, constituted the interview and served as context from which I extracted themes.

Chapter one was attributed to the literature review undertaken for this study, the objectives of which were to: Firstly, construct a picture of the evolution of fatherhood Discourses within Western society, with a brief focus on the theoretical approaches that have been utilized to study this phenomenon. Secondly, focus on and discuss the current research on the experience of fatherhood. My focus fell on the realms of Western society, specifically America and the United Kingdom, for the simple reason that there was a lack of relevant South African research. Thirdly, it was important to identify the relevant methodological and measurement issues related to research and literature on fatherhood. The purpose of this was to highlight the relevant contribution of this study to the current body of knowledge on fatherhood.

Chapter two concentrated on the theoretical framework, the research design and the research methodology. In this chapter I clarified why it was necessary to utilize a social constructionist framework for the study of first-time fatherhood, by playing essentialist viewpoints off against social constructionist viewpoints of fatherhood. I have opted to utilize a qualitative approach to this study, which is presented in the second section for chapter two. My belief was that a qualitative approach was more relevant in addressing the research aim. Furthermore, in chapter two I addressed trustworthiness and credibility of data and interpretations, which are important issues to qualitative researchers. I indicated how I intended ensuring trustworthiness and credibility, by using data and method triangulation for addressing the four criteria posed by Lincoln and Guba (in Decrop, 1999), i.e., credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability.

Within this qualitative approach, it made sense to utilize semi-structured in-depth interviewing for data gathering purposes. This method ensured in-depth and detailed data to be gathered. As such, the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique was utilised in order to bridge the gender divide between the participants (as men) and myself (as a woman).

The ZMET is a qualitative technique that is generally used for marketing research purposes. Through conducting a pilot interview, I found this technique to work effectively in order to gather rich and vivid narrative descriptions of each first-time father's experience.

Thematic analysis was applied to create themes and sub-themes that assisted in presenting the findings in a structured manner and to give meaning to the reader of each first-time father's experience. The purpose of a thematic analysis was also to explore and describe the experience of first-time fatherhood.

Chapter three was allocated to the analysis and interpretation of each father's interview material, and in Chapter four I ended this mini-dissertation with a brief discussion of the results, credibility and trustworthiness of the research, as well as suggestions for future research. For the most part this study has only been a starting point on the journey of discovery and much more needs to be done if we are to fully understand the everyday experiences of first-time fatherhood.

It is not my intention to claim that this study is flawless. I have indicated in the literature review that one criticism levelled against studies on fatherhood is the focus on the white nuclear family, which leads to a cultural bias in definitions of family organization. As such, I have to admit that I am also guilty of having made the same mistake as other researchers in that I have focussed on white males in nuclear families. However, I would like to defend my actions by saying that even though I focused on the white nuclear family it did not make the research any less relevant to the South African context. Due to a considerable lack of research on first-time fatherhood and the historical constructions of fatherhood in South Africa (i.e., Discourses) my study was an exploration of previously unexplored territory and therefore the white nuclear family was considered important.

By increasing trustworthiness and credibility of the research and results, it has been possible to expose a different field for future researchers to conduct similar studies, most likely broadening the focus to also include the first-time fathers from the extended African family.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it has become more and more common for people to advocate the importance of fathers. There has certainly been a substantial increase in the study of fatherhood in the past twenty-five years (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999) and now there are many research articles (e.g., Chopra, 2001; Cobb, 2002; Finnbogadottir, Crang & Persson, 2003), comprehensive books (e.g. Lamb, 1981, 1986, 1997; Gould & Gunther, 1993) and reviews available (e.g., Burdon, 1994, Burgess, 1997, Lupton & Barclay, 1997; White, 1994). According to Marsiglio, Amato, Day and Lamb(2000) several scientific journals have also devoted special issues to fatherhood, e.g. Families and Societies (1993); several issues of Journal of Family (1993, 1994 & 1999); Demography (1998), Journal of Men's Studies (1998); Journal of Family History (2000), and Marriage and Family Review (2000). Nonetheless, even with an increase in available reading material, fatherhood is still under represented in both academic literature (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Russell & Radojevic, 1992) and in dissertation studies (Silverstein & Phares, 1996).

The literature review serves as a starting point for this mini-dissertation and the questions, arguments and conclusions posed there in. I propose three objectives for chapter one. Firstly, to construct a picture of the evolution of fatherhood Discourses within Western society, with a brief focus on the theoretical approaches utilized to study this phenomenon in each Discourse. My focus falls within the realms of Western society, specifically America and the United Kingdom, for the simple reason that there is a lack of relevant South African research.

The discussion spans the period from the early 1900's to present day with the emerging Discourse of fatherhood, i.e. the new nurturant father. A historical perspective is helpful in reminding ourselves that ways of acting and being a father do not necessarily remain timeless truths, but rather reflect the social and cultural circumstances in which they emerge.

The second objective relates directly to the topic of this study, i.e. the experience of first-time fatherhood. Here I wish to illustrate previous research studies on this topic and their respective results. This section is especially important as a reference framework for the design of this study, as well as the final data analysis and interpretation. The third objective, which goes hand-in-hand with the second briefly, discusses the methodological and measurement issues within existing research and literature on fatherhood. The purpose of which is to highlight the relevant contribution of this study to the current body of knowledge on fatherhood.

1.1. Fatherhood throughout history

Within current literature, there is a conspicuous amount of theoretical approaches, perspectives and paradigms used to study fatherhood. These differing approaches and perspectives come from fields of study such as sociology, social psychology, psychology and child-and adult development. The most prominent academic thinking and theorizing to the study of fatherhood identified in and by current literature, in no particular order of importance, include:

- Conflict theory (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- Erikson's concept of generativity (Holland, 1998; Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- Gender display and hegemonic masculinity (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- Identity theory (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)

- Psychoanalytical approach (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- Scripting theory (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- Sex-role theory (social learning theory) (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996)
- Social constructionism (Cobb, 2002)
- Structural functionalism (Tanfer & Mott, 1997; Tripp, 2003)
- Symbolic interactionism (Tripp, 2003)
- The micro-structural approach (Tanfer & Mott, 1997)
- The socio-biological perspective (Tripp, 2003)

It is an impossible task to carefully review all of these within the limitations of this mini-dissertation, particularly since Tanfer and Mott's (1997) paper is quite comprehensive in this regard. Findings from studies conducted by Demos (1986) and Pleck (in Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996) further demonstrate that there has been a change in the father identity in Western societies in the last few centuries and these changes have been far from linear. That is, most of the changes took place during the 20th century. Thus, I will only focus on the broad movements within the different Discourses that have facilitated dominant constructions of fatherhood.

I have identified four such Discourses (i.e. forms of life) of fatherhood in current literature that delineate the history of fatherhood in Western societies.

1.1.1. The father as moral overseer

Within this Discourse, the father is known as the moral overseer. Historians and researchers ascribe different periods in which this was more or less prominent. Researchers identify the 19th century to early 20th century as belonging to the moral overseer (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996; McPherson, 2003), while historians suggest the

period spans from late 17th to 18th century (Waller & McLanahan, 1999). Nonetheless, the discourses (i.e., language-in-use) were centred on the idea that fathers assumed a broad range of responsibilities for children, but primarily represented the moral and religious authority of the family and supervised the behaviour of all family members (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996; Waller & McLanahan, 1999).

Religious ideology during these times influenced the construction of the positions awarded to fathers, mothers and children. The father was the moral overseer, which meant that he was primarily responsible for ingraining the cultural values in his children. These values were derived from reading religious material. It was also the father's responsibility to ensure that his children were educated, as literacy was needed in order to read religious material (McPherson, 2003).

Furthermore, fathers assumed control over childbearing and childrearing decisions, whilst wives were given the responsibility of taking care of the children, for they were believed to be less rational and more susceptible to their emotional impulses (Tanfer & Mott, 1996; Rotundo in McPherson, 2003; Waller & McLanahan, 1999).

In attempting to identify an academic and psychological theory associated with these times, Freud's psychosexual theory comes to mind. In his article, Rethinking Law and Fatherhood, Sarat (1999) eloquently uses Freud's theory to illustrate the significant themes within discourses of fathers as moral overseers. Quoting from Jerome Frank's writings, Sarat (1999, p.1) writes: "the father is the Infallible Judge, the Maker of definite rules of conduct. He knows precisely what is right and what is wrong and...sits in judgement and punishes misdeeds." Accordingly, Goodrich (in Sarat, 1999) argues that Freud and his followers depict a law where the power of the father is used as guideline.

1.1.2. The father as distant breadwinner / provider

The second prominent form of life portrays the father as the distant breadwinner or financial provider. This Discourse was evident during the early 19th century to mid 20th centuries (Knijn, 1995; Pleck, 1987). However, Filene (1986) and Lasch (1977) argue that it was prominent particularly during the early 19th century.

Within this Discourse, the father was positioned as the sole provider and breadwinner for the family, without having a direct function in the upbringing of children (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996). McPherson (2003) ascribes the birth of this Discourse to the father slowly becoming a distant figure in the family, as their ascribed economic positions drew them away from home during the Great Depression. Abell and Schwartz (1999) suggest that one of the earliest factors to influence this distant breadwinner on fatherhood was the industrial revolution. The father was seldom present, while mothers had to extend their domestic and caretaking positions into becoming the disciplinarians (Tanfer & Mott, 1997).

As fathers began to move away from the centre of the family to the periphery, the discourses became concerned with the imminent capability of women as caregivers and their natural predisposition to home and family were dominant. Fathers on the other hand, were constructed as lacking in a natural predisposition to home and family, which indicates the strong undervaluing of the role of the father within the family (McPherson, 2003).

It is quite difficult to ascribe a psychological theory, while the position awarded to fathers focused on economical functions. For this reason, it is possible to suggest that theories such as structural functionalism and conflict theory facilitated the perpetuation of the father as a distant and instrumental figure in the family. Although these two theories may have contradictory views on the positioning of fathers in families, they both concentrate on the family within an economic position in a capitalist western society.

According to the structural functionalists, the nuclear family is best suited for the function of childbearing and childrearing where men are the financial providers and women are responsible for the socialization and emotional stability of the children (Bernard in Tanfer & Mott, 1997). During the 1950's structural functionalists maintained that fatherhood consists of the introjection of rules and norms that allow men to "behave like fathers", thus responding positively to the expectations of others (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996), i.e. what people should do according to the norms and values of the group (Thompson & Hickey, 1999). For structural functionalists the power relations, i.e. paternal power, are important in that the father as the dominant powerful person can facilitate the family's growth into a learning and cultural institution (Thompson & Hickey, 1999). This view contrasts directly with conflict theory, which stipulates that men, who in general have a social and economic advantage over women, maintained their power by refusing childrearing responsibilities, which were viewed as a woman's job (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). There was thus a distinct change in thinking about fatherhood, in terms of the father as moral overseer who played a significant role in childrearing in terms of discipline and education, to the father who plays an instrumental role, of financial provider with little contact or interaction with the children.

The father as distant breadwinner Discourse facilitated an increased interest in why and to what extent fathers are involved or uninvolved in families and what the possible effects could be on the children. Thousands of research articles, too numerous to mention here, focus on the involvement of fathers, although the hypotheses, questions and objectives may differ. This is also one of the contributing factors to the increased interest in the father's involvement and emergence as sex-role model.

1.1.3. The father as sex-role model

The historically constructed father as the sex role model can be traced to the 1940's (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996), when he was positioned within the practice of being influential in and important to the sex role development of the children, especially the boys. A father's main function was now to encourage stereotypical, instrumental male behaviour in boys and expressive behaviour in girls (Pleck, 1987).

It is suggested that the Second World War brought on the emergence of this Discourse. While criticism grew of the mother's greater influence in child rearing and lack of a strong male role model within the family, the prominence of social learning theory significantly informed interpretations of fatherhood during those years (Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996).

According to the social learning theory, children learn appropriate sex roles through differential reinforcement and through observing and imitating (Burr, 1998; Louw, van Ede & Louw, 1998). Thus, the criticism, from a patriarchal scientific community, that mothers as the only caregiver are not good for boys' sex role development, has facilitated extensive application of social learning theory in psychology to describe fatherhood or more specifically, the position of the father as sex role model.

However, it is rather amusing to note that as research done from this viewpoint increased, the initial hypothesis that fathers are indispensable in the sex-role development of boys have become somewhat redundant. Cacace and d'Andrea (1996) as well as Tanfer & Mott (1997) mention that research results conclude that children do not appear to imitate people of their own gender any more than the opposite gender. Children do not typically end up resembling the same-sex parent more than the other. In conclusion men are unlikely to construct their masculine identity and fatherhood identity based on a male role model only.

It is my suggestion then that this refutation of the social learning theory facilitated a different way of thinking about fatherhood and the position of the father in the family. That is not to say that the social learning theory is extinct or that the sex-role Discourse of fatherhood no longer awards this position to men. Rather, there has been an increase in thinking and theorizing that men's identities as fathers were constructed through social interaction and thus it gave way to multiple realities of fatherhood.

In addition to the social learning theorists blunder of proving their own theory unsuccessful, Reisman and Schwartz (in Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996) believe that men and women's behaviour can only partly be explained by childhood learning. Rather learning how to be and act as a man, or a woman, is an evolutionary process facilitated by opportunities in social interaction. A man can thus be any kind of father if the situation so requires, irrespective of early childhood learning. As Moss (1995, p.xi) wrote:

There is a general awareness that fatherhood is not what it was. Fathers are losing their traditional roles – as authority figure, disciplinarian, the bridge between the family and the outside world, the breadwinner.

Broader social, economic and academic changes created an opportunity for fathers specifically and society in general to question the historically dominant positions of fatherhood. As such, there is a new form of being and acting like a father, i.e. the new nurturant father (Russell, Barclay, Edgecombe, Donovan, Habib, Callaghan & Pawson, 1999).

1.1.4. The new nurturant father

Pleck (in Cacace & d'Andrea, 1996) argues that the 'new nurturant father' or 'new father' (McPherson, 2003), differs from the historical father in various respects: he chooses to be present at the birth of his children, he cares for them even at a very young age, he assists in domestic chores and interacts with the children not only during playtime. There is also no gender stereotyping, treating his sons and daughters the same.

Segal (1990) also suggests that this new father has particular experiences during pregnancy, birth and fatherhood as a whole. The father's new image is that of an active and fully participating parent (McPherson, 2003). Russell *et al.* (1999) mention that findings in several western societies support the idea that there is a new father or at least researchers find them more easily. The motivation behind the new father's involvement is important.

Support for the notion of a new father is provided by looking at the increasing number of fathers attending antenatal classes and the birth itself (Russell *et al.*, 1999). Whether there is in fact a new father, the perception fuelled by the media either explicitly or implicitly, is that fathers either are or should strive to become this man (Pleck, 1987). However, in most randomly sampled studies the historical model of the father as breadwinner still predominates.

Abrams (2002) discussed in the article he wrote for *Psychology Today*, that census results in America indicated that one in four dads takes care of his preschooler during the time that the mother is working.

The number of children who are raised by a primary-care father is now more than two million and counting. Furthermore, fathers now provide three-quarters of the childcare the mothers do, up from one-half thirty years ago.

In addition, an increase in reading material focusing on fathers can be seen in popular South African literature. For example, in *Baby & Me* (Summer 2002, p74), Glenda Nevill wrote an article, called 21st-century fathers, in which she challenges the stereotypical notion that fathers, as men, are the breadwinners and are incompetent in looking after children.

As one interviewee replied: "You have to realize your ego and your male identity are not directly related to your career. Now, that I am back at work, I miss being a Mr. Mom". Furthermore, in the April/May 2002 issue of *Your Pregnancy*, the authors focus on how first-time fathers experience pregnancy. They interviewed six first-time fathers who

narrated their experiences in detail, including their thoughts and feelings, their worries and the status of the relationship with their partners.

It should also be noted that more stories of and by fathers and first-time fathers are to be found on many different websites that give a platform for men to express their thoughts and feelings as well as talk about their overall experiences. For example, on <http://kidsdirect.net> a first-time father tells the story of his experience in terms of the learning process he went through, his view of their child, and the functions and responsibilities that he associates with being a father.

Another website, <http://www.fatherville.com>, not only gives a platform for fathers to tell their stories, but also serves as a method for distributing information on being a father and childrearing in general. For example, on this website, Farrell (2001) posted tips which specifically focus on the issue of sleep, or rather the lack thereof, when you have a new baby and how first-time fathers can deal with this situation.

