

**PATERNAL COMMITMENT**

**AND**

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

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## Abstract

This study explored the effects of paternal involvement on the quality of life of fathers. Data were gathered from 56 fathers who had at least one child under the age of 10 years. Respondents completed self-report measures which assessed their level of involvement in child care, proportion of contribution to the total family income, perception of social supports, level of self-esteem, as well as objective and subjective quality of life. Four main findings emerged. First, higher levels of paternal involvement together with a greater contribution to family finances were related to fathers providing lower scores on both the objective and subjective domains of the quality of life measure. Second, a greater contribution to family finances predicted a higher subjective quality of life scores. Third, a negative association was found between the level of paternal involvement and perceived social supports. That is, fathers that remained at home appeared to suffer from greater social isolation. Finally, no relationship was found between levels of involvement or of economic support and self-esteem. The positive relationship between financial responsibility and subjective quality of life suggests that the breadwinner-role still features in the paternal script. The poorer quality of life scores reported by fathers when they showed high commitment to both child care and the family finances might be attributed to role-overload. In conclusion, while the image of the involved father might be popular, the reality of being a co-parent does not appear to appeal to many men because of the associated costs in career prospects and sense of social isolation.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Over the past 25 years increasing attention has been paid to the nature and implications of the paternal role. A growing number of publications on fatherhood have appeared in Western countries, including Australia, and it has been the subject of recent conferences and government reports (e.g.. Russell et al., 1999). Critical scrutiny of fatherhood can be traced back to 1828 (Lewis, 1995), but in psychology it was Freud who drew attention to father and child relationships (Richards, 1987). Recently several investigators (e.g. Moss, 1995; Weiss, 1998) have noted that decades of social change have necessitated increased attention on fatherhood. Nonetheless, in a review of the area, Russell et al. (1999) claimed that research into fathers remains under-represented and further exploration of the paternal role is necessary to increase understanding of its impact on all family members.

The type of research required today is different from that of previous decades. As noted by Lamb (1997), it is no longer necessary for researchers to attempt to justify the importance of fatherhood. It is accepted that fathers are effectively and formatively salient. Rather than simply comparing the effects of fathers to those of mothers, research has begun to focus on the finer details and concerns of fatherhood, recognising its multidimensionality and its many indirect influences.

### **1.1. Historical Overview**

The fatherhood construct has to be considered in the context of time and place (West, 1998). A number of American researchers have traced the changing roles of fathers in the family (e.g., Grisworld, 1993; Lamb, 1986, 1995, 1997, 1998; Pleck

& Pleck, 1997) and have observed shifts in the conceptualisation of fatherhood, where at different times, different aspects in a complex, multifaceted role, have been emphasised.

Pleck and Pleck (1997) examined how fatherhood has changed in America over the past 100 years. They attributed changes in the ideals of fatherhood to shifts in economic imperatives. For example, the breadwinner role, which is often assumed to be the dominant paternal function in Western society, was not of such importance at the turn of the century (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). In the 19th century, spouses, parents and children were relatively distant, and legally both women and children were the man's property (Richards, 1987). In the early part of this century, fathers' foremost duty was to be the moral teacher (Lamb, 1986). In the 1930s, mothers became the primary caregivers and fathers took on a more passive role (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). With the industrial revolution home and work became separate, and women came to be seen as naturally suited to nurturing. At the same time breadwinning became central to fatherhood. Griswold (1993) described breadwinning as the unifying element in fathers' lives, its obligations common to men of all classes and races, shaping their sense of self, manhood and gender. Breadwinning was supported by law, affirmed by history and sanctioned by every element in society and became synonymous with maturity, respectability, and masculinity (Griswold, 1993). The Great Depression left many men unemployed, but instead of increased involvement, they often deserted their families entirely. This indicates that money was the men's foremost goal rather than involvement in family life (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). In the 1940s and 1950s strong masculine role models were considered essential for boys so as they would not become

effeminate, or display communist or fascist tendencies (Lamb, 1986; Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

Major events, like the industrial revolution and the World Wars, had enormous impact on the structure of the Western family. The industrial revolution led to a division of labour between the sexes, creating a distinction between the private and public sphere. Conversely, the wars forced women into the workforce (Horna & Lupri, 1987; Russell, 1983). Since the Second World War the proportion of women in paid occupations has grown from about a quarter to nearly half of the entire workforce (Blau & Ehrenberg, 1997). These changes have impacted on the family structure and the social context of men as parents (Russell et al., 1999).

The attitudes of fathers towards the parenting role have changed along with the entry of women into paid employment. Pleck and Pleck (1997) noted that a new rationale for fathers being involved in their families emerged in the 1950s. That is, parenting was something to enjoy and fatherhood became "the best of men's hobbies" (p.43). Concurrent with this, however, was an increase in father-absence, due to higher divorce rates (Lewis, 1995; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Fatherhood as a pastime and father absence both appear to be indicative of an attitude of fathering being optional.

Since the 1970s, the nurturing father ideal has become *en vogue*, where active parenting is considered as part of being a 'good' father. Aligned with the increased emphasis on men's position in the family, men have been encouraged to review their high personal investment in the increasingly unstable world of work (Moss, 1995). However, Russell et al. (1999) indicated that a reconsideration of



men's investment in paid work and a shift in emphasis to their position in the family, would challenge the very premises of traditionally perceived masculinity.

Recently, a new type of father image, endorsed by feminism, has emerged, the egalitarian father or the co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). According to Pleck and Pleck (1997), this new kind of father is required today since in Western countries both parents are likely to be active in the workforce due to economic pressures. This exposes mothers to role overload and makes children vulnerable to neglect. Unlike previous ideals, the co-parent does not allocate domestic and breadwinning responsibilities according to gender. Fathers may yet be socially less skilled at child rearing, but innately a father is as capable a carer as the mother.

Pleck and Pleck (1997) identified a dual function of this fatherhood ideal, the promotion of change in gender roles and the reinforcement of class distinction by serving as a sign of the more privileged classes' conception of its enlightened attitude towards fathering. Policies stating that caring and bringing up children is the responsibility of both the mother and the father, endorse this notion of equality (Moss & Brannen, 1987). Families therefore, once premised on gender differentiation, are in a process of change where gender equality is becoming a legal and moral principle (Eichler, 1997).

## **1.2. The Father's Role Today**

Over the last three decades, women have acquired greater negotiating power through their increased financial contribution to the family. Nevertheless, this has not automatically translated into a correlation between women's paid work and men's family work (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). As noted by Eichler (1997), the division of

labour within the family is greatly "out of kilter" (p.60). Women have adopted most of the roles previously held by men and yet men have not taken on half of the tasks previously done by women. Because the move by mothers into paid work has not been mirrored by a move of fathers into unpaid work, many mothers have dual roles (Russell, 1983).

Comparing the findings of several studies exploring the effect of maternal employment, Pleck (1997) concluded that there was a substantially higher availability and direct involvement by fathers when the mother was employed. He estimated that in these families the fathers' availability for their children, expressed as a percentage of the mother's involvement, increased from 33% to 65% and their direct interaction with children rose from 20-25% to 33%. However, these figures need to be viewed with some caution, since the apparent increase in paternal involvement may merely reflect a decrease in maternal involvement due to work commitments (Lamb, 1997). Furthermore, fathers may have overestimated their level of involvement in order to appear to be good fathers, that is nurturant, involved in child care, and participating in domestic duties. This tendency for men to overestimate their involvement has been identified as a general flaw in investigations based on self-reports by fathers (e.g. Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). In order to overcome this weakness, some studies (e.g., Russell, 1983) have included data from mothers.

There are signs that the division of labour between mothers and fathers is gradually becoming more equitable. O'Brien and Jones (1995) examined the perception of fatherhood held by secondary students in London and found that young people expected fathers to be participative and emotionally involved with

their children. Similarly, Smith (1995) noted an increase in fathers' participation in infant-care tasks since the 1950s and a desire by fathers to be more involved.

Lamb, Pleck and Levine (1987) ventured that many young men, dissatisfied with the relationship they have with their own fathers, were less eager to define personal success solely through a career. Recent opinion polls seem to reflect this trend. American men from a variety of backgrounds have shown that they share a common goal, namely to be good fathers, involved with children in a caring and nurturing way (Kimmel, 1995). Similarly, in an Australian investigation, Russell et al. (1999) listed as men's greatest concerns, their changing identity, their relationships and their future role as fathers.

### **1.3. Gender Stereotypes and Fatherhood**

Men have become more involved in the family, however as indicated, this increased responsibility has been limited. The overall proportion of families where fathers take primary responsibility for child care remains small. In the 1980s these families made up 1-2% of Australian households (Russell, 1983) and a recent report (Russell et al., 1999) showed little, if any, increase. Nfarsiglio (1995) proposed that in order for fathers to become co-parents, it is necessary that there be substantial changes in attitudes. Cultural scenarios pertaining to fatherhood will need to be revised to incorporate both fathers interpersonal and financial commitment to children, so that the notion of co-parenting will become part of the fathers' internal script. Until then, since parenting rarely seems to be a truly negotiated task, a lack of role clarity will prevail which leads couples to resort to stereotypical gender roles, especially when there are social and economic restraints (Weiss, 1998).

The function of scripts is to enable people to conduct relationships along preprogrammed scenarios, without having to continually re-establish basic parameters (McKnight & Sutton, 1994). On an individual level, the availability of scripts provides comfort, security and efficiency, making them hard to shift. On a broader level, the ideologies informing scripts and stereotypes ought to be questioned as to whose interests they represent, thus allowing a deconstruction of the scripts and stereotypes.