Also on this website, Turley (2002) posted his narration of his experience of being a father. He reflects mostly on the wonderful experience fatherhood actually is for him in spite of the hard times experienced. *Daddio*, a sitcom about a stay-at-home dad is a further example of the popularity of the new nurturant father in popular media. The main character openly challenges negative comments regarding him being a man as well as an involved and caring father (Nevill, 2002).

Not only has fatherhood seen changes pertaining to child-care activities and overall experiences, but research has indicated that the father is also undergoing physical changes due to the prospect of fatherhood and birth. Studies have indicated that men

experience hormonal changes, similar to women, which prime them for parenting (Abrams, 2002). Lamb (in Abrams, 2002) suggests that this research has only now been done due to a combination of scientific progress and cultural changes.

As such, Lupton and Barclay (1997, p.9) claim, “Fatherhood is a phenomenon around which there currently exist many and competing discourses.” In an interview with Michelle Rieff (1996, p.1), Kirk Harris responds to the father as provider construct by saying: “A discourse has to emerge that considers varied and conflicting notions of fatherhood, beyond the simple role of economic provider”. Accordingly Lamb (in Abrams, 2002) advocates that a father is multifaceted. That is, he is a breadwinner, a coach, a moral guide and a source of love and inspiration. Nonetheless, McPherson (2003) explicitly argues that discourses portraying the father as provider are still dominant.

With the emergence of the new nurturant father, studies on the emotional competence of fathers have increased. Most studies still only pay attention to the level of involvement by fathers and the influence thereof on the child (Dye in Russell *et al.*, 1999; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Even though there has been an increase in relevant studies very few studies are available that focus specifically on the man’s own experiences of first-time fatherhood. Unfortunately, a similar situation exists in terms of the available research on fathers in South Africa. Nonetheless, what follows is a discussion about the experience of fathers during the prenatal, birth and postnatal phases (e.g. Robinson & Barret, 1986). I briefly elaborate on studies that have concentrated on how men experience fatherhood. These studies are significant within the context of this research, because I aim to explore how men experience first-time fatherhood.

1.2. Men's experiences of fatherhood

According to Robinson and Barret (1986) fathers during the early 1970's started to show deeply complex emotional and physical responses to pregnancy. Research has indicated that expectant fathers have a wide range of emotions before, during, and after childbirth that were once believed to be exclusively maternal reactions. These emotions range from empathy and elation to depression (Robinson & Barret, 1986). For clarification purposes, this section will be divided into three phases of becoming a parent, as used in current literature.

1.2.1. The prenatal phase

Robinson and Barret (1986) explore the excitement about and anticipation for the upcoming birth, and describe these as perhaps the most common initial emotions fathers have.

However, this initial excitement declines approximately one month after the confirmation of pregnancy and the attention of the father shifts towards the mother and her needs. This is where feelings of empathy start to play a role, with fathers often experiencing symptoms of pregnancy such as morning sickness or other physical problems.

Russell and Aitchinson (in Russell *et al.*, 1999) report that the following feelings are quite common amongst fathers:

- 'womb envy'
- feeling jealous of the mother
- feeling left out
- experiencing appetite loss, nausea and depression

- worrying about their job and ability to provide
- worrying about whether they will be competent parents
- having difficulty on accepting the pregnancy and
- identifying with the foetus.

Fathers also seem to experience certain levels of enjoyment, which appears to derive from signs of foetal development, ultrasound pictures and growth of the partner's abdomen (Jackson, 1984). By studying first-time fathers' narratives on their experience of their partner's pregnancy, Finnbogadottir *et al.*, 2003) found that all fathers-to-be experiences some psychological, social and/or physical change during the pregnancy. Similarly in a study conducted by Flinders University and reported in The Age (2002), found that men often feel helpless and disempowered by their partner's pregnancy. More recent research done by the RMIT University (1999) found that first-time fathers may even experience depression and anxiety similar to their partner's during pregnancy (RMIT University, 1999).

A phenomenological study by Gage and Kirk (2002) of the perceptions of preparedness for fatherhood by first-time fathers is also significant to note. Through conducting focus groups, three broad themes were identified that concern the transition to fatherhood.

These are:

- The reality of pregnancy;
- Physical, emotional and financial preparation;
- Relationships with friends, family and health professionals.

The authors concluded that the participants actively prepared for fatherhood, they attempted to adjust to the perceived expectations of their new positions, and sought information on how to be good fathers. Barnhill, Rubenstein and Rocklin (in Robinson & Barret, 1986) already suggested that as the actual birth drew closer, the father may start to feel helpless and isolated, because it may seem that he is becoming the “peripheral person” in the family.

In addition to experiencing certain emotions, fathers also show physical changes. Teichman and Lahav (1987) found that expectant fathers reported experiencing physical symptoms more than the control non-expectant group. It should also be noted that the highest frequency of these reports were made by males expecting their first child. Even though this study is essentialist based, it is significant to note that the highest response rate was from first-time fathers.

To me this suggests that the experience of first-time fatherhood may be quite different than the experience of having a second child and should be taken into account in future research studies on fatherhood.

Subsequently, Abrams (2002) writes that several fathers-to-be had gone to seek medical help after having pregnancy-like symptoms during their partners pregnancy.

Quill, Lipkin and Lamb (1984) also found that expectant fatherhood significantly influences health-care seeking behaviour. Contradictory to these results, Elek, Hudson and Fleck (1997) found that expectant mothers, but not expectant fathers, reported increasing levels of fatigue, especially morning fatigue, as the pregnancy progressed.

Hormonal changes have also been detected in fathers. Storey, Walsh, Quinton and Wynne-Edwards (2000) indicated that their study produced results where men and women had similar stage-specific differences in hormone levels, including higher concentrations of prolactin and cortisol in the period just before the births and lower postnatal concentrations of sex steroids (testosterone or estradiol). More specifically, Berg and Wynne-Edwards (2001) found that fathers had lower testosterone and cortisol concentrations, a higher proportion of samples with detectable estradiol concentrations and higher estradiol concentrations in those detectable samples, than did control men. Detectable estradiol levels were lower during the month before the birth than in the month after, and that cortisol concentration increased in the week before the birth.

The majority of these studies have been conducted from a biological perspective, but they reveal the significant changes that have occurred over the past twenty or more years in the focus of research on fatherhood. Previously the father was not seen to be an active figure in or in any way affected by the pregnancy, not even to mention experiencing hormonal changes. This, to me, is an indication of the way in which an ever-changing society constantly adapts its constructions of fatherhood.

1.2.2. The birth

Although this phase is mainly characterised as an “up” phase, feelings such as anxiety and elation were also reported by participants in several studies. Self-report and observational studies of fathers’ experiences of birth have concluded that most of them are very positive and display exhilaration and engrossment (Greenberg & Morris in Russell *et al.*, 1999). The father’s anxiety may stem from the wish to perform well

during labor and delivery, but also from the possibility of danger to wife and child, or fears of deformities or miscarriages.

During this phase however, fathers experience a sense of enhanced self-esteem (Greenberg & Morris in Robinson & Barret, 1986). Research done on this phase suggests that there is a paternal instinct that is present at the birth of a child and that it is a natural urge common to most men (Robinson & Barret, 1986). Once again, we can be witness to the changing nature of research brought on by broader social and cultural changes to the Discourses of fatherhood. At one stage there wasn't even a suggestion that men are inherently made to be fathers, they were not naturally inclined for fatherhood, not to mention child-care activities. What these results suggest however, is that there is a tendency to view fatherhood from a different perspective.

Chapman (1992) identifies three positions that expectant fathers adopt during the birth of their child. They are the coach; the teammate, and the witness. According to Chapman (1991), the coach refers to the man's experience of high degrees of physical and mental engagement during the birth process. Teammates fluctuate between high and low degrees of physical and mental engagement, whereas witnesses remain at low degrees of engagement until the second stage of labor, when they experience high degrees of mental engagement. Although the results in Chapman's (1992) study indicate that the majority of men adopted the role of the witness, it is significant that this study already hypothesised a much more active role for the father-to-be during the child-birth process, as well as afterwards.

1.2.3. The postnatal phase

Fathers are obviously also engaged in the “low” points of having children. Research indicates that it is possible for fathers to have post-birth blues or depression similar to emotional letdown reported by new mothers (Richardson, 1998; Robinson & Barret, 1986). Studies that are more recent indicate that it is rather easy for fathers to articulate their experiences of being fathers.

In a study done by Anderson (1996), analysis of the in-depth interviews indicated that all the fathers spoke about their experiences in detail and designate that they experienced extreme pleasure and depth of feeling from being close to the baby. In another study, fathers also spoke about their increased self-esteem, a new dimension to life, new pleasures, a powerful sensation to protectiveness, as well as meaning and fulfilment in being fathers (Russell *et al.*, 1999).

Furthermore, studies of fathers with older children conclude that they perceive the responsibility of preparing the child for survival in the world, as well as socialization as very important (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). In these studies, breadwinning or taking the position of provider is also perceived to be an important responsibility of fathers by fathers. However even in taking this responsibility, they have a need to spend more time with their children and feel bad because they are not able to do so (Russell *et al.*, 1999).

In a longitudinal study conducted by Barclay and Lupton (1999) three interrelated themes were identified which they conclude represent the experience of the first-time fathers.

The themes are:

- Renegotiating paid employment and household work.
- Expectations and symbolic meanings of fatherhood, e.g. they expected their infant to be more socially responsive.
- Changing relationship with their partners, i.e. they were surprised by the tension brought on their relationship because of the new baby.

In another study conducted by the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom (http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2001-11ff10201.php), thirty first-time fathers were interviewed in order to discover how they perceived the transition to fatherhood and to explore the meanings of their accounts of becoming a first-time father. The results conclude that men experience some difficulty in combining work and home responsibilities, particularly in reconciling the provider and supportive partner positions.

Furthermore, these first-time fathers worry about their feelings of insecurity in their relationships with other family members. It is significant to note that overall, this research suggests there is a change in the meaning of fatherhood, what it means to be a father and that instead of just accepting the provider position, the opportunities are there for men to negotiate their provider and new father positions.

Although the above section has indicated what I perceive to be very important issues in the study of fatherhood and of particular relevance to this study, cognisance needs to be taken of the measurement and methodological issues that may be associated with studies such as those discussed above. It is noticeable that very little research is available that focuses on the subjective experience of fathers and first-time fathers from a social constructionist perspective.

Thus working within a social constructionist framework I feel a responsibility to outline the critique against studies that imply that the experience of fatherhood can necessarily be generalized. What follows is a brief outline of current criticism against essentialist studies and practices related to fatherhood.

Focussing on developmental psychology from a social constructionist perspective, Burman (1994a) comments that research on fathering has been conducted as if it were just like mothering. Subsequently, there was little reflection on how appropriate the methods had been. The consequence of which Pleck (in McPherson, 2003) argues, is that men or fathers are labelled as uninvolved or under-involved because they do not perform the same functions as mothers generally do.

In this regard previous research lacks in three ways:

- In terms of tests and procedures, it treats fatherhood as a simple variety of motherhood, and thus perpetuates the notion that fatherhood and motherhood are two poles of one single dimension (Burman, 1994a).
- The research issues have simply been transferred from mothers to fathers, mother-child attachments became father-child attachments (Burman, 1994a). Also, the activities of mothers have been used as baseline for assessing father involvement (Levine in McPherson, 2003).
- There tends to be a cultural bias in definitions of family organization, with a focus on the middle-class white nuclear family (Burman, 1994a). This is especially true for theoretical approaches such as conflict theory and structural functionalism.

According to Lamb (1996) four major traditions focussing on fathers are:

- father absence – divorce
- correlation studies
- increased involvement
- attachment

None of these traditions focus on the subjective experience of fatherhood. In line with the criticism above, Moynihan (1998) comments that stereotypes of masculinity still informs the research design, data collection, analysis and conclusions, as well as men's own responses to questions. Accordingly, Burman (1994a) advises that the research procedures cannot be treated as neutral context free descriptions because then social differences that arise from gender roles and inequality will be essentialized. I have taken Frank's (1997) comment to heart during the design and development of this study, for he says that by ignoring local narratives, we have constructed men's experiences to be fixed, linear and bounded.

I believe that my study will contribute to the current body of knowledge on fatherhood in two ways. Firstly, the focus will fall on first-time fatherhood, which, as a specific version of fatherhood, has been underrepresented in studies all over the world and especially in South Africa. Secondly, working within a social constructionist framework, fatherhood and the experiences of first-time fatherhood will be given voice, not in an attempt to generalise essential characteristics, but to discover the richness of how these men construct themselves anew when becoming fathers.

SUMMARY

This literature review addressed three objectives. By outlining some historical perspectives on fatherhood I have indicated that there are various ways of being and acting as a father. That is, as a moral overseer, a financial provider, a sex role model or lately, a new nurturant father. As such, it was important to pay some attention to theories used within each of these Discourses to study fatherhood. The religious ideology together with Freud's psychosexual theory was quite prominent during the times of the father as moral overseer. As a financial provider, the structural functionalist and conflict perspectives, together with the Industrial Revolution and the Great Depression, contributed to a changing father who was turned into a peripheral person in the family due to the labour expectations.

With the two World Wars, fathers were away from home more and more and for longer periods. The sex-role model father was constructed through increasing use of social learning theory and criticism from a patriarchal academic community on the influence of mothers on boy-children. The new nurturant father emerged in the second half of the previous century as broader cultural and social changes took place. This father is much more involved in all aspects of child-care, and has thus become a focus point for research, media and popular literature.

Whether the changing father has influenced current research and thinking about fatherhood or vice versa, the experience of fatherhood as a research topic have increased considerably in the last few years. Research has indicated that fathers experience intense emotional, mental and physical changes or symptoms during pregnancy, birth and the post-natal phase. However, even with an increase in research, there are serious methodological and measurement issues that should be taken into consideration. Fatherhood is most often still perceived to be a simple

outflow of motherhood and research topics on motherhood have merely shifted to the study of fatherhood, as can be seen in mother-infant attachment to father-infant attachment discourses.

Most importantly, though fatherhood is still dominantly studied within a deficit paradigm, a paradigm that essentializes positions and experiences. To address this problem my study focuses on the first-time father from a social constructionist perspective, which acknowledges that fatherhood is a socially constructed phenomenon and multiple realities exist of the experience of first-time fatherhood.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

An exploration of the experiences of first-time fatherhood from a social constructionist perspective makes it possible to do the research planning and execution within a multiple-case study design, often referred to as a collective case study (Tellis, 1997b). The objective is to use a qualitative approach to research design, data gathering and analysis, in order to answer the question: How do men experience first-time fatherhood?

Directed by my experience of supporting a brother who became a father for the first time and sharing much of what he felt and lived through, and guided by two basic assumptions my approach to the research process unfolded. From a social constructionist perspective, fatherhood, and in this context, first-time fatherhood is considered as being a socially constructed reality. Therefore, multiple realities of first-time fatherhood could exist. There is no formal hypothesis to be tested, only the basic question and the possibility that the design, (i.e. multiple-case study design) by implication will facilitate further questions and possible answers (Dalton et al., 2001; Parker, 1994).

The following sections will present a thorough discussion to the reader pertaining to the methodological aspects of this research, which includes the theoretical framework, the research approach, trustworthiness and credibility issues, as well as data gathering and analysis techniques.

2.1. Theoretical framework: Social constructionism

Reading these words: “We have all been brought up to think about sexuality in essentialist ways” (Vance in Potgieter, 1997), immediately recalled in my mind the constructed category of masculinity-femininity that most of us are familiar with. It also made me aware once again that many of us have been brought up to think and construct our lives in such ways to implicitly acknowledge this essentialist viewpoint that masculinity and femininity are inherent and in essence “two poles of a single dimension” (Burr, 1998, p.125). Similar to other essentialist discourses this notion leads to stereotyping of men and women as being different. For example, men are unemotional, women are emotional, men are good with physics and mathematics , women are good with languages, men have an animal instinct for reproduction only, women have a natural instinct to care for their young (Nicholson, 1993).

Similarly, we have come to think and construct our lives and thoughts in such ways as to implicitly acknowledge the essentialist viewpoint that fatherhood and motherhood are essentially different. For example, in our South African context the dominant discourses surrounding parenthood portrays the father as the head of the household and the sole provider, while the mother is the caretaker and dependent on the father.