In the past, changes in the parental script have been impeded by what Russell (1983) refers to as "myths" pertaining to the current state of the Western family. Such myths include the belief that the nuclear family, with the mother at home and

the father employed, is the dominant family type. In reality, there is considerable variety in the forms families take. A second myth includes the rigid sexual division between paid labour and child care being 'natural' and universal. In fact, this role division is relatively new and in many societies child care is the responsibility of the community.

Some of the most powerful stereotypes relate to people's self-perception of their gender role. In a review of the research, McKnight and Sutton (1994) noted that people often unconsciously work to maintain gender stereotypes. They proposed that stereotypes become models for gender development and the criteria against which successful growth and maturity is measured.

For the exploration of, and deconstruction of gender stereotypes, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between sex and gender. Social scientists use the term 'sex' when referring to the biological aspects distinguishing male and female, whereas 'gender' is socially constructed, referring to the cultural meanings attributed to these biological differences (Kimmel, 1995). Parenting often is understood as a gendered role (Rogers & White, 1998). Social institutions, like fatherhood, are not simply followed but are created by people and the family is instrumental in shaping such roles and thus has been described as a "gender factory" (Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998: 23). In the family, the polarisation of masculine and feminine is both created and displayed. Gender has come to be regarded as a reasonable and legitimate basis for the distribution of rights, power, privilege and responsibility within the family, and rather than the partner, other members of the same gender serve as a basis of comparison (Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998). These stereotyped gender roles often result in an inequality of

power, which when abused, can contribute to adverse conditions and even violence (Weiss, 1998). Weiss (1998) stressed the importance of a deconstruction of gender stereotypes in order to facilitate co-parenthood.

Lewis and O'Brien (1987) contrasted motherhood and fatherhood 'mandates' which reflect the gender stereotypes. They referred to a source from 1916, which described how the monotony and drudgery of childrearing was minimised while emphasis was given to the joys and compensations of motherhood, thus making it seem desirable. The 'fatherhood mandate', according to Lewis and O'Brien (1987), has always been a better deal, encouraging consolidation and development in the public sphere. Based on this division, the neat and tidy appearance of household and children remains a measure of good mothering (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987), whereas professional success is a positive measure for men regardless of whether or not they are fathers. In other words, the fathers identify more closely with the work role than the family role and depend upon their success in the public domain for status (Russell, 1983).

The above divisions describe stereotypical situations, to which, of course, there are many exceptions. Hood (1993), for instance, postulated that the two worlds of the private and the public sphere are a myth and ignore the experiences of many men. But despite some exceptions, it is generally the case that, although both parents have the opportunity to earn an income and be good parents, many women and only few men are responsible for both roles (Flichler, 1997). It appears that the majority of fathers are not ready to defy stereotypical role expectations.

Perhaps one of the reasons why fathers are so slow in adapting a more involved parenting role is the lack of appropriate role models (McKnight & Sutton,

1994). Daly (1995) explored the function of role models as an important mediator in the type of role fathers adopt. In a qualitative study, Daly (1995) interviewed 32 fathers from intact families with children 6 years old and under. He found that men were experiencing difficulties in finding appropriate role models for fatherhood, and that often they could not rely on one specific model. He attributed the lack of role models not only to the changes in expectations of what fatherhood should be like, but also to the changing patterns of work and parental subsystems. Most frequently men considered their own father to be a model of some sort, but often as an example of how they *did* not want to be a father themselves (Daly, 1995).

#### **1.4. Antecedents and Barriers to Greater Involvement**

As noted by Russell (1987), when examining life-style issues it is important to investigate the process of adjustment, as well as the reasons why the life-style was adopted. Research has shown that men and women from non-traditional families overtly reject the patterns set by their own parents (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). However, the lack of role models or a reference group which can serve as a point of comparison for shaping their identity, can leave men trying to adopt a less traditional style of fathering while being unprepared and uncertain about what is required of them (Daly, 1995). This lack of a 'clear job description' makes it very difficult for men to incorporate this new fatherhood ideal (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987).

In an Australian study, Russell (1983, 1987) investigated non-traditional families with young children, in which the father had either the major responsibility for the day-to-day child care, or shared this equally with his partner. Data were gathered through interviews with both parents (N=71). Russell (1983) explored why

these families decided to allocate parental responsibilities in a non-traditional fashion, and the impact this experience had on family members. Antecedents to the change were investigated and factors found to be important were: a relatively high income; the parents had good employment potential, especially the mothers; parents were able to have flexibility in hours of employment; and certain family characteristics, such as fewer and younger children. Surprisingly, the amount of time mothers worked was not related to the fathers' level of involvement (Russell, 1983). In addition, contrary observations from American studies (e.g., Pleck & Pleck, 1997), Russell (1983) found that non-traditional fathers did not differ from more traditional fathers according to their socio-economic status. Rather, personal beliefs about parenting such as more responsible attitudes towards child care and the welfare of children, and previous experiences (e.g., attendance at pre-natal classes), were instrumental antecedents to shared-care-giving fathers.