Social constructionists criticise the essentialist view that human behaviour is naturally predetermined by genetic, biological and physical mechanisms. Furthermore, they question the essentialist view that human behaviour is fixed and not subject to change, and that it is therefore the same across time and culture (Potgieter, 1997). The most relevant argument against this viewpoint is found by simply looking at the historical and emerging Discourses of fatherhood (see Chapter 1).

Pleck (1986) and many others, argue that the positions of fathers changed from the father being the moral overseer, to being the distant breadwinner, to the father as sex role model and now, the new nurturant father. These changes are not only indicative of the changing nature of societies, but also of how men have changed in their constructions of self and their ways of acting as and being a father. It is especially indicative of the cultural- and historical relativity of fatherhood.

In a social constructionist approach a critical stance regarding 'taken for granted' knowledge is advocated. That is, our ways of viewing and understanding the world, should be questioned so that we can gain an alternative understanding. Social constructionism challenges the conventional idea that knowledge and understanding is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world, by saying that knowledge is not coherent or logical (Potgieter, 1997). Therefore, 'facts' can mean a variety of things and knowledge is not necessarily a direct perception of reality (Cobb, 2002).

All forms of knowledge are culturally and historically relative and therefore notions of 'truth' become problematic (Burr, 1995). For example, the stereotypical idea that fathers are uninvolved is constructed through social processes. There are no 'essences' inside people that make them what they are or do (Potgieter, 1997). Thus, there are no 'essences' inside men that 'cause' them to be uninvolved or only fulfil the provider function.

Social constructionism focuses on everyday interactions between people and sees these interactions as actively contributing to forms of knowledge that are context and time specific. In laymen's terms, when people talk to each other in a specific time and space, the world is constructed.

Social constructionists view language as a form of action, and argue that when the world is constructed through discourse (i.e. language-in-use) the identities of a person are affected (Burr, 1995). Thus, because constructions take place all the time, a person's identity cannot be seen as having one, single distinctive form across time and space, but rather that it is socially constructed, highly contextualized, fluid and variable (Johnson & Meinhof, 1997; Moynihan, 1998).

Furthermore, working from the perspective that a person's identity is fluid and variable, social constructionists rid themselves of using the term 'role', mostly because it typically signifies the modernist notion that the self is fixed, static and structurally formalized (Pinkus, 1996). Social constructionists criticise this term for being static and without description of the way in which relationships are actually experienced by participants in social action (Luberda, 2002). It is significant to note that both academic and popular literature on fatherhood still use the term role when referring to the responsibilities, functions and experiences of fathers, as well as identity construction.

Another relevant concept in the social constructionist perspective is that of positioning. Positioning refers to "the process by which our identities and we as persons come to be produced by socially and culturally available Discourses" (Burr, 1995, p.140). Each Discourse and its associated use of language (discourse), provide a limited number of subject positions, which we inevitably take to view and experience ourselves and the world from (Burr, 1995). The discourse of a person implicitly facilitates other people to position themselves according to the available positions in the present discourse and *vice versa*. For example, a father who positions himself as a provider, implicitly positions his partner within the caretaking position. It is by accepting or rejecting awarded positions that people's identities are constructed.

Especially essentialists can debate the relevance of social constructionism as a theoretical approach to this study. However, in my view social constructionism allows for and facilitates studying fatherhood from a different angle, where the subjective experience, social interaction and historical plus cultural relevance of fatherhood can be taken into account.

2.2. Focusing the discussion on discourse

Throughout this mini-dissertation, an important term is used which needs clarification. According to Burr (1995, p186) the term discourse can be used in primarily two ways:

- to refer to a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on to construct an object in particular ways or;
- to refer to the actual spoken interchanges between people.

O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery and Fiske (1994) refer to discourse as implying an interactive process or the results of communication and thought. In short, discourse, in terms of this project, is the social process of making and reproducing construction of objects or to be more specific, of first-time fatherhood. Furthermore, I distinguish between the little d discourses and big D Discourses (Gee, 1999). When contemplating discourse within one piece of text, the distinction explains that discourses are "language-in-use", whereas Discourses are "ways of being in the world" or "forms of life" (Gee, 1999, p.7). Little d discourses, which together constitute the interview, are relevant within Chapter three.

These discourses give the context from which to identify themes. Forms of life or big D Discourses will be utilized within the literature review to give a brief outline of the historical perspective of fatherhood. Subsequently, whenever I use the term discourse(s) I am referring to the actual act of speaking and using language or conversation between people.

For example, when during the interview, the participant and I may be talking about his feelings and he says, “I feel like I have to provide sufficiently for them.” On the other hand, when I speak of Discourses, I am referring to actual ways of acting and being in the world which is constructed in a broader social and cultural context and in which discourses reside. For example, the Discourse on the new nurturant father as mentioned in the literature review, is a big D Discourse on fatherhood, referring to the ways of being and acting as a father in the world, which is different from the historical conceptions.

2.3. Research approach

I have chosen a qualitative approach to this study of first-time fatherhood for several reasons. From an epistemological viewpoint, a qualitative approach is more relevant in a social constructionist framework, when the assumption is made that multiple realities of fatherhood exist, and that fatherhood is emerging from discourse. Truth and reality belongs to the person/group that is being studied, and therefore it cannot be perceived as objective and value-free. In using a qualitative approach the meanings that participants bring to the study and which represent their constructions of reality and truth, can be taken as valid information.

Briefly stated, “...qualitative methods are usually based in contextualist perspective in which a central goal is to understand the meaning of a phenomenon for persons who experience it” (Dalton *et al*, 2001, p.88). Furthermore, I believe that the problem under study will always show the researcher what the proper approach to data gathering and analysis should be (Trow in Bryman, 1984). Trow’s pronouncement refers to technical aspects rather than epistemological issues.

In this regard, it is suggested that one technique is not necessarily more superior to the other, e.g., structured interviewing versus participant observation, but that one technique is likely to be more useful in some contexts than others are. As such, the research question can be effectively answered by using a qualitative approach, which is mainly exploratory (Bryman, 1984).

Although social constructionists allow for both qualitative and quantitative methods in research (Potgieter, 1997), in this particular study I will utilize methods that will allow rich and in-depth data to be collected in order to perform the exploration of the participants' experiences. That is, semi-structured in-depth interviews will be conducted through which it will be possible to gather data that contains detail, vividness and nuance to warrant rich descriptions of each individual's experiences.

2.3.1. Participants

Keeping in mind the aim of exploring the experiences of first-time fatherhood and gaining an in-depth understanding of their constructions, a multiple case-study design will be employed. Cases will be selected on the basis that they fulfil the following criteria.

Firstly, White South African first-time fathers between the ages of 25-40 years will be interviewed. I assume that within these age boundaries it is likely for men to be first-time fathers. Age itself is not a criterion; merely that the participant should be a first-time father.

Secondly, fathers will preferably be in the post-natal phase, i.e., after birth. Although current literature indicates (e.g. Abrams, 2002; Robinson & Barret, 1986) that men have certain physical and emotional reactions in the pre-natal phase, i.e., before birth, the parameters of this study do not allow for inclusion of this phase merely because it will make the analysis too broad and may perhaps be more relevant to a comparative type of study. Furthermore, Hanson and Bozett (1985) argue that the issue of when fatherhood starts, at conception or at birth, has not been resolved.

Although I acknowledge current research findings that men experience a multiplicity of emotions and thoughts that men experience in the pre-natal phase, I believe that there is a proximity aspect relevant to the reality of fatherhood. That is, actually having a child in the house, someone to care for, contributes to the experience of first-time fatherhood in a different way than simply seeing the baby on a sonogram television screen or printout.

The last criterion is that participants have to be in a relationship or marriage for at least two or more years. This criterion is included because of the reciprocal influence that the relationship can have on the experience of first-time fatherhood (Louw *et al.*, 1998).

Three (3) first-time fathers who fit the selection criteria will be interviewed. According to Dalton *et al.* (2001), qualitative research relies on a small amount of participants in order to facilitate the level of detail needed in a study. Within a multiple-case study design, which is mainly exploratory, and using, a complex method for data collection such as the ZMET (discussed later in this chapter) three cases should allow for sufficient data. Furthermore, encultured respondents who accept the responsibility of sharing their experiences usually provide adequate data for analysis purposes.

However, the flexibility of using a qualitative approach allows for further interviews, should I find that the gathered data is not sufficient.

2.3.2. Recruitment of participants

Approaching the research in a qualitative fashion implies that non-probability sampling techniques can be utilized. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that purposive and snowball sampling will be applied in order to reap the benefits of both. Neuman (1997) suggests that purposive sampling is generally used in exploratory research where the intent is not to generalize to a population.

I have established previously that this study will be exploratory and therefore purposive sampling is fitting. Furthermore, Beveridge (2003) suggests that since qualitative research is considered purposeful, the researcher selects participants based on the aims of her research.

In order to explore the experience of first-time fatherhood from a social constructionist perspective, it is also necessary to select and recruit participants who are suitably acquainted with and willing to share their stories. Purposive sampling will thus be employed to select white males from South Africa who are first-time fathers to participate in this multiple-case study design (Tellis, 1997a).

The actual recruitment of participants falls within the realms of snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling is defined as:

a form of convenience sampling that allows the researcher to locate very small groups of respondents via identification of them by friends, relatives or acquaintances who either know them or know of them (Schneider, 2000, p.1).

Participants will be recruited by way of referrals from previous participants and/or other people. Thus, although participants are selected by way of specific criteria, the actual recruitment will be done by word-of-mouth. The advantage of combining these two non-probability sampling techniques is straightforward. These techniques increase the likelihood for establishing credibility and trust with the participants when a known person, friend, or family member makes referrals. A further advantage is that it is possible to collect data and present results relatively quickly (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

For recruitment purposes, a Participant Information Leaflet (Appendix A) will be handed out to each identified participant. This information leaflet will inform participants of my intentions, the purpose of the study, as well as possible ethical, confidentiality and privacy considerations involved. In the leaflet a brief description is given of the data collection technique and the time involved. This preliminary information will give the participants the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether to participate or not. Each participant will complete a Research Consent Form (Appendix B) before the interviews are conducted.

2.4. Credibility and trustworthiness

Validity in qualitative research regards the issue of whether the findings are true and certain (Guion, 2002). According to Winter (2000), qualitative research concerns itself partially with internal validity, although not with cause-effect issues. External validity, on the other hand is of no importance to qualitative researchers. It is argued that by attempting to achieve external validity it can seriously hinder the study's overall trustworthiness and credibility. Overall, qualitative researchers do not attempt to generalize their findings, and therefore internal and external validity are to some extent irrelevant (Winter, 2000).

For the most part however, questions of validity relate to the research process and the plausibility with which the qualitative researcher deals with the data. Common criticism involves the labour intensiveness of data analysis, as well as the possibility that data overload may negatively interfere with the research process (Visser, 2001).

Miles and Huberman (in Visser, 2001) argue that the credibility and quality of conclusions can be questioned due to a lack of generally accepted methods and rules used to make conclusions and against which conclusions can be verified. Lincoln and Guba (in Decrop, 1999) counter this criticism by having developed four questions that qualitative researchers can use to guide them in establishing trustworthiness and credibility of their interpretations.

These questions and the criteria they represent can furthermore be incorporated into a qualitative study by way of triangulation (Decrop, 1999; Lal, 2001). "Based on the triangle analogy triangulation implies that a single point is considered from three different and independent sources" (Decrop, 1999, p.158). More appropriately, triangulation means to look at the same phenomenon or research question from more than one source of data.

Although five types of triangulation exist in qualitative literature only the two most relevant to this study will be considered, namely data triangulation and method triangulation.

For Lincoln and Guba, credibility represents what is generally known as validity in quantitative studies (Decrop, 1999). For Lal (2001, p.2) it refers to the notion that the “inquiry reflects the accurate depiction of the subject studied”. Marshall and Rossman (1993, p.143), further advocate that credibility is effective to “explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group or a pattern of interaction”. In case study research one way of obtaining credibility is through data triangulation involving the use of various data sources (Decrop, 1999; Guion, 2002; Tellis, 1997a). By using a sound theoretical framework, data and field notes, findings can be evaluated for their trustworthiness describing the phenomenon under investigation.

For example, working within a social constructionist framework, the gender of both the researcher and participants are important factors in how the research and the data collection, in this case interviews, are approached. As a woman and a researcher, there are certain subject positions that I accepted and rejected, which will influence the way in which I approach the research as well as the participants. A similar situation exists for each respective participant. It is thus important to take note of these positions and their possible influence in the overall research process (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Field notes, which are taken during and immediately after an interview or observation session involve aspects such as non-verbal behaviour, body gestures, communicational aspects and so forth that shed light on the contextual nature of the interview or observation.

This type of triangulation is particularly important in the context of this study, due to the gender differences between the researcher and participants, i.e., female – males and the implications this social category has on how data is collected.

I have established previously that the intent of qualitative research is not necessarily to generalize to a population and therefore generalization is negligible. However, by indicating how models and concepts guide data collection and analysis, thereby setting the theoretical parameters of the study will, according to Marshall and Rossman (1993) suffice to establish transferability of the research process and interpretations. By applying the suggested strategy it would thus be possible to make decisions within the parameters of the research and not the population. Therefore, I will not attempt to generalise the experiences to any cultural or social setting, e.g., White American males. Rather, I will ensure that the project is sound according to the requirements for this kind of study. Transferability in this study would rather refer to the sufficient exploration of meanings as I intended to do, not to generalize the findings to any other setting or group.

Working from the assumption that the social world is ever changing, replication is not a standard strived for by qualitative researchers. The attempts made by qualitative researchers to account for changes render dependable data and is a natural part of research (Lal, 2001). The Northern Arizona University (1999) proposes that dependability is more relevant to longitudinal studies, where change over time is to be expected and should be documented accordingly. Therefore, I feel that dependability is not quite relevant to this study, as it takes place and focuses on one point in time.

In qualitative research the process is never value-free or objective (Lal, 2001) and that is why Marshall and Rossman (1993) say that the rationale behind the criterion, confirmability, is whether the data will help to confirm general findings and whether the data lead to implications. In qualitative research, the researcher is closely involved in the process and it is therefore necessary to build in various measures that could promote the credibility and trustworthiness of both the data and the interpretations (Visser, 2001). The use of non-probability sampling techniques, purposive and snowball sampling will increase the proximity, as well as enhance the relationship between the participants and myself. This will also allow for and facilitate the opportunity to double-check the data and interpretations with the participants and thus increase confirmability (Dalton et al., 2001; Tellis, 1997a). However, verifying data and interpretations with participants are not the only measure that can be put in place.

As indicated earlier, a second type of triangulation can be applied in this study. Method triangulation entails the use of multiple data collection techniques or multiple methods to study one phenomenon (Decrop, 1999; Guion, 2002). Although I have chosen to use the ZMET as data collection technique (see discussion below), the use of several steps within this technique, lends itself to performing triangulation (President and Fellows of Harvard Business Collage, 2000).

The different phases in the interview guideline leave room for verification of data via the participant's responses on the previous phase and thus increase what Lincoln and Guba (in Decrop, 1999) implies with the criterion of confirmability within the context of this study.

This section has indicated that various measures have been built into the study to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. These issues will again be addressed during data analysis and interpretation to evaluate whether credibility and trustworthiness have indeed been established.

2.5. Data collection

The argument for using a qualitative approach has been put forward previously. I have opted to utilize a semi-structured, in-depth interview as data collection method, including the ZMET as specific technique to act as stimulus. Some may question the use of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation technique (ZMET) as stimulus within a social constructionist framework. However, as I will indicate further on, I am convinced that it is adequate and even appropriate to the context of this study. I will start my discussion by focussing on semi-structured, in-depth interviewing and then direct the discussion more specifically on the ZMET as a data collection technique.

2.5.1. Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing

An important feature of in-depth interviewing or open-ended ethnographic interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 1994) is the level of interaction that it facilitates (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1993).

Due to the unstructured nature, participants and researchers are able to talk freely, and respond to whatever topic may come up during the course of the interview. With semi-structured interviews, the situation is much the same. Even though there are certain topics that the researcher wants to focus on, as outlined in an interview guideline, she does not constantly have to steer the conversation in that direction in order to capture “precise data” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p.366). The benefit of conducting a semi-structured in-depth interview is thus to allow for exploration of the topic under investigation, rather than finding exact information. What drives the interview is certainly not to explain but rather to understand (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

By conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with three first-time fathers, it is possible to explore and understand this socially constructed phenomenon, rather than trying to find exact data that will prove a hypothesis, e.g. that new nurturant fathers exist. Furthermore, in acknowledging that multiple realities of first-time fatherhood exist, it is necessary to have as little structure as possible within the interview (Lloyd-Jones, 2003). This does not imply that I go into the interview blindly, but rather that I will allow the interview to unfold and develop around the topic of their experiences of first-time fatherhood in order to capture all possible information (i.e. explore).

In a qualitative approach, the importance of context is necessarily implied. In order to consider each father's experience during data collection and analysis, individual in-depth interviews can ensure that appropriate contextual data is gathered. For example, conducting an interview at a father's home, will give some indication of the context in which he lives from day-to-day, as well as his personal reactions towards the research and myself as researcher. By noting these contextual aspects and incorporating them into the final analysis and discussion it is also possible to increase confirmability (Lal, 2001).

For this project, I decided to facilitate the interview process by making use of the ZMET. In the section that follows, I will explain the technique in detail, and also why I believe it to be an effective technique to use in this study. Written permission has been granted by Prof Zaltman, the patent holder of this technique to use it for academic purposes.

2.5.2. The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique

The ZMET as it is commonly known was developed by Professor Gerald Zaltman, the Joseph C. Wilson Professor of Business Administration and co-director of the Mind of the Market Laboratory at Harvard Business School (Gavel, 2000; Seaton, 2002). The ZMET is a patented qualitative research technique, developed mainly for marketing research purposes.

It is based on research and thinking in disciplines such as cognitive neuroscience, neurobiology, art and literary criticism, visual anthropology, visual sociology, semiotics, the philosophy of mind, art therapy and psycholinguistics (President and Fellows of Harvard Business School, 2000). The basic assumptions underlying the technique are that pictures/images are metaphors for thoughts and feelings (Christensen & Olsen, 2002).

The interview is a one-on-one discussion that takes approximately two hours based on an interview guideline containing seven phases. Each participant is requested to spend two to three weeks finding pictures/images and photographs from which to construct a collage, which is then used during the interview (President and Fellows of Harvard Business School, 2000). The collage is prepared before the time and serves an important function as stimulus during the different phases of the actual interview. These phases are elaborated on, further below. Analysis of the data is done by constructing interpretive loops, identifying constructs, constructing consensus maps, extracting metaphors and laddering techniques, in an effort to construct the participants' mental models (President and Fellows of Harvard Business School, 2000).

I do not intend using these analysis techniques as it is outside the social constructionist perspective of research. Briefly, the ZMET consists of the interview guideline, the interview, as well as the analysis techniques. Only the interview guideline and interview will be utilized during this study.

The rationale for using the ZMET technique for data collection is relevant at this point. I realize that there are many intricacies to this technique that I cannot possibly address here. However, I have identified critical issues, which I now put forward for scrutiny.

The main criticism against utilizing the ZMET is that it is mainly based on cognitive and neuropsychological theory and is therefore essentialist. My counter argument is two-fold. Firstly, although based on cognitive and neuropsychological thinking, the ZMET is still a qualitative technique that contributes to rich and in-depth data collection and the exploration of the topic of study. Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter (2001) suggest that it is a qualitative research tool that enables the researcher to explore and probe participants' thoughts and feelings extensively. Accordingly, the multiple phases (discussed below) provide a somewhat different window for gaining a deeper understanding and a more accurate representation of the participants' experiences pertaining to the topic under investigation (Wallendorf & Belk in Coulter *et al.*, 2001). According to Zaltman (1997) and Zaltman and Coulter (1995) the interview is used to elicit participant's meanings about the personal relevance of a topic. It is thus, an appropriate interview style used for exploration.

A semi-structured in-depth interview can be enhanced by the ZMET to facilitate the exploration of first-time fatherhood from different vantage points and can thus increase the trustworthiness of the research.

Coulter *et al.* (2001) suggest that the use of multiple steps furthermore increases the likelihood of uncovering important information that may otherwise be missed by only conducting an interview.

Secondly, a pilot interview has indicated the usefulness of the technique within a social constructionist framework. The ZMET provided a plausible interview guideline for the context of constructing different realities, particularly after expelling the context of marketing research as I did during the pilot interview. Thus the essentialist features are nullified, which makes it an interview guideline applicable in a social constructionist framework.

Finally, using the ZMET interview addresses another issue discussed earlier concerning the subject positions of participants and myself as researcher. I have to acknowledge that we still live in a society where gender stereotypes exist, which may potentially influence the way in which participants respond in the interview (Moynihan, 1998). Subsequently, I pose two more reasons why the ZMET is relevant to this study.

According to a research website, <http://www.dobney.com>, researchers can use a variety of stimulus material, of which collage is just one such approach. The aim of stimulus material is to elicit information that in normal circumstances are hidden. Similarly, Törrönen (2002) argues that stimulus texts can be used to encourage participants to speak about the research topic. Thus, in an attempt to bridge the gender divide, the collage will serve as facilitator or response elicitation tool for discussion about the topic, instead of posing straightforward questions to the participants, which may limit detailed responses.

The collage also serves a second important function. That is, instead of just being used as stimulus material during the interview. The collage in itself is a form of text through which the participant's experience and reality is reconstructed which can be utilized as text during data analysis and interpretation together with the transcriptions of interview material. For example, looking at the way in which the collages are constructed, the order of the pictures and their content, may say something about the father's experience.

I have outlined why I believe the ZMET interview to be a valuable tool to this study. What follows is a discussion of the interview guideline itself and the way in which it will be used within this study.

2.5.3. The interview

One pilot interview was conducted with a volunteer. The results are not presented here. Results from this pilot interview indicate that this technique proved to be very successful to facilitate the conversation.

Furthermore, reflexive analyses involve the participant's suggestion that the whole experience of making a collage was "relaxing, interesting and fun". Other aspects, concerning the pilot interview and how the ZMET was adapted, will be mentioned in the relevant sections below.

2.5.3.1. Initial question and collage-making

During initial contact and prior to the actual interview, each participant is asked a question that serves as guideline for making a collage. The question is:

"What is your experience of being a first-time father?"

In its original format, the ZMET requires that participants cut out their own pictures and images, and that only pictures, images and photographs are allowed. However, the pilot interview indicated that looking for pictures is a time consuming activity and that participants should rather be provided with a number of possible pictures related to the topic under investigation. The pilot participant also suggested that he would have preferred to make use of words instead of some of the images that he chose. He felt that the pictures did not accurately represent what he had in mind.

Subsequently, I decided to provide participants with approximately thirty-six pictures and images, of which no more than fifteen and no less than eight can be used to complete the collage. Eight pictures is the minimum as proposed by the President and Fellows of Harvard Business School (2000).

I set the maximum limit of fifteen pictures according to the results from the pilot interview, where the participant used fifteen pictures from approximately thirty-six images and pictures he initially cut out. There does not seem to be a standard maximum limit. For example, in Coulter et al., (2001) participants use thirteen images, whereas Christensen and Olsen (2002) requested participants to use only ten images in their research project.

Two to four weeks are given to participants to complete the collages. This period is provided for participants to immerse themselves in the collage and really think about what the pictures represent, as well as their overall experience of being a first-time father. This pre-interview work ensures that participants

come to the interview ready to discuss their thoughts and feelings (<http://www.hbs.edu/mml/negotiation/zmetint.html>).

2.5.3.2. Story telling phase

During the semi-structured interview, conversation is elicited by asking questions related to the pictures used in the collage. The participant is asked to describe each of the images, pictures and/or words used to complete the collage. The main focus is on the reasons for selecting these particular images and pictures as well as their meaning to the participant.

The rationale behind this phase is to give each participant the opportunity to tell the story of his experience. Through this phase, it is possible for the participant, perhaps unknowingly, to elaborate on the themes and subject positions within his narrative.

2.5.3.3. Missing image phase

Each participant is then asked whether there are any images that he would have liked to include in the collage, but could not find. If so, he will be asked to discuss and describe these to illustrate his impression of the missing image. If a missing image is reported, a “drawing note” will be made and included as another picture in the collage (Coulter et al., 2001; Kyle, 2000).

This phase gives the participant an opportunity to talk about aspects of his experience for which he could not find relevant pictures, but that are also crucial to the comprehensiveness of his story.

2.5.3.4. Triad comparison

During this phase of the interview the participant is asked to choose three pictures in the collage that are most significant to him and to discuss similarities and differences between the images (Coulter *et al.*, 2001). The rationale of which is, that it is possible to facilitate discussion of the most important themes associated with his experience.

2.5.3.5. Metaphor probe / Expanding frame phase

In phase four the participant is asked to place himself, and if he so chooses another person as well, somewhere between the pictures in the collage. The pilot interview suggested that a participant would most probably place himself between those pictures that he selected as most significant in phase three (triad comparison). This phase, thus gives a second opportunity to increase confirmability of the data. Furthermore, the participant is asked to use taste, touch, smell, sound, colour and emotional feeling to describe his impressions/experiences of first-time fatherhood.

Concentrating on the physical and emotional aspects of his experience, this part of the interview also serves to elicit themes, which may not have been discussed in previous phases.

Due to possible time constraints imposed by participants being working fathers, as well as insight gained from the pilot interview, the Vignette (phase 5) as proposed by the President and Fellows of Harvard College (2000) will not be included into this study.

From the pilot interview data, it appeared that this extra phase takes up a lot of time and participants may find it difficult to construct and narrate a story when they have limited time available. It also does not add significantly to the outcome of the interview and the vividness of the data.

2.5.3.6. Digital imaging phase

Owing to certain technological limitations, this phase is adapted to suit my research process. In the original interview guideline of the ZMET technique the participant is asked to change the shape of any of the images that he might want to, by way of a computer software program (Coulter et al., 2001). However, it was argued that by asking the participant whether he would like to make any changes and then carefully documenting these changes and their meaning to the participant in my field notes, adequate and relevant information will be collected without the use of technology. Subsequently, I decided to ask each participant whether there are images that he would like to change and why these changes are important to him.

Even though participants will be given several opportunities to discuss their experience, this phase gives a further opportunity for participants to indicate the significance of the different aspects of their experience. For example, one picture used in the pilot interview was a red heart, indicating the feeling of love to the pilot participant. He indicated that he wanted the heart to be bigger and brighter to indicate how big his love for his child was.

This final phase will again increase credibility of data, by comparing it with what the participant said in previous phases. For example, if the pictures chosen in phase three are also the ones that he wants to change during this phase, it can be considered an indication of their significance in the overall context of his experience.

2.6. Data analysis and interpretation

In qualitative research of the nature described above, data analysis is an ongoing and simultaneous process. By using the ZMET technique, the interviewee is also participating in the interpretation and re-interpretation of information that already serves as a preliminary analysis process. However, I would prefer to outline three phases of analysis and interpretation.

Firstly, with permission from each participant, tape recordings will be made during the interview. These tape recordings will be transcribed verbatim and the field notes taken during the interview will be incorporated into the relevant sections. As a personal preference for conducting analysis, these documents will be captured as electronic documents, but used in hard-copy format during actual analysis.

In order to immerse myself in the data, I will read the transcriptions until I sense a greater contextual understanding and empathy for their experiences. This process will, assist in creating themes, as well as identifying Discourses and subject positions as it did in previous studies I conducted.

In this project, I decided to do a thematic analysis in order to explore, represent and describe the experiences of first-time fatherhood. According to Aronson (1994), there are many ways to

analyze informants' talk about their experiences, of which thematic analysis is one way. Burman (1994b, p.57) defines thematic analysis as "a coherent way of organizing or reading some interview material in relation to specific research questions." She further argues that pieces of text are ordered or structured under thematic headings in such a way as to do justice to both the research question as well as the interviewees.

DeSantis and Ugarizza (2000, p.362) define a theme as

...an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a current experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole.

Gage and Kirk (2002) offer an example in their phenomenological analysis of the perceptions of preparedness for fatherhood by first-time fathers. They identify the following themes in the focus group transcripts:

- The reality of pregnancy;
- Physical, emotional and financial preparation;
- Relationships with friends, family and health professionals.

By extracting themes from the fathers' interview material, it is possible to reconstruct and describe each father's experience in a coherent manner. As explained previously, each interview is a combination of discourses used by the fathers. These discourses are the contexts from which to extract themes, highlight the relevant Discourses and subject positions influential in their experience construction. Themes will be extracted by means of using different coloured pens to highlight pieces of text or words, which stand out as meaningful in the context of the experience. Notes will be made next to themes in order to give my thoughts some clarity.

As a second phase in the process of analysis, measures should be taken to ensure a valid argument for choosing the themes I did. I will carry out four measures to ensure that the themes I have chose, are valid. Firstly, by utilizing the various phases as outlined in the ZMET, method triangulation will be possible. Recurring words, phrases or sentences in phases one through five enable identification and verification of identified themes.

In some instances it might occur that themes extracted in phase one, are lacking in other phases and thus constitutes a sub-theme and *vice versa*.

In addition to identifying themes in the transcripts, the themes will be constantly compared with the pictures and words as used in the collage. The collages themselves tell a story of how the fathers constructed their experience and their representations thereof. In most cases one picture or a cluster of pictures, represent a theme as will be indicated in the following chapter.

After the themes are identified, I intend building mind-maps of the themes together with keywords extracted from each interview, in order to establish whether each theme actually constitutes a theme or perhaps a sub-theme, while constantly referring back to the text and collage. Finally, in order to validate my choice of themes, I will use the current literature on the topic to stimulate my thoughts in order to delve deeper into the interview material.

The last phase of the analysis process is concerned with the presentation of the data and will be discussed in the following chapter.

SUMMARY

This study will be conducted by utilizing a qualitative approach to research and working within a social constructionist framework. For the purpose of this research, a semi-structured interview, called the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique will be employed. The interview guideline consists of six phases through it is possible to dig deeper into the thoughts, feelings and overall experiences of participants.

Triangulation, specifically data and method triangulation, will assist in enhancing trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Furthermore, credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability are criteria set forth by qualitative researcher and are applied to some extent in this study. The final analysis of the gathered data will be done through thematic analysis of each participant's interview material in order to present their experiences to the reader in a coherent manner.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Two of the three interviews were conducted in Afrikaans. All excerpts from participants' interview material will be presented in English as I translated them with the assistance of a translator. Even though the translation of interview material may have some implications for analysis and interpretation, every possible measure was taken to ensure accuracy of the data. Fortunately, in this case, all terms, phrases or metaphors used by participants could be translated directly.

Each interview took place at a time and venue suitable to the participant. Directly after each interview, the tape recordings were transcribed verbatim and data analysis commenced. Within these verbatim transcriptions, I incorporated the field notes taken during the interviews in order to contribute to the credibility of the research.

During the discussion, the identified themes from each first-time father's interview material will be discussed in relation to the relevant picture in the collage. After a brief introduction to the participant and the interview process, the collages will be presented. Picture numbers will be added for easy reference. In this document's electronic format, the added picture numbers are hyperlinks.

The analysis of each father's interview material will be presented in the order that the interviews took place. The discussion will take the shape of the mind-maps that I created during the analysis phase in order to enhance comprehension and reading.

3.1. Participant One: GEORGE¹

George is a thirty-four year old white male and first-time father, who is an accountant in a micro-finance institution in Midrand. The family consists of his partner and her daughter from a previous marriage, and Kate who was born in May 2003, his first biological child. The couple has been married for two years at the time that Kate was born. George spent the majority of his childhood in Pretoria and Johannesburg areas, and lived with his mother, father and younger sister.

Getting access to George was relatively easy, because we work for the same company. During initial contact, he was quite sceptical about participating in a research project, but after I have personally explained to him what the research topic was, he became excited about giving his input.

George completed his collage within three weeks after baby Kate was born and the forty-five minute interview took place in June 2003 in his office. I was quite surprised at how much George actually had to say about his experience, because in general, he keeps to himself during office hours. Through his openness and willingness to talk, as well as his general body language during the interview, it seemed that my gender did not inhibit him, on the contrary, I found him quite energized in talking about Kate and his experience of first-time fatherhood. The interview was conducted in Afrikaans and translated during the transcription process.