In reporting the positive consequences of a non-traditional family structure, Russell (1983) noted that above all fathers commented on the improved relationships with their children. Mothers reported greater independence and job satisfaction, yet they felt they were losing closeness with their children. Furthermore, only about 30% of relatives, friends and neighbours were perceived as being supportive of this lifestyle choice.

One of the puzzles Russell (1983) encountered was that many fathers who had claimed to enjoy the non-traditional life-style, reverted to more traditional arrangements. Only 10 out of 27 families re-interviewed 2 years later, were in the same non-traditional family pattern. The initial enthusiasm was at odds with the



tendency for families not to maintain alternative arrangements. To date, the research has not provided an adequate explanation for this occurrence.

Russell (1983) attributed a reluctance to take on a non-traditional role to men's concepts of typical masculine behaviour. He suggested, therefore, that non-traditional fathers were different from other fathers even before they decided upon their role, that they were higher in self-esteem, independence and interpersonal sensitivity. These personal characteristics alone would not ensure someone became a non-traditional father, but together with certain family factors, would influence the decision for shared care giving.

Lamb (1997) referred to a combination of institutional and cultural barriers, as well as certain personality characteristics and a lack of motivation, as impediments to paternal involvement. He observed that there has been a considerable change in the type of tasks fathers have become prepared to do, but only a modest change in the amount of time they are prepared to invest. Lamb (1997) argued that increased motivation alone is not enough to bring about ~ a certain amount of skills and self-confidence is also essential, as well as sensitivity to the child's needs.

Institutional practices, above all workplace policies, can act as a barrier to greater parental involvement, especially for men who are expected to assume the main breadwinning role (Lamb, 1997). In an Australian investigation, men reported their involvement in paid work to be the major barrier to being an effective parent (Russell et al., 1999). Pleck (1997) reviewed a number of studies which explored stress on fathers due to work-family conflicts, and found that stress could be alleviated through more favourable policies and practices. For example, the

availability of flexitime was found to be effective, but it was still only available to a small proportion of workers. Other institutions, such as schools, have been reported to have made little effort to include fathers (e.g., Lamb, 1997).

Another important factor which has prevented men from taking greater involvement is a lack of social support. Unlike women, men's social networks tend not to provide encouragement for fathering or the relevant resources (Pleck, 1997). Support from within the family, particularly the mother, is also crucial. Mothers and members of the extended family are not always ready to adopt changes in the family structure which break with tradition, such as the father taking primary responsibility for child care (Lamb, 1997; Pleck, 1997).

Traditionally, the unequal distribution of responsibility for children and home was explained by availability of time, economic dependency, and gender ideology (Allen & Hawkins, 1999), but with the increase in women's economic power, explanations for the maintenance of the status quo had to be sought. The lack of a collaborative arrangement in regard to home and child care has been attributed to what has been called 'maternal gatekeeping'. Allen and Hawkins (1999) define maternal gatekeeping as "the mothers' reluctance to relinquish responsibility over family matters by setting rigid standards, external validation of a mothering identity, and differentiated conceptions of family roles" (p. 199).

Through gatekeeping it is said that men's opportunities for learning and growing by caring for home and children is limited (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Dye (1998) traced the term back to 30 years ago when women tried to enter the 'place of men', the workplace. By viewing the family as the woman's domain, the mother is not only controlling the family relationships, but expects to set standards as to how

things ought to be done (Allen & Hawkins 1999; Dye, 1998). Dye (1998) suggests that, as a consequence, our families are too much structured around women's wants and needs, and neglect those of men.

Gatekeeping, as a factor impeding greater paternal involvement, is controversial. The emphasis on gatekeeping is at odds with the notion that paternal involvement is determined by multiple factors with no one factor exerting predominant influence (Pleck, 1997). Further, Aldous, Mulligan and Bjarnason (1998) questioned the importance of gatekeeping, suggesting that children who enjoy the attention of one parent are likely to benefit also from the care of the other, whereas if one parent is less involved, the other is not likely to make up the difference.

## **1.5. Effects of Father Involvement**

Research on paternal involvement has examined the impact of increased attention by the fathers on family members. This research can be divided into three main areas, investigations of the effects of father involvement on children, on mothers, and on the men themselves.

### **1.5.1. Effects on Children**

Fathers' involvement has been shown to have a significant impact on the development of both boys and girls (Russell et al., 1999). Children's perceptions of the effects of substantial paternal involvement have been found to vary across culturally and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds, but mostly they have been reported to be positive and life enhancing (Russell et al., 1999). In reviewing the area, Lamb (1995, 1997) reported a range of consistent effects, including that the

children display increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, and a more internal locus of control.

The influence of fathers on the well-being of the child can be through direct interaction, such as through care taking, teaching and play (Lamb, 1995) or through more indirect but nevertheless substantial ways, such as economic support by which the father contributes to the rearing and well-being of the child. He can further contribute indirectly by acting as an emotional support, especially for the mother, as well as easing her workload through being involved in child-related housework. This support in turn enhances the quality of her parenting (Lamb, 1997).