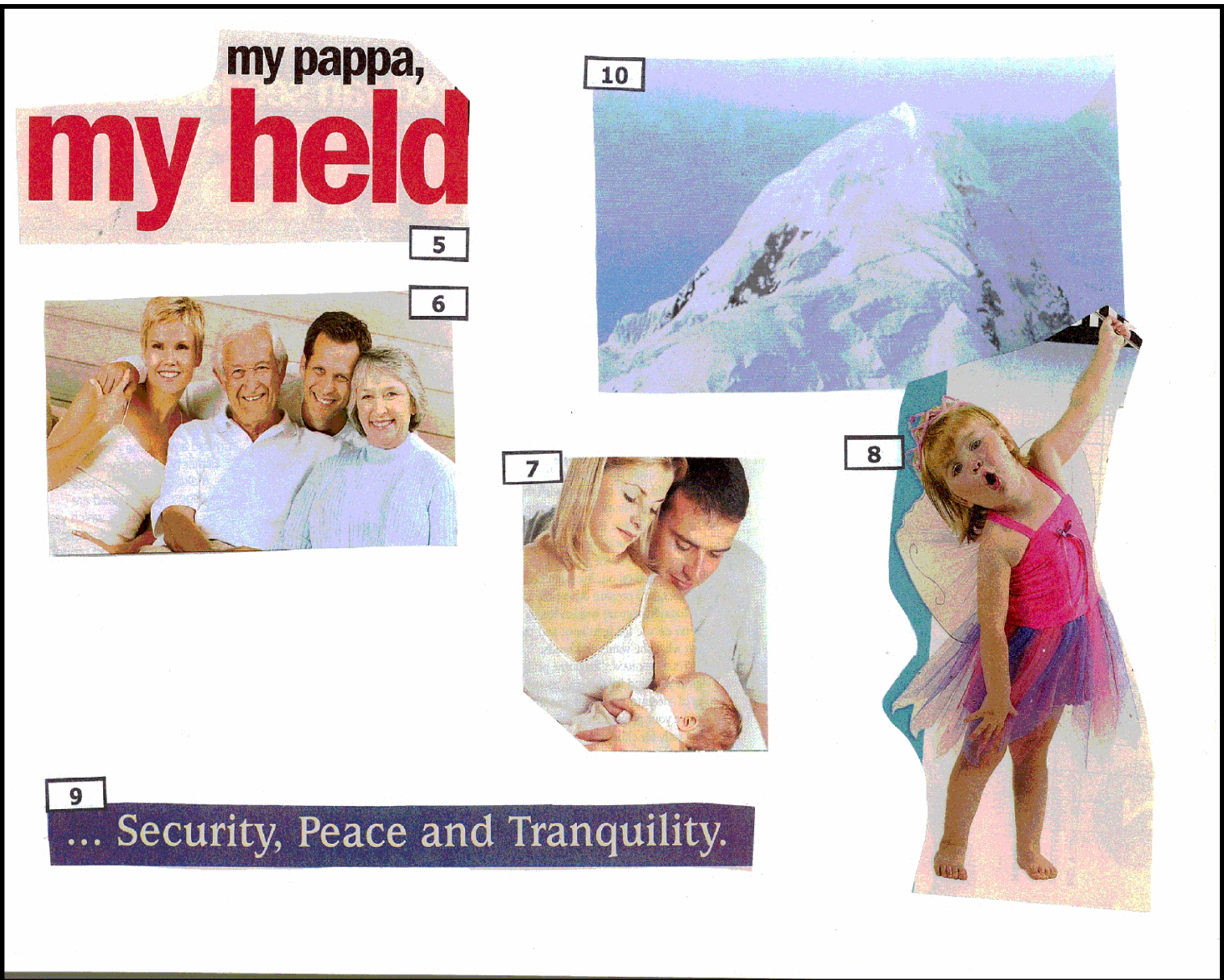
¹ Aliases were given to all participants, as well as their respective children.

George used fifteen pictures in his collage of which eight were words/phrases. He presented the pictures, spread over three pages, in a very structured manner, almost outlining a theme or sub-theme with each picture/word. Theme extraction was made easy and straightforward due to the linearly structured format of his collage.

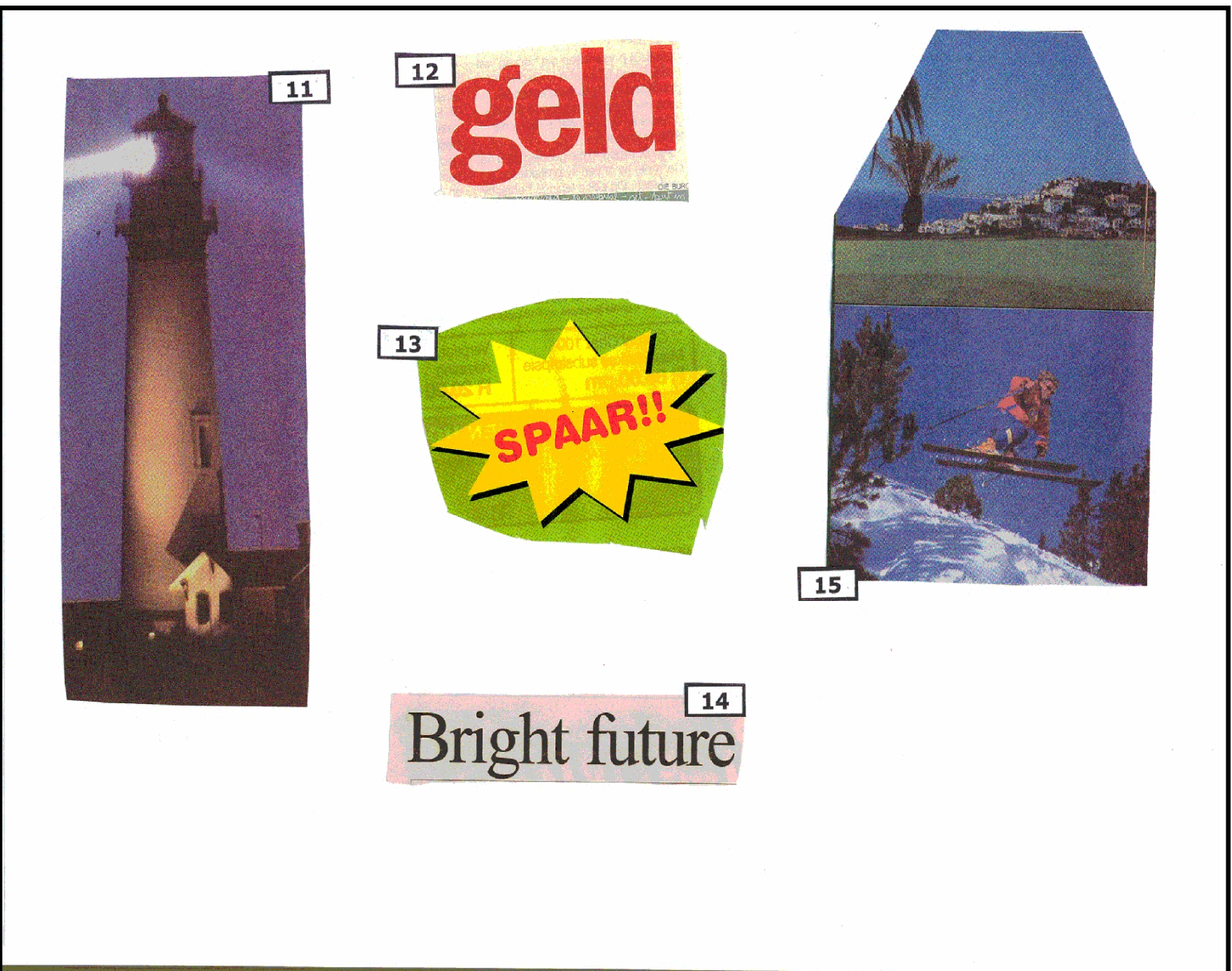
In the translation process, some of the finer nuances could have been lost. However, I tried to represent his conversation and comments as authentically as possible and the excerpts presented here were directly translated from the original interview material.



Collage 1a: Page one of George's visual representation of his experience



Collage 1b: Page two of George's visual representation of his experience



Collage 1c: Page three of George's visual representation of his experience

Overall, within George's interview material I was able to identify, amongst many possible others, three major themes. These were: (1) responsibility, (2) feelings and thoughts: (i) happiness and joy; and (ii) a sense of a loss of freedom, and (3) the family.

Interpreting the interview material, made it clear that there was some kind of chronological order to his experiences and it was necessary to establish a starting point, similar to what he did in the interview. In this regard, George established that he had a clear perception of Kate as a small person with the potential to grow and eventually do her own thing. In phase one and with the first picture in collage 1a he said:

This [\(picture 1\)](#) represents to me the situation of being a dad. I see her as an island, even though the island is small; it has the potential to grow. Growing means her future; she must grow-up and start doing her own thing.

The first theme, responsibility, emerged with two sub-themes that were mostly concerned with George's perception of the responsibilities associated with being a father. In particular the dialogue represented his awareness of having to provide sufficiently for Kate in order for her to have a happy and healthy life, but also to enable her to follow her dreams. The two sub-themes involved emotional provision and financial provision.

Emotional provision became apparent in his words:

...and then this one [\(picture 3\)](#) represents peace and love and that she must know she will grow up in a home such as this – a home where there is peace and love.

Also,

For me, this one ([picture 9](#)) goes together with this one ([picture 3](#)) where I once again feel that she must know she will grow-up in a home where there is security, as well as peace and tranquillity.

In addition to this, George not only wished for her to grow up in a stable home, but also perceived it as his responsibility to accept her future needs to make her own decisions concerning various issues.

He said:

Yeah, this ([picture 2](#)) represents my dreams for her future and her health. It's also her dreams. We have to make life easy for her and give her the resources to make her own dreams come true.

Within this first sub-theme, it became apparent that George perceived one major responsibility of fatherhood to be ensuring that sufficient emotional support was given.

He further elaborated on the sub-theme of emotional provision, by using the lighthouse metaphor to talk about two further aspects he deemed important. He pointed to the picture of the lighthouse in collage 1c and said:

This ([picture 11](#)) represents my hope that I will be a lighthouse to her. To show her the right direction, just like a lighthouse does with ships, but also giving protection, like a lighthouse protects ships.

In addition to a stable home and allowing her to make her own decisions one day, George implicitly admitted to the ‘fact’ that Kate is still small and will need assistance and guidance from her parents and other adults during her growing years. By associating with a lighthouse, he placed himself in the position of the person who could guide and protect her. From the social constructionist perspective, it is important to note the perpetuation of the stereotype of a father protecting his daughter (man protecting woman). This stereotyping was taken one-step further when George used the words “*my pappa, my held*” [my father, my hero] ([picture 5](#)) to elaborate on his wish to protect her.

Cobb (2002) makes the assumption that most of the research done on men’s definitions of fatherhood, showed a link between men’s perceptions of fatherhood and with their ideas about masculinity. It specifically seemed as though George’s conception of masculinity (i.e., being a protector of women) informed his construction of the reality of his first-time fatherhood (i.e., protecting their daughter).

George illustrated the second sub-theme of financial provision by having spoken about how their financial struggles, even though they both work full-time. He explicitly stated that children are expensive and elaborated on problems they did not anticipate and that contributed to additional expenses not budgeted for initially. While discussing the pictures in collage 1c, he said:

This ([picture 12](#)) is the money that is spent when you have a child, because it is expensive and a reality from which no one can escape. My wife and I both work, but we are still shocked at the amount of money it costs to have a small child and sometimes we also struggle.

In addition to this, as the excerpt below indicates, he elaborated on financial responsibilities by talking about making provision for her future by saving money now.

This [\(picture 13\)](#) is the provisions that my wife and I are making for her future.

We have started saving to assist her financially so that she can fulfil her dreams.

George further explained the financial situation of having children by way of three examples:

Yeah, you know, this saving thing – you really have to look after your money.

It is not as it used to be. Hmm, looking at all the costs, like nappies. For example, we found out that she is allergic to Huggies and now we have to replace all the ones we bought beforehand. You know? As you go along you realize that her nails actually grow and they have to be cut and you cannot use normal size nail clippers. This costs money. It is expensive. Oh, and bottles, we had many problems. When she started drinking bottles, she would choke. We took her to the paediatrician who advised that the teat is too small and we had to replace everything.

As previous research has indicated (e.g., Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Russell *et al.*, 1999) financial provision seems to be a major concern for fathers and a responsibility they took very seriously.

However, although it seemed as if the provider Discourse mentioned in the literature review facilitated his experience and reality construction, George refuted the stereotypical notion that the father is the sole provider or breadwinner, by having mentioned twice that both him and his partner in order to provide for the family.

He indicated several times that, although he wishes to provide for Kate financially, he did not perceive himself as the sole breadwinner. Various sources have touched on the issue of the wife being a second or even primary breadwinner. During an interview on March 23, 2004 with Prof Van Delft, a psychologist and social worker from UNISA specialising in family life, he said to me that the economic situation in South Africa does no longer allow fathers to take on the position of sole provider. This construction by George is thus a reminder that Discourses of fatherhood do not necessarily remain timeless truths, but that fatherhood is culturally and socially relative.

In terms of the first theme of responsibility, and providing emotionally and financially for his daughter, two further extracts illustrated how George perceived his ultimate goal as a first-time father.

Regarding [picture 8](#), he said:

Yeah, it is not only about giving her what she needs, but also it represents how I imagine her to be – a friendly girl who laughs and dances... Well, this [\(picture 14\)](#) says that we can give her a good future.

The second theme, feelings and thoughts, also consisted of two sub-themes: (i) happiness and joy; and (ii) a sense of a loss of freedom. For George, happiness and joy concerned the intense feelings that not only he, but the rest of the family experienced with the arrival of this new baby girl. Very interesting to note was his use of a metaphor, the high mountain peak [\(picture 10\)](#) to illustrate his overall experience of becoming a father as a high point in his life.

Very few studies elaborating on first-time fathers, show similar results in terms of fathers experiencing such intense elation after the birth of a child. Most studies rather indicated that after birth, fathers experienced very low periods where they lacked in self-esteem, were anxious and worried about how they would perform as a parent (e.g., Barclay & Lupton, 1999; RMIT University, 1999; Russell & Aitchinson in Russell *et al.*, 1999). George, however, did not articulate or show any signs of experiencing it as a stressful situation. In phase one he said:

This [\(picture 4\)](#) says that she brings us great joy and pleasure.

At this point during the interview, George also introduced thoughts and feelings about the extended family to his experience of first-time fatherhood. In the first instance, it was just him, his partner and Kate, whereas in the second instance, he spoke about the rest of the family.

The second sub-theme, although not well represented within the interview material, but still important to consider, is that of George's sense of a loss of freedom. By using a combined picture of an exotic island and a person skiing, he elaborated on, without any displeasure:

Agh, I chose this picture [\(picture 15\)](#) to show that I feel my wife and I will not for a long time to come be alone or be able to go away on holiday alone.

To me this theme might well only have been a product of constructing a collage, i.e., an afterthought or by-product. However, it was quite a significant finding in terms of attempting to validate the use of the ZMET. Even though an interview guideline could have led to similar findings, building the collage facilitated his own construction processes regarding his experiences.

There was some overlap between theme two and three, the family. In terms of theme three, George expanded particularly on his experience concerned with the familial relationship, i.e., the grandparents, father, mother and Kate. He mentioned in the comparison phase of the interview that:

You know, family is really important to me. Here [\(picture 6\)](#) they all look so happy and in this one [\(picture 7\)](#). These two pictures are my whole family.

In addition to joy and happiness, George paid much attention to family relationships in general. He elaborated on how important his family is to him, the unity within the family is perhaps the most significant aspect in his overall experience of first-time fatherhood. In this regard the ZMET, because of the different steps used within the interview, provided me with sufficient support in order to extract the most significant themes. During phase one he simply spoke about the family relationship:

This [\(picture 6\)](#) is my whole family, everyone is happy and proud of the new baby...This [\(picture 7\)](#) represents to me the unity of the family. The wife and her husband are happy together with the baby they have. They have expressions of love and pride for her.*

However, during phase three, when asked to compare three pictures, he specifically chose the pictures of the family. In this instance, he chose only to compare pictures 6 and 7 in collage 1b (see also excerpts * above). Furthermore, George pointed out in phase four that he would place himself between the pictures representing his family, because they were important to him. This theme was somewhat contradictory to previous results (University of East Anglia, http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2001-11ft10201.php), which concluded that first-time fathers experienced insecurity in their relationship with other family members.