As noted by Russell et al. (1999), family problems are increasingly defined in terms of a lack of involvement and insufficient support by fathers, especially when children display behaviour problems. At the same time, fathers taking additional responsibility has been regarded as a positive strategy to help address these problems (Russell et al., 1999).

### 1.5.2. Marital Effects

The experience of a close parent-child relationship, or the lack of it, also impacts on the marital relationship. According to Dinnerstein (cited in Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent, & Ffill, 1995) "The process of nurturing life is the most profoundly transforming experience in the range of human possibilities. Because women have this experience and men generally don't, we live and think and love across a great gap of understanding' (p.56). Hawkins et al. (1995) noted that greater responsibility by men for nurturing children will reduce developmental incongruence between fathers and mothers; an incongruence causing many marital difficulties.

The parental role is central to the stress reported by employed mothers; a stress attributed to greater overall responsibility (e.g., McLanahan & Adams, 1989; Russell et al., 1999). This stress would be reduced by less role-overload, by more equitable distribution of home and child care. In addition, equality in paid work cannot be achieved unless men take an equal share of this unpaid work (Russell, 1983).

Some negative aspects of increased paternal involvement on the mother have also been reported. Despite the relieving of the work overload, there are likely to be significant costs given the extent of socialisation for motherhood most women experience. For example, Russell (1983) found in non-traditional or shared-we giving families 23% of mothers reported guilt about leaving children and 33% regretted the loss of contact between mother and child. Russell (1983) further reported that mothers can experience negative reactions from relatives for their lessened contact with their children.

### 1. 5. 3. Effects on Fathers

In more traditional family arrangements men can feel restrained by their role as it is less central than that of the mother, and envy the close relationship between the mother and child (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). Russell (1983) observed a significant change in the father-child relationship when fathers adopted a shared-care-giving role. Extended sole responsibility made for a more realistic, less superficial relationship, which was particularly gratifying because of its expressive nature (Russell, 1983). The fathers interviewed in Russell's (1983) study reported that they and their children had become closer, had a better understanding of each other and that they enjoyed the love and affection they shared. Many fathers described this closeness, both emotional and physical, as a highly valued new dimension in their lives. Geiger (1996), who interviewed a group of fathers she called "primary care-givers" reported similar reactions. She noted that these fathers, who have reconsidered values of professional achievement in favour of parenthood, reported satisfaction with the deep involvement with their children.

Children can become a potential stimulus of men's development (Hawkins; et al., 1995). Erikson introduced the notion of generativity in his theory of personality development to reflect this reciprocal influence (Snarey, 1993). Broadly, generativity refers to the nurturing of one's offspring, a widening commitment beyond the self and care for the next generation. A failure of achieving generativity has been found to result in self-indulgence and may jeopardise adult mental health (Hawkins et al., 1995). Hawkins et al. (1995) proposed that research should be less concerned with a detailed examination of "domestic democracy" (p.53) but would gain from a greater emphasis on adult men's growth and maturity.

Despite reported benefits such as the potential for personal fulfilment through closer and richer relationships with the children, along with the positive influences on their development, fathers appear to be reluctant to move away from the more traditional role. Fathers are not likely to change to a less traditional position, unless they are able to recognise advantages for themselves (Lamb et al., 1987). As Lamb et al. (1987) warned, while increased paternal involvement can be rewarding, it should not be romanticised. There are a number of costs associated with greater paternal involvement, including the likelihood of diminished earnings and career opportunities. Other costs include possible marital friction, boredom with tedious daily chores, and social isolation from disapproving friends and relatives. Fathers who stay at home with young children often find the community and institutions are insensitive to their needs. Since these fathers are not given the support women offer each other, they become even more socially isolated than women in the same situation (Russell, 1987). Greif and DeMaris (1995), who studied single fathers with custody of their children, noted that most were suffering from loneliness and a low sense of personal worth.

In summary, increased commitment to parenting has been found to have a complex array of effects on fathers. These include positive effects such as personal fulfilment (Greif, 1995; Russell, 1983, 1987), but also negative effects such as increased stress, loneliness and low self-esteem (Lamb, 1987). It would be of interest for future studies to explore whether the positive developmental factors balance or outweigh the stresses associated with looking after young children in an unpaid capacity and whether they outweigh the costs of defying stereotypical expectations. In particular, investigations could examine the effect of paternal

involvement on the quality of life of fathers. A search of the literature has indicated that no investigation has examined the influence of father involvement on quality of life. A general measure would be valuable as it could examine a wide range of dimensions such as changes in close relationships, standing in the community, productivity and the level of material well-being (Cummins, 1997).



## **1.6. The Concepts of Commitment and Involvement**

Investigators have used a wide range of approaches to operationalise the construct of commitment to fatherhood. For example, Russell (1983) interviewed fathers about what they did on a day-to-day basis, and distinguished between four types of fathers in intact families: the uninterested/unavailable father, whose involvement is minimal; the traditional father, whose primary function is that of the breadwinner and decision-maker; the 'good' father, who is much more actively involved in the care of his children but remains the mother's helper; and the non-traditional/highly participant father, who takes on independent responsibility for the majority of child care and related tasks. Similarly, Lamb et al. (1987) distinguished between three dimensions of involvement: engagement or interaction, consisting of direct care giving or interaction through play; accessibility to the child while engaged in other tasks; and responsibility, that is knowing what the child needs and making decisions on this basis.

Although valuable in that they distinguish between different types of fathering, both of these approaches to operationalise paternal involvement fail to fully account for the various ways fathers can be involved with their children. In particular, they tend not to include the more indirect, but nevertheless substantial, ways fathers influence their children's well-being, such as through their economic support.

Doherty, Kouneski and Erickson (1998) identified a relationship between motivation for paternal commitment and real or perceived success as a breadwinner. Successful performance in the provider role, as is the stereotype, is considered indicative of fathers being committed to their families. Commitment to both child

care and breadwinning manifest a sense of responsibility. Professional success can enhance a sense of competence and boost self-esteem, making fathers more open to increased involvement, Doherty et al. (1998), who criticised much of the research into fatherhood for having stressed father involvement, while ignoring the economic support fathers give their families. They saw a father's success as provider to be tied to the quality of his fathering, especially as disparities in the earning-power of men and women have yet to disappear (Doherty et al., 1998).

It has further been suggested that to exclude economic support from 'involved' fatherhood made the concept "mother-defined", that is, the involvement construct based on forms of involvement traditionally shown by mothers (Pleck, 1997). Research has tended to compare mothers' and fathers' respective levels of involvement with mothering as the benchmark for fathering (Doherty et al., 1998). Dye (1998) reported that men were uncomfortable with the feminisation of the fathering role, as reflected in the notion of being the mother's helper or the 'male mother'. The shift in maternal employment may mean that economic support becomes just as important to motherhood as fatherhood and so should be included in all measurements of parental commitment.

A further limitation with the typical methods of categorising types of fathers was identified by Pleck (1997) who noted that emphasis was generally placed on the amount, not the kind, of fathering men perform. A simple time measure of combined housework and child care is inadequate since increased time spent at home has been reported not to automatically lead to better parenting, particularly in the case of unemployed fathers (Pleck, 1997).

A final limitation relates to the reliance of researchers on interview data (e.g., Cohen, 1993; Daly, 1995; Geiger, 1996; Rogers & M%te, 1998; Russell, 1982,1983,1987). These descriptive studies of paternal involvement have yielded a wealth of information. Nonetheless, they are prone to subjective bias and due to problems of reliability, have limited generalisability.

In summary, a range of problems in operationalising paternal involvement have been identified. These include an overemphasis of the amount of time spent with the children and a failure to include economic support. Not only should measures be expanded to include financial contribution to the family, they should assess both the amount and the quality of child care tasks performed. In addition, the basis of comparison should not be maternal involvement, rather measures should allow for the fathers' uniqueness in how the role should best be fulfilled.

### **1.7. Re~rch,Rationale and Aims**

With the increasing number of families where both parents are in the paid work force, the question arises of who takes care of the children (Hayes, Nielsen-Hewett, & Warton, 1999). In order to encourage men to become more committed to the parenting role, an identification of the advantages greater involvement has for them could be of benefit (Lamb et al., 1987). This may be especially important as parenting has traditionally not been central to the male role as mothering has for women. If men are expected to make sacrifices in the work domain, where traditionally they have measured their success and gained status, fatherhood might have to offer them comparable scope for achievement and rewards.

Literature investigating the impact increased involvement has on men, has indicated positive and negative effects. It has been suggested that greater involvement with parenting is of benefit to the fathers' adult development and emotional well-being (e.g., Snarey, 1993). In addition, it has been reported that close family relationships can provide men with a greater sense of personal fulfilment (e.g., Geiger, 1996; Russell, 1983). On the other hand, investigations (e.g., Greif & DeMaris, 1995; Lamb, 1987; Russell, 1983, 1987) have reported that paternal involvement can have negative consequences for the subjective well-being of fathers, for example a decrease in self-esteem and social support.

The present study explored the overall effects of paternal involvement on men's lives. Whereas previous investigations have generally relied on descriptive methods, standardised measures were used. A measure was designed which incorporated both active involvement with children and the amount of economic support men give their families. Rather than restricting fathers to categories, such a measure allowed for an investigation of fathers' levels of commitment on a continuum. Furthermore, it enabled the exploration of interactions between levels of involvement and levels of fulfilment of the more traditional breadwinner role, measured by estimates of the level of financial contribution.

The primary aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between levels of paternal involvement, levels of financial contribution and quality of life. Given the lack of studies which have investigated fatherhood and quality of life, no specific hypotheses were proposed.