One implicit question that is left unanswered is the influence that his stepdaughter had on his overall experience. Did he perhaps find being a biological first-time father was easier because he has previous experience with an older stepchild? In an attempt to render the findings credible, I made contact with George again and discussed my idea with him. His answer was a definite “No” to making things easier as a first-time father. He indicated that his stepdaughter was four years old when he married her mother and therefore he did not have any real experience of the physical reality of fatherhood, e.g., changing nappies or feeding the baby. According to him, being a biological father was entirely different from being a stepfather.

SUMMARY OF GEORGE'S CONSTRUCTION

The re-construction of George's experience of first-time fatherhood in this analysis was interpreted according to three themes. Firstly, he elaborated on what he perceived to be the responsibilities of a father, i.e., emotional and financial provision. The second theme represented his constructions of feelings of joy and happiness, as well as a sense of a loss of freedom of being a first-time father. To him this was a high point in his life, but he also felt that the freedom of being alone had been taken away from him and his partner.

In the third theme, George spoke about the family. In this regard, he referred to the nuclear family and extended the significance of family relationships to the rest of the family, i.e., grandparents. It became apparent that family life was highly significant in his experience.

In the interview one issue as it did in previous studies I conducted, however, was not addressed in the literature review, nor did it form part of the original objective for this study. This issue relates to the influence from a broader gender Discourse, which suggests that men are the protectors of women, because men are physically stronger, more aggressive and have always

been the so-called hunters (Burr, 1998; Nicholson, 1993). George illustrated that he wanted to protect Kate and this suggests a stereotypical notion of girls/women in need of protection. This was quite an unexpected construction and indicates the influence from, not only fatherhood Discourses, but also gender Discourses on the experience of first-time fatherhood.

3.2. Participant Two: JOE

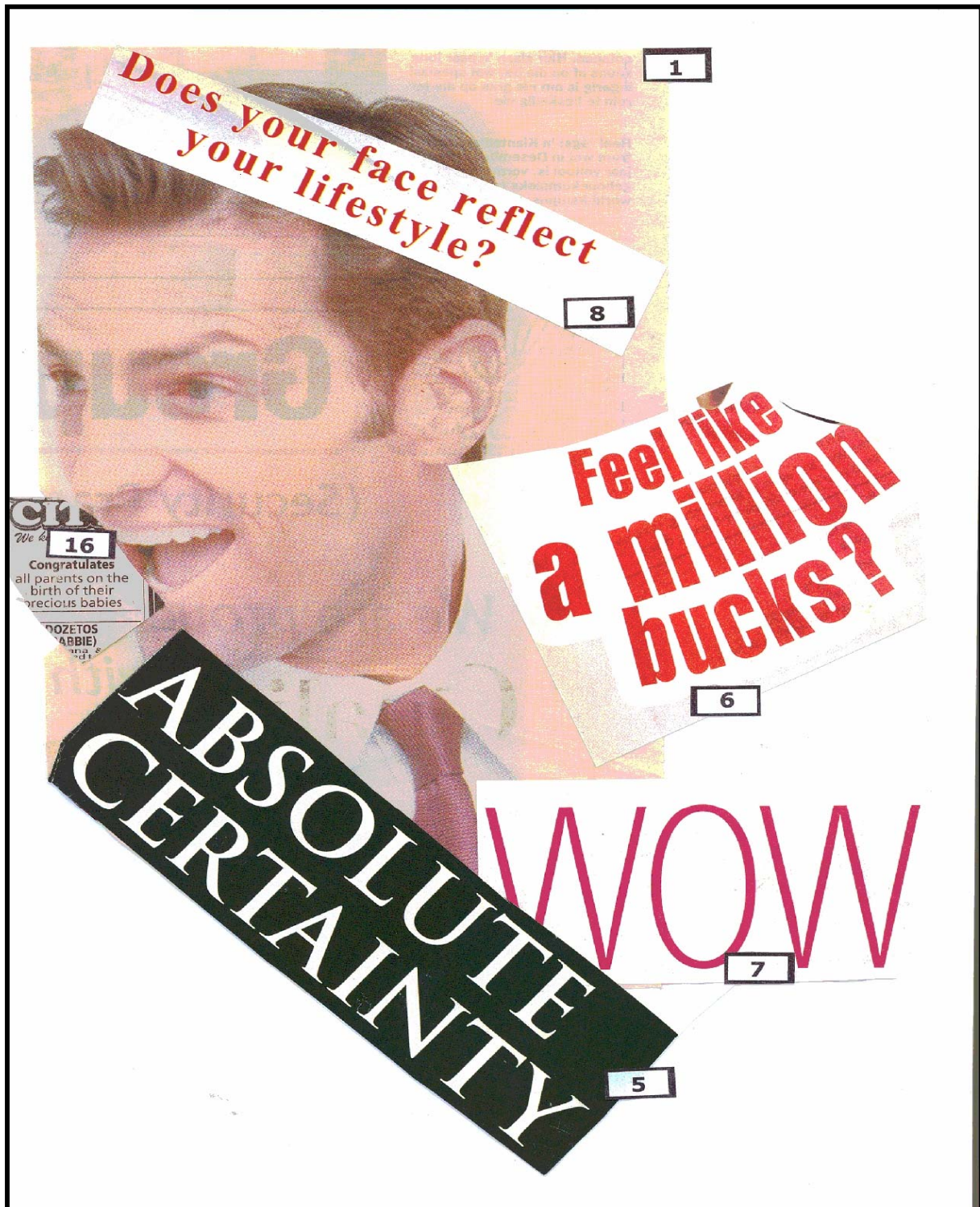
Joe is a first-time father aged thirty-three years, and works as a manager for a financial institution in Pretoria. He lived most of his life in Port Elizabeth, with his father as a bank manager, his mother as a librarian and a younger sister. Like the other participants, Joe was also a South African citizen and the interview was done in his native language, Afrikaans.

He has been married for 8 years and at the time of the interview, they were two months into the post-natal phase. A friend referred Joe to me and during my initial introduction; it became clear that he is very excited about participating in this study. During an e-mail discussion with him, he mentioned, "I am sick of these men who aren't involved in their children's life." After the interview, he was also very interested in talking about the technique and my approach to the analysis.

The interview took place at his place of work after hours and took just more than one hour to complete. The interview was also conducted in Afrikaans and translated into English during the transcription process.

Joe used seventeen pictures to complete his collage. Of these seventeen pictures two were used to represent one image and I therefore numbered the pictures only up to sixteen (collages 2a and 2b). The pictures in the collage and themes extracted from the interview overlapped in some areas, while he also tended to cluster certain themes together.

Joe's collage does not seem to take on a definite structure, but rather reflects how he jumps from one picture to the next, from one page to the next, seemingly to assist in his constructions of his experiences during the interview, but is also indicative of the diversity in his experience in terms of thoughts and feelings.



Collage 2a: Page one of Joe's visual representation of his experience



Collage 2b: Page two of Joe's visual representation of his experience

By applying thematic analysis, I identified, amongst many possible others, three major themes within Joe's interview material, namely: 1) feelings and thoughts: (i) happiness and joy; and (ii) a difficult and stressful situation; 2) responsibility; and 3) father-child relationship.

The first theme concerned his feelings and thoughts directly related to his experience of being a first-time father. This theme has two sub-themes: (i) happiness and joy; (ii) a difficult and stressful situation. In the first instance, Joe mentioned that he experienced a lot of joy and happiness. Unintentionally perhaps, Joe divided these feelings as coming from two sources. Firstly, in perceiving John (their baby) to be "a gift that is more than skin deep" ([picture 14](#)), Joe implied that John is a gift that they have received, and as it befits recipients of gifts, they were happy and elated. Joe's experience of joy and happiness started when they heard they were pregnant and were still ongoing at the time of the interview. Joe responded:

It ([picture 1](#)) sort of spoke to me, because this guy looks very happy. This really is how I felt right throughout – from the time we found out, we were pregnant until now. It is a great feeling.

He elaborated on these feelings at various sections during the interview. For example, by using [picture 7](#), Joe expressed more intensified feelings of joy and happiness, by saying:

When we found out, it was an amazing feeling and now that he is here...It was really WOW!!

The phrase "*feels like a million bucks*", represented by [picture 6](#) further illustrates his elation of being a first-time father.

Secondly, Joe experienced joy and happiness by receiving congratulations from various parties. In this way, Joe implied that in becoming a first-time father, he has achieved something. In [picture 16](#) he illustrated his feelings and added:

The amount of congratulations you receive – it is people who are happy for you. It is amazing and very exciting.

Thus, Joe's experience of happiness and joy in being a first-time father stems from both the perception that it is an achievement, as well as perceiving it to be like receiving a gift.

In terms of perceiving it to be an achievement, Joe indicated a stereotypical masculine discourse where men strive for achievement (Nicholson, 1993). Various times throughout the interview, Joe accepted this stereotypical masculine position, as I will later discuss. For now, I want to focus on Joe's perception that John is a gift. My suggestion is that this perception is a metaphor commonly available in religious Discourse where a child is seen as a blessing from God.

Direct quotations from the Holy Bible should illustrate this. For example, Genesis 28:3 in the Holy Bible says: "And God Almighty bless thee and make thee fruitful and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people." Also, if God wants to punish sin, Hosea 9:11-12 pointed out: "As for Ephriam, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from birth and from the womb and from the conception."

Even though Joe experienced much happiness throughout the pregnancy and period after the birth, he indicated during the interview that he also perceived first-time fatherhood to be a stressful and difficult situation.

He first mentioned the biological act of birth and his attendance as a situation where he felt anxious and stressed. Especially with [pictures 2](#) and [3](#), he expressed these feelings when he said:

It is like walking on a minefield. You do not really know which way is the right way. It is a difficult situation. All of a sudden there are so many things that you have to know.

He then went on to stress that being a first-time father is not like playing a game, as indicated by [picture 10](#). In this instance, comparing first-time fatherhood to a game means that it is not something that is necessarily fun and easy to execute.

The way in which time ([picture 4](#)) influenced his experience is also noticeable throughout the conversation and which I perceived to be a contributing factor to his experience of stress and anxiety. He felt that before he would realize it, they would need to start making serious plans for their child. Furthermore, in terms of spending time alone with his partner or just relaxing, he also felt that time was running out ([picture 11](#)). This is a feeling similar to George's in terms of losing the freedom to spend time with his partner.

The way in which he approached this situation was by tackling it head-on, because to him "*failure is not an option*" ([picture 3](#)). It seems as if Joe portrayed a great sense of responsibility as a first-time father and it seems that he approached his situation in a stereotypical masculine fashion – aggressively and without the possibility of failure (Nicholson, 1993).

When interpreting Joe's responses in phase four and phase five, it is possible that he constructed this stressful situation and the associated feelings and thoughts as very prominent within his experience. When asked where he would place himself in the collage, he said between [pictures 2](#) and [3](#).

In phase five, where he had to choose three pictures related to this theme, Joe wanted to enlarge – [pictures 3, 4](#) and [5](#), further indicating the significance of the feelings of stress and constraint in his experience of becoming a father.

The second theme, a theme well represented in his collage and narrative, was that of responsibility. That is, the responsibilities and functions that he associated with being a father. Joe accepted responsibility when he indicated that having a child, and by implication becoming a father, was an “*absolute certainty*” ([picture 5](#)). For him it meant that having a child will inevitably change one’s life ([picture 8](#)) and there is nothing you can do about it. He went on to say that even though it was an absolute certainty and changes were inevitable, it was also inevitable that he would have experienced much joy and happiness from being a father.

This theme therefore had some overlap with the first theme of happiness and joy in that this absolute certainty facilitated the experience of stress and anxiety, as well as joy and happiness.

Together with these changes that he constructed as being inevitable when having a child, he again expressed it to be a situation that could have been approached head-on and by taking responsibility for his life and the family. In taking responsibility for his child, he perceived providing education as a manifestation of taking responsibility. He illustrated this theme in [pictures 9](#) and [15](#). Education was important to him in his position as a first-time father in two ways: Education concerning schooling and higher education, as well as life training such as teaching John about life and the world.

He said:

It is your responsibility if he wants to study and receive tertiary education. But you know it's more than just that, it's also the way in which you raise him. That was a relatively big question for me...It does not matter what we do, our children are the future. It relates strongly to the education thing and that it isn't a game. It is what we make of him that makes the future. What am I going to leave him as a legacy?

In [picture 10](#), he further elaborated on the responsibility of providing for the family by posing these questions to himself: "Do I earn enough? Am I doing the right thing?"

Even though I added financial provision as a sub-theme, Joe, through his spoken words, implicitly placed more significance to educational provision than financial provision, by only mentioning financial provision once.

The third theme that I identified concerned his experience of first-time fatherhood in terms of father-child relationship. Joe mentioned at [picture 13](#) that,

Now there is a stronger bond between us, although the mother – child bond is much stronger than the father-child bond. It sometimes feels as if I am only an onlooker, because the mother is with the child more than I am and they have built a relationship.

Pointing to [picture 13](#) Joe laughed and explained that this was actually not the real representation of how things were for him.

He indicated that the bond between him and John had only recently started to develop and perhaps later the picture will be an accurate representation. Barclay and Lupton (1999) concluded that fathers' expectation and the symbolic meaning of fatherhood, are not usually met soon after the birth. For example, fathers may expect an infant to be more socially responsive and could even be disappointed if such responsiveness was not forthcoming.

Joe's description of "feeling like an onlooker" reflected what Russell and Aitchinson (in Russell *et al.*, 1999) said when they commented on fathers' experience of feelings of being left out or feeling like a peripheral person in the family.

Through Joe's verbal and mostly non-verbal expressions, I suspect that he has taken up a traditional father position, in the sense that he accepts it as natural that the mother-child bond will be stronger, with him fulfilling more of a provider and educator function, than care-taking.

SUMMARY OF JOE'S CONSTRUCTION

Overall, Joe's experience can be interpreted according to three themes. The first theme, feelings and thoughts, represented his feelings of joy and happiness, as well as stress and anxiety for being a first-time father. Secondly, the theme responsibility, related to his perception of educational and financial provision as the functions of a father. Within the third theme, he illustrated the father-child relationship, which at that point made him feel like an onlooker rather than an active participant.

Joe's reality of first-time fatherhood was strongly influenced by a stereotypical masculine position in terms of dealing with his feelings and the situation with a sense of aggressiveness and without the option to quit. Religious constructions also influenced his reality, in that he perceived John to be a gift.

Overall, there was a considerable influence on the part of masculine stereotypes in Joe's construction of his reality. Joe used phrases such as: *it is not a game; failure is not an option, and leaving a legacy to the world*, to describe his experience.