A secondary aim was to explore the potential negative effects of extensive paternal involvement. The relationship between levels of involvement and

proportion of financial contribution were assessed in regard to self-esteem and social support. Research has indicated a decrease in self-esteem and social support for fathers who spend extensive time caring for their children (e.g., Greif & DeMaris, 1995; Russell, 1983). On this basis, it is hypothesised that a decrease of both self-esteem and social support will be related to increased levels of involvement. On the other hand, a positive linear relationship between self-esteem and the proportion of financial support is expected, since men typically have depended upon success in the public domain for status and success (e.g., Russell, 1983).

Finally, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between quality of life, self-esteem and social support. This part of the investigation was primarily intended to confirm the validity of the finding of this study. Previous investigations (Cummins, 1997) have reported significant positive relationships between these variables. This part of the investigation was primarily intended to confirm the validity of the finding of this study. Therefore, it is hypothesised that both self-esteem and social support will have a significant positive relationship with quality of life.

## **Chapter 2 - Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

Participants were fathers with at least one child under the age of 10 years. A convenience sampling method was employed in order to obtain a representation of both highly involved and less involved fathers. Recruitment took place in three ways. The highly involved fathers were contacted through father-child playgroups. Fathers from these groups also identified fathers of their acquaintance who were in a similar situation. The less involved group of fathers were selected through a large accounting and auditing firm. One of the partners was briefed about the research project and asked to pass questionnaires on to suitable members of staff. Finally, a more general group of fathers was obtained through children's sport teams. These fathers were approached at sporting events and invited to participate. Most of the recruitment took place in Melbourne's bayside suburbs.

Approximately 90 questionnaires were distributed, 56 were returned, leaving a response rate of approximately 62%. The majority of participants were born in Australia ( $n=41$ ), the second largest group in Great Britain ( $n=9$ ), and the remainder born in a variety of countries including Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, New Zealand and Sudan. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 55 years, with a mean age of 40.57 years ( $SD=5.98$ ).

Data were collected concerning the education level and employment status of participants, the composition of participants households and the age groups of their children. Frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Frequencies of Participants' Employment Status, Highest Level of Education Completed,  
Composition of Household and Age Group of Children (N=56)*

	Frequency	Percent
<u>Employment Status</u>		
Full-time employed	39	69.6
Part-time employed	10	17.9
Unemployed	7	12.5
<u>Education</u>		
Incomplete secondary	10	17.9
Trade certificate	4	7.1
Diploma	6	10.7
Degree		19
		33.9
Post-graduate degree	12	21.4
Other	5	8.9
<u>Composition of the household</u>		
Mother/Father/Children	41	73.2
Parent/Step-parent/Children	3	5.4
Step-children		
Mother/Father/Only child	4	7.1
Single parent/Only child	3	5.4
Single parent/Children	5	8.9
<u>Children's age group</u>		
All school-aged	23	41.1
One or more child younger than school-age	33	58.9

As can be seen from Table 1, participants were mostly in full-time employment (69.6%), and tertiary educated (55.3%). The largest proportion of fathers (73.2%) were members of a traditional family with both biological parents living at home. A total of 14.3% of fathers were single parents. Two groups of children were formed based on the reported ages of children; families with school age children and families with at least 1 child of pre-school age. More than half of the fathers (58.9%) had at least one child who was younger than school age. The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 5, at an average of 2.43.

## **2.2. Materials**

The participants were asked to complete 5 questionnaires. These included a demographic information questionnaire and a measure of commitment, both of which were designed for this study. These 2 measures were followed by the Quality of Life Scale, the Social Provisions Scale and the Self-Esteem Inventory.

### **Demographic Information**

The first 6 questions sought demographic information (see Appendix C). Respondents were asked to indicate their age, country of birth, employment status, level of education reached, size and composition of the household, and the number and ages of their children.

### **Measure of Commitment**

This measure consisted of 8 questions which assessed the level of parental involvement. These items were based on interview questions used in qualitative research conducted by Russell (1983) and Lamb et al. (1987). The self-report scale was designed to assess the level of paternal involvement. Respondents were asked



to indicate their level of parental responsibility by estimating the number of hours per week they were available to their children when they were awake; they were solely responsible for their children; they spent preparing meals or feeding their children; they were involved in your children's playtime, sport and leisure; and they spent on helping with school work. For the next 3 questions participants were asked to provide an estimate in terms of their proportion of responsibility: for looking after children when they were sick; for household tasks (Le, washing, cleaning); and for making a financial contribution you make to the family's income.

The final item asked fathers to complete the following item: "Would you prefer to be solely responsible for your children... ", by selecting a rating from a 5-point Likert type scale which ranged from *1 =much more often* to *5=much less often*.

#### Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale - Adult. ComQol-AS (Cummins, 1997)

Although quality of life has been described as an "elusive construct" (Cummins, McCabe, Romeo, & Gullone, 1994:372), a comprehensive scale, the ComQoPAS, has recently been developed in Australia. This measure is a 35-item multidimensional scale, which defines quality of life in terms of 7 domains; material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, place in community, and emotional well-being. The scale has 2 axes separating quality of life into an objective measurement (i.e., culturally relevant measures of objective well-being) and subjective measurement (i.e., domain satisfaction weighted by the importance of the domain to the individual).

For the objective axis, the questionnaire contains 3 culturally-relevant items for each domain. For example, to assess the intimacy domain the questions are: 'Now often do you talk with a close friend?', 'If you are feeling sad or depressed, how often does someone show that they care for you?', 'If you want to do something special, how often does someone else want to do it with you?'. Answers are indicated on a Likert type scale from 1=Almost *never* to 5= Almost always. An average score for each domain is obtained, and the average of these domain scores makes up the individual's score for objective quality of life (OQOL).

The subjective axis indicates subjective quality of life (SQOL). Scores on this axis are comprised of a rating of each domain in terms of importance and satisfaction. Importance is assessed by a question for each domain. For example: "How important to you are the things you own?". Participants provide an answer by indicating the level of importance on a Likert type scale ranging from 1 =not important at all to 5 =could not *be* more important. Satisfaction is similarly assessed by a question for each domain, for example : "How satisfied are you with the things you own?" Participants answer by indicating the level of satisfaction on a Likert type scale from 1 =*terrible* to 7=*delighted*. The satisfaction scores for each domain are weighted by the importance score through multiplication. The average of all these product scores makes up an individual's score of subjective quality of life. In the present study, to reduce the number of variables for analysis, only the total scores subjective quality of life and objective quality of life were used.

The ComQol-AS is reported to be psychometrically sound with Cronbach's alpha for internal-consistency estimates of reliability recorded as 0.64 for the 21 items of the objective sub-scale (Cummins, 1997). Reliability was further tested by

Cummins (1997) through multiple regressions using the 7 domains to predict total objective quality of life (all significant at  $p < .001$ ) and total subjective quality of life (all except *Health* significant at least at  $p < .001$ ). Test-re-test reliability has indicated stability for both objective quality of life ( $r = .86$ ) and subjective quality of life ( $r = .84$ ) (Cummins, 1997). The test manual (Cummins, 1997) lists several comparisons with other scales which attest the validity of each domain of the ConiQoPA5.

Social Provisions Scale, SP (Russell & Cutrona, 1984)

This scale consists of 24 items. It was developed to assess 6 relational provisions identified by Weiss (1974; cited in Cutrona, 1984): attachment, social integration, opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, and guidance. This scale assesses the extent to which participants perceive their social relationships to supply each of these provisions. Each provision is assessed by 4 items, 2 describing the presence and 2 the absence of the provision, for example: "Other people do not view me as competent"; "I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities"; "I have relationships where my competence and skill are recognised"; "There are people who admire my talents and abilities". Participants indicate on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree* the extent to which the statement is applicable to their current situation. Only the total social support score is formed by summing the 6 individual provision scores. To reduce the number of variables for analysis, only the total score was used in the present study.

The scale has been reported to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total social provisions score recorded as .84 (Cutrona, 1984). Inter-item

correlations between items measuring the same provision were found to range from .33 to .56 and a test-retest reliability of the total score of .55 over a 6 month period (Cutrona, 1984). The range from .03 to .07 is considered optimal for intercorrelations, if redundancy is to be avoided (Mine, 1979; cited in Cummins, 1997). Baron, Cutrona, Hicklin, Russell and Lubaroff (1990) reported that several studies provide evidence for the validity of the scale.

### Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory - Adult Form. SEI (Coopersmith, 1975)

This self-esteem inventory measures personal judgement of worthiness toward the self in social, family and personal areas (Meager & Milgrom, 1996). Self-esteem is defined as expressing an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicating the extent to which a person believes himself or herself capable, significant, successful, and worthy (Coopersmith, 1987). The short form of the adult scale, which was normed on an American population (Coopersmith, 1987), was used in this study. It consists of 25 items, for example: "I'm a lot of fun to be with" or "I often wish I were someone else", which can be answered by indicating one of two choices, *I= like me* or *O=unlike me*. The total self-esteem score consists of the sum of all answers.

The inventory has been found to be reliable with a Kuder-Richardson reliability estimate for the short form of .74 for males (Coopersmith, 1987). Coopersmith (1987) refers to numerous studies which compare the scale with other related measures that support the scale's construct validity.

### **2.3. Procedure**

The procedure employed in this study was compliant with the guidelines set by the Monash University committee on Ethics in Research on Humans. Questionnaires with a covering explanatory statement, describing the nature and purpose of the study, were distributed to all participants over a 2 month period. In several instances the researcher was available to participants for discussion of issues concerning paternal involvement. Participants had the option of completing the questionnaires immediately and returning them to the researcher or of completing the measures at their leisure and returning them using a stamped and addressed envelope. In both

cases the anonymity of participants was safeguarded by completed questionnaires being returned in sealed envelopes. Completed questionnaires were collated, scored and the data was recorded