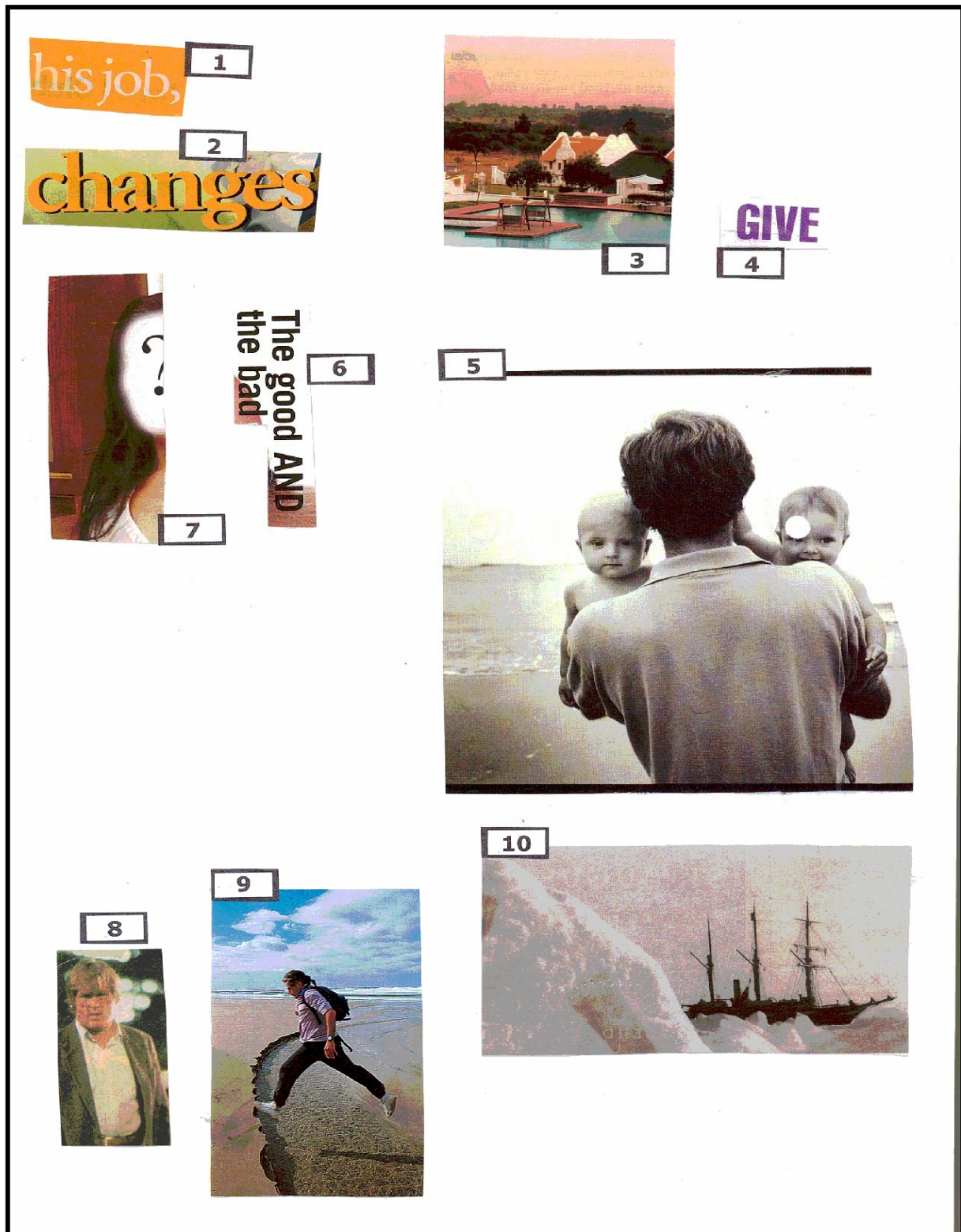
In current literature, these phrases are indicative of stereotypical masculine 'traits'. Furthermore, in having received praise from other people, he turned the biological act of procreation into an achievement. This masculine identity influences fatherhood identity and reality construction.

3.3. Participant Three: WILLIAM

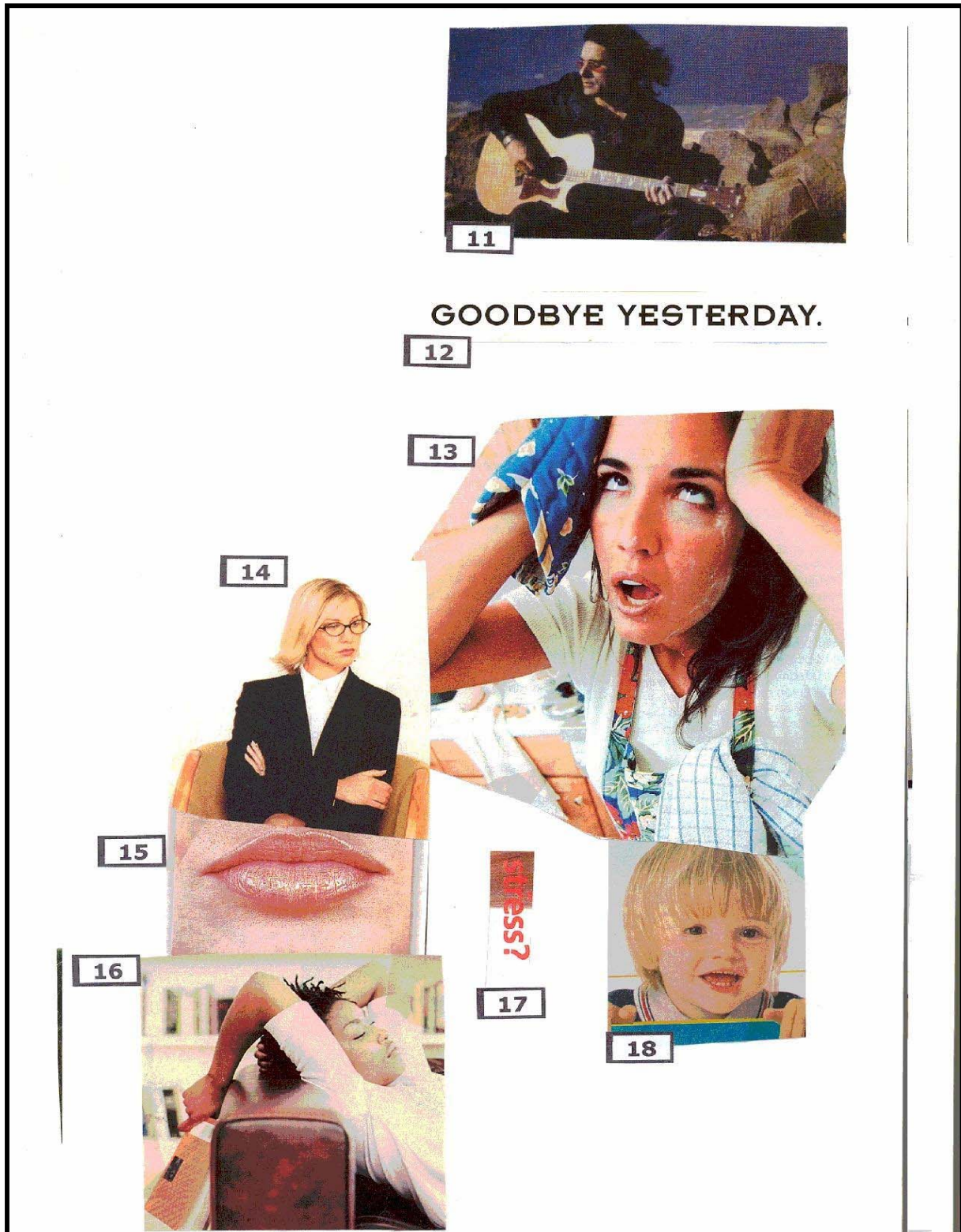
William was a 28-year old dentist practicing in East London in the Eastern Cape. He spent most of his childhood in Pretoria, where he lived with his parents and a younger sister. I was referred to him via another family friend and was able to conduct an interview with him, because of a business trip in the same area. The interview was conducted in English and at his home, with neither his wife nor their baby-girl present at that time. At the time of the interview, Jane, who was conceived out of wedlock, was just over a year old. They have been married for six months after co-habiting for two years.

From the onset, he was very interested in this project. In fact, he had so much to say that I had to consciously keep him within the parameters of his own experience during the interview.

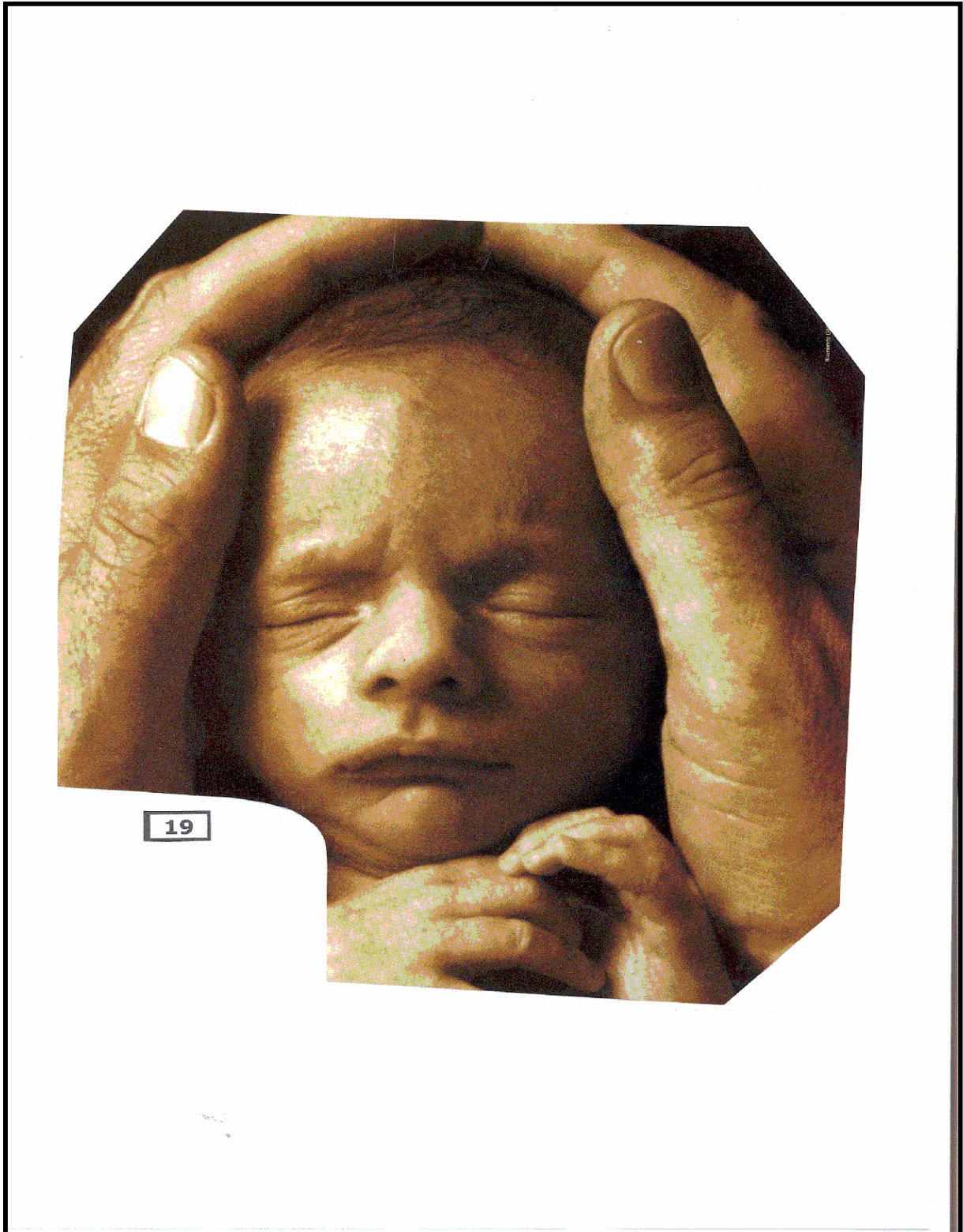
William stated that he found the topic very interesting and that he enjoyed making a collage of his experience, as it was something that he has never done or really thought of before. It is therefore quite understandable why he used nineteen pictures (collages 3a, 3b and 3c), instead of just fifteen as was required in the Information Leaflet. The pictures in the collages are structured in terms of themes, which at times seemed to overlap. Even though the pictures are structured linearly, he jumps from one picture back to another at times.



Collage 3a: Page one of William's visual representation of his experience



Collage 3b: Page two of William's visual representation of his experience



Collage 3c: Page three of William's visual representation of his experience

In William's interview material, I was able to identify, amongst many possible others, three major themes, 1) responsibility; 2) the marriage relationship; 3) feelings and thoughts: (i). helplessness, confusion, and (ii) sense of loss of freedom.

William initiated theme one with the words "his job", as illustrated by [picture 1](#). From the onset, he presented a stereotypical position within the provider Discourse of fatherhood, i.e., as the financial provider. For William these words represented his perception that it is a father's responsibility to take care of the family financially. He said:

I have to see to it that my family receives the best that I can give them.

On the other hand however, William seemed to have felt that all he ever did was give ([picture 4](#)), i.e., financially and emotionally. This feeling of always giving manifested itself also in [picture 5](#), where he admitted to feeling that he was being treated unfairly. William made it her quite clear that his main responsibility to the family was financial provision, not to take care of Jane or to provide any other emotional support, and that it was unfair of anyone to expect otherwise, when he said:

I have to look after her, because her mother is tired. Why can't I also rest? I work very hard to provide but do not get time to relax as my wife does. I worry about the welfare of this family, but that is not seen as stressful – only motherhood.

The University of East Anglia (http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2001-11ff10201.php) found similar results, which indicated that men had trouble in combining work and home responsibilities, i.e., reconciling the provider and supportive partner positions.

[Picture 6](#), seems to represent a culmination of his feelings represented in pictures 1 through 5. Unfortunately, he was not available for verification of my interpretation, as he was out of the country for an undetermined period. Nonetheless, my thought was that he was trying to say that for him there were two sides to being a first-time father. That is, that being a first-time father had good aspects and bad aspects, and when he accepted responsibility as a father, it meant that he accepted these two sides as his reality. This construction seems to be quite similar to Joe's 'absolute certainty' construct as illustrated in [Collage 2a](#).

This feeling of not being taken into consideration is further elaborated on in [picture 16](#) and [17](#), where he again focused my attention on how much his partner expects of him. The epitome of his feelings was outspoken in question three when he quite sarcastically said, "Men are always fine." This sarcastic comment by William was quite significant in the sense that it is stereotypical for men to always be on top of things and unemotional (Nicholson, 1993). It seems to me that William at this point actively refuted this notion that men are always fine.

In [picture 19](#), I saw William positioning himself as the protector of the family. Through the pictures, and his discourse, William thus implied that his experience in terms of taking responsibility consisted of providing financial support and protecting the family, including his partner, but especially Jane, from any harm. He illustrated this by expressing his concern for Jane's happiness in [picture 18](#), and when he said:

It is important that my child is happy. She should not have a confusing and unhappy life. I just want the best for her, because nobody wants to be unhappy and it makes me happy to see her happy.

One of the most significant themes, to me, in his experience was that of the marriage relationship and how it contributes in various ways to his overall reality, as discussed in the following theme.

[Picture 2](#), the word, ‘changes’, which William felt was representative of the changes that has taken place since Jane was born. He responded:

These are the changes that I have seen, for example, my relationship with my wife, which causes changes at work.

Barclay and Lupton (1999) concluded that first-time fathers were surprised by the change in their relationships with their partners, specifically the tension brought on because of the new baby. This theme, the marriage relationship, was best illustrated in [pictures 13 to 15](#), where he illustrated his perception and experience of his partner. [Pictures 13](#) and [14](#) were utilized to illustrate the controversy that he experienced with his partner in terms of her being a mother and having a career. In his words:

This ([picture 13 & 14](#)) is my wife who needs to be productive. She needs to work and have a career, but when she comes home, she wants to be cared for and take the role of the maiden in distress. Because of her career, she is aggressive and cold at work, but comes home with the same attitude and still expects me to treat her like a maiden in distress. When she is at home, she has more patience with the baby than with me.

Following these words, William illustrated in [picture 15](#) that his partner does not talk to him and when she does, she shouts and acts aggressively. William attributed his partner’s attitude and behaviour to so-called baby-blues.

The third theme, which I suggested, is rather intertwined with both previous themes, is that of William's feelings and thoughts within his experience. There were two sub-themes: (i) helplessness and confusion, and (ii) a sense of loss of freedom. This starts with [picture 3](#) and William's words:

This is how I feel, alone. Like a house somewhere, where no one knows about it. I am alone because I do not get any support from my wife.

This feeling of being alone further manifested itself in [picture 5](#) and [picture 7](#), where the man with his back turned to the screen and the woman with a question mark on her face, illustrates the questions he asked himself.

So what now? What do I do? Where do I stand and who am I?

A proposed ramification of his feelings was illustrated in [pictures 8](#) through [10](#). Here William illustrated his wishes to run away because he felt tired and helpless and his whole situation, as he explained, was like sailing through dangerous icebergs. Zaslow and Kramer (in Robinson & Barrett, 1986) found that it is possible for fathers to experience feelings similar to emotional letdown, as are often reported by new mothers.

The second sub-theme relates to William having experienced a loss of freedom, since he became a father. It can be argued that the changes he referred to in [picture 2](#), also related to [pictures 11](#) and [12](#), where he said goodbye to how things used to be and illustrated how he has lost his freedom (e.g. not being able to play guitar).

A significant finding compared to the other participants, is that it was very difficult to verify any responses or data from one phase with the other phases. In each phase, he provided me with new data, which sometimes even contradicted data from the previous phases.

Subsequently, it was quite difficult to establish whether there was in fact a theme or various themes, which took precedence above the others in terms of their significance in his experience of first-time fatherhood.

Contradictory to the first two participants, the lack of clarity on the significance of a specific theme within his experience assisted me in suggesting that it is helplessness and confusion which carries the weight of influence on his experience and reality construction (i.e. the most significant theme).

It was conspicuous that William said very little about Jane or his experience of her, except in question four, where he had to use his senses to describe his experience. Here his focus shifted from helplessness and confusion to an illustration of his overall involvement in her care taking, e.g. when she cannot sleep, he will lie down with her and touch her hair. Even though he actively rejected a care-taking position earlier on in the interview, it seems as though he still performs the actions.

SUMMARY OF WILLIAM'S CONSTRUCTION

William's experiences can be represented by three themes. The first theme represented his perception of the responsibility of a father in terms of the provider Discourse of fatherhood and his active acceptance of a position as financial provider. Together with this provider position, William tended to move towards a stereotypical masculine position, in terms of perceiving to be the protector in and of the family. However, a discrepancy exists between William's acceptance of these positions and his active refutation of the stereotypical discourse, 'men are always fine'.

The second major theme, the marriage relationship, seems to have played a significant part in contributing to his reality construction and experience of being a first-time father, in terms of accepting or rejecting positions made available by his partner, i.e. provider and equal positions. The last theme, thoughts and feelings, both represented his feelings of helplessness and confusion, as well as the feeling that he has lost his freedom. Overall, it seems as if William experienced first-time fatherhood as a lonely and mostly negative life event.

SUMMARY OF THREE FATHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF FIRST-TIME FATHERHOOD

Even though two of the three interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, all excerpts from participants' interview material were presented in English as translated by a translator and myself. Each interview took place at a time and venue suitable to the participant. The tape recordings were transcribed verbatim and data analysis commenced immediately after each interview. Within these verbatim transcriptions, I incorporated the written field notes.

The identified themes from each first-time father's interview material were discussed in relation to the relevant picture in the collage. Hyperlinks from the text to the relevant pictures were added for easy reference.

Overall, the analysis indicated that these three first-time fathers' experiences were diverse and multifaceted. George tended to move towards a financial and emotional provider position in terms of accepting responsibility as a first-time father. Joe, on the other hand, focussed more on accepting an educational provider position, whereas William indicated his acceptance of a financial provider position.

Diverse feelings and thoughts were also identified. For George, first-time fatherhood was a high point in his life. Joe experienced it as a joyful and happy event, but also as a stressful and difficult situation. Overall, William's experience was one of helplessness and confusion. Experiencing a sense of a loss of freedom seemed to be relevant to all three fathers, although in different degrees.

Further identified within the interviews, were the themes related to some form of relationship and its influence on reality construction. George indicated the important part of all his family members in his experience. To a certain extent, Joe experienced his father – child relationship as one where he simply takes on the position of the onlooker. William, on the other hand, focussed extensively on his marriage and how this influenced his overall perception of being a first-time father.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter four consists of three sections. Section one is a discussion of the themes extracted from the three interviews. Section two focuses on the credibility and trustworthiness issues of the research, while the possibilities for future research will be addressed in section three.

4.1. Discussion of themes

Throughout the world, there is still a stereotypical notion that fathers are not physically or emotionally involved in pregnancy or any other child-care activities. Most often fathers are still portrayed as financial providers and incompetent caretakers. However, many people, and especially fathers, have realized that fatherhood is not what it was. Fathers are rejecting their traditional positions as authority figure, disciplinarian, and the breadwinner. The experiences of fathers have received attention in studies of late, but attempts to essentialize these experiences still prevail. Social constructionists take a different viewpoint and advocate that multiple realities of fatherhood exist and therefore, experiences cannot be placed into small black boxes. Few research studies have focussed on the subjective experience of first-time fathers. The description of these three cases of first-time fatherhood gives voice to the array of realities, which exist of this social construction.

The use of the ZMET and conducting thematic analyses enabled the extraction of themes representative of each father's experience of first-time fatherhood. Three major themes emerged.

4.1.1. Responsibility

Responsibility was a strong aspect of being a first-time father. This theme consisted of three sub-themes: financial, emotional and educational provision. Whatever the 'truth' may have been, each father positioned himself within one or several of these provider positions. George and William largely built their reality around the financial provider Discourse, while educational provision was more important to Joe.

There was, however, a difference in the way in which George and William took on these financial provider positions. George tended not to be a stereotypical provider, but rather included his partner during his discourse on providing financially (i.e., "My wife and I."). William on the other hand tended to take a very stereotypical position where he accepted the sole financial provider position (i.e. "my job") – representative of the financial provider Discourse. Joe on the other hand, placed very little emphasis on the provider position over all.

There may also be a strong emotional provision sub-theme in other fathers' experiences. This sub-theme represented various aspects of emotional involvement, including ensuring that the child grows up knowing that she/he is loved and that there is stability within her/his home environment. With reference to the literature review, George seems to represent a new nurturant father. However, some fathers may actively reject the position of emotional provider by stagnating within a financial provision position, similar to William.

Another sub-theme related to responsibility was educational provision. Only one father, Joe, indicated that ensuring their child receives adequate education, i.e., life skills and higher learning, was an important aspect of being a first-time father.

It should be noted that this theme was prominent within Joe's interview whose child coincidentally, is a boy-child. There were no mentions of educational provision where the child was a girl-child as is the case with George and William.

However, George and William constructed themselves within stereotypical protector positions. The traditional notion is that men are protectors of women, because men are physically stronger, more aggressive and have always been the hunters (Burr, 1998; Nicholson, 1993). Stereotyping from all three fathers suggested to me that various Discourses, such as the stereotypical masculine Discourse witnessed here, influenced these first-time fathers' reality and identity construction, as well as their overall experience.

4.1.2. Feelings and thoughts

The second theme identified in the three interviews, has been feelings and thoughts that they associated with being a first-time father. These fathers showed feelings, which ranged from intense happiness to extreme helplessness and confusion, as well as a sense of a loss of freedom.

Happiness and joy was a prevalent sub-theme extracted from two interviews, George and Joe. They described how being a first-time father, was a high point in their lives or a real 'wow' feeling. Joe, on the other hand, also showed some inclination towards experiencing the whole situation as difficult and stressful, another sub-theme. He described how being a first-time father was a learning process and you never know whether you are doing the right thing.

These intense, yet diverse, feelings of joy and despair are prominent in current literature (e.g., Robinson & Barret, 1996) and in retrospect quite significant, because not much attention has been paid to fathers' subjective experiences.

A construction worth mentioning here, is the influence of a broader religious Discourse on Joe's experience. I mentioned previously that in his analysis he perceived John to be a gift. This discourse suggested religious influence as depicted in the Holy Bible (e.g. Genesis 28:3 & Hosea 9:11-12). Together with the sub-theme of educational provision, there was a strong proposition that Joe's reality was constructed with influence from the historical father as moral overseer Discourse. This again was indicative of the influence from broader cultural and social Discourses influencing a man's experience of first-time fatherhood.

A sub-theme strongly represented in William's interview, concerned the feelings of helplessness and confusion. Various times throughout the interview he explained that, without adequate support between him and his partner, he experienced feelings of being alone and confused. Referring back to theme one and William's position as a financial provider, this construction of his was rather important to realize that even though a father may take on a stereotypical position as father, it does not mean that it is directly linked to a stereotypical masculine position.

The final sub-theme concerned the issue of having a sense of a loss of freedom, as experienced by all three fathers. This feeling manifested itself in different ways. George and Joe indicated that to them this loss of freedom related to them and their partners not really having any time to spend alone together.

On the other hand, William's loss of freedom related directly to himself and activities that he used to perform, but were now unable to do. Perhaps not innovative knowledge, it is my feeling that experiencing a loss of freedom, almost places the child in a position of being an intruder into their lives.

The theme of feelings and thoughts was closely linked with the next theme, relationships, in that it seemed as if the relational aspect of fatherhood facilitated the construction of what these fathers felt and thought.

4.1.3. Relationships

Although different sub-themes exist, each father indicated an influence by some form of relationship. The first sub-theme concerned the family. The importance of family or relationships can manifest in different ways.

George eloquently described the importance of his family (nuclear and extended family), their involvement and their influence on experiencing first-time fatherhood as something exciting and wonderful. Joe on the other hand, focussed more specifically on the father-child relationship and mentioned that he sometimes felt like an onlooker for the simple reason that he believed there was a naturally closer bond between the mother and child. For him, only when the child becomes more active, will he become less of an onlooker and more of an active participant. Joe's feelings represented the second sub-theme, the father-child relationship.

William, who mentioned very little about his feelings towards their little girl, was greatly influenced by the marriage relationship, the third-sub-theme. Perhaps linked to his feelings of helplessness and confusion his interview consistently moved back to the lack of support from his partner and her awarding him two conflicting positions, i.e. knight in shining armour / financial provider and equal partner. To me, this is an indication that all the interactions within a father's environment assists in constructing his reality of fatherhood and as each father's environment is different, multiple realities of fatherhood have to exist.

How do men experience first-time fatherhood? My exploration indicated that men, as first-time fathers, experience a multitude of feelings, thoughts and other constructions based on inputs from their environments and the social interaction therein.

4.2. Credibility and trustworthiness issues

I believe that the ZMET aided in the data analysis. Through a semi-structured procedure, it enabled validating my choice of themes as discussed above, as well as assisted in highlighting significant theme(s) in each father's experience by verifying data from various phases. However, in retrospect I now believe that with more experience and knowledge I could have dug deeper into the material and extracted a wider array of themes than I had.

In terms of the credibility of the study, the subject positions taken up by both the father's and myself did not seem to influence the research process or data collection. I advised that the ZMET would be used to counter the possible masculine-feminine stereotypes that might influence the research and I believe that it has succeeded. With a deeper analysis of the data, there was an implicit openness and honesty from each father.

For example, if Joe intensively focussed on taking the position of a stereotypical male, I do not believe that he would have divulged his intense feelings of stress and anxiety.

Concerning the written notes that were taken during the interviews, I must admit that they have not increased the credibility of the data. Two of the three interviews were conducted in settings away from the normal family situation, i.e. work. Notes taken in these settings were focussed on the interview and the participants' behaviour, not the physical surroundings. Furthermore, although William's interview was conducted at his home, I do not feel that it added valuable data, nor confirmed any data that he explicitly told me during the interview.

Transferability and dependability as I explained in chapter two, were less important in this study. The intent was not to generalize and I am confident that I have succeeded to a certain extent and to the best of my abilities, to give voice to meanings that these fathers have constructed of their experiences. Dependability is important for longitudinal studies where changes can be tracked and incorporated into the analysis phase. Dependability was negligible in this study.

I believe that I have succeeded in establishing a high level of confirmability in this study. The ZMET allowed for data verification, and the opportunity for data verification was further increased by the close proximity between me and the fathers, attributed to employing snowball sampling during actual recruitment of participants. Unfortunately, my intention to verify the data and my analysis with William could not take place as he was out of the country for an undetermined period.

4.3. Future Possibilities

At this point my analysis raises questions for social research on fatherhood. In the first instance, I admit that I have ignored current criticism (e.g., Burman, 1994b) and used only white males within nuclear families for this study. I propose that, within the context of the broader South Africa, it would be important for future studies to select participants who are from an African culture, as different cultures have different ways of being and acting as fathers. In a multi-cultural society such as South Africa, we can give voice to these differing Discourses.

In addition to this, it is imperative to increase the body of knowledge on fatherhood in South Africa in general, by conducting comparative studies. There are vast numbers of cultural and social ways of being and acting as fathers in each culture, which from a social constructionist perspective, influence the construction of fatherhood identities.

For the future of research on fatherhood in South Africa, I believe it is imperative that we focus on analysing South African literature in order to delineate the history of fatherhood in South Africa – similar to what I have found in Western literature. By exploring the historical perspectives of fatherhood, it can remind us that contemporary Discourses on fatherhood do not necessarily render timeless truths, but rather reflect current social and cultural circumstances. Especially with the cultural, economic and social changes that we have witnessed in South Africa, many of the assumptions we make about fatherhood today, could be considered historical artefacts, rooted in cultural beliefs and no longer relevant to the conversational practices and constructions of fatherhood in the present era.

An aspect that did not form part of the objective for this study, was the notion of masculine identity formation and the processes involved in constructing a fatherhood identity. During the literature review and data analysis, however, I have observed at several occasions, that a father's masculine identity impacted on his experiences of fatherhood and how he perceived himself in the co-construction of realities (e.g., Cobb, 2002). I propose that a South African based study be conducted where the relationship between masculine identity and fatherhood identity construction could also be explored.

In relation to the above point, the influence of gendered discourses (i.e., language-in-use) and Discourses (i.e., forms of life) on the experience of fatherhood need further exploration. I have indicated in the analysis that the gender of the baby played a role in how the father experienced the relational responsibility. If it was a girl-child, the likelihood was greater for the father to take on a position of protector rather than that of a conversational partner. This of course could have further implications for the way in which father and child would co-construct their future realities in conversational practices. I propose further exploration of this aspect in order for us to better understand how fathers and their daughters relate and partake in interchange.

A lot has been written about various aspects of fatherhood and there is still a lot more to be learned. As social, economical and political conditions shift, the dynamics of the family formation and parenthood also change. Consequently, the topics of research also need to be revisited from time-to-time in order to ensure that aspects of importance are addressed and that underrepresented voices are heard.

The institutions we build reflect our deepest, sometimes darkest, values. For some time in this country, fathers were not a part of birth. How deeply must this separation affect our society, affect us all, in ways which are hard to think of as positive. Perhaps what is good is the clear opportunity for improvement left for the next generation.

Forest Seymour, A Father's Journal, 1(2), May 1994.

APPENDIX A: Participant Information Leaflet

Introduction

You are invited to volunteer as participant in a research study. This information leaflet is to help you decide if you want to partake. Before you agree to participate, you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this leaflet, do not hesitate to ask me. You should not agree to partake unless you are completely happy about all the procedures involved.

Background

In 2001, I had a personal experience where a first-time father openly challenged the stereotypical idea that fathers are uninvolved and emotionally detached from pregnancy and birth. Thus, I got interested in the possibility that there are other discourses and experiences of first-time fatherhood than was originally thought. Original, meaning the stereotypical notion that the father's only functions are acting as the moral overseers, the breadwinner and the sex role model.

What is the purpose of this study?

You have been identified as a first-time father. I would like you to consider taking part in research exploring the experiences of first-time fathers. During the study, you will be asked to talk about and clarify your experiences, thoughts and feelings about first-time fatherhood.

Your participation and contribution is invaluable to me, because I will use this information to fulfil all the requirements for my Masters degree in Research Psychology.

What is expected of you during this study?

I will make use of a data collection technique called the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique. You will be asked to make a collage with pictures, images and photographs provided by me. After the collage has been completed, I will conduct a personal, in-depth interview with you to gain further insight into your experiences by discussing the collage.

What time period is involved?

The collages can be done in the comfort of your own home. Making the collage should not take more than two (2) hours of your time and can be done at any time of day. A further two (2) hours will be required in which I will conduct an interview and discuss the collage you have compiled. The interviews will be scheduled for a time and a place that suits you best. It may, however, be necessary that I conduct more than one interview if it seems necessary and if there are certain questions regarding your first interview that need clarification.

What are your rights as a participant in this project?

Your participation in his project is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason and without prejudice.

Source of additional information

If at any stage during the study you feel that you need more information regarding the study and its purpose, please do not hesitate to make contact with me, Ms Yendra Marx (012) 998-9033 / 083 292 0748 or with my supervisor, Dr. G. van Schalkwyk (012) 420 2921

Confidentiality

All information obtained during this study is strictly confidential. Data that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information that identifies you or your family as participants in this investigation.

APPENDIX B: Research Consent Form

I, _____ understand that I am being asked to participate in a research study focusing on my experience as a first-time father. The study is being conducted by Yendra Marx, a Masters (Research Psychology) student at the University of Pretoria, under the supervision of Dr. G.J. van Schalkwyk. If I have any questions about the study or about my rights as a research participant, I may call Dr. G.J. van Schalkwyk at (012) 420 – 2921 or Yendra Marx at (012) 998-9033 / 083 292 074.

I have received, read and understood the Participant Information Leaflet regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form for future reference.

I understand that I choose to participate in this study and that any and all information I disclose will be handled with utmost confidentiality and that by disclosing information I agree to it that the researcher may use her professional and ethical discretion to use or disclose this information for the purpose of her research only. I understand that the interview(s) will be audio taped and the tapes will be kept confidential in the same way as all other information.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and under these conditions, I agree to participate in this study about the experience of first-time fathers.

Interviewee: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

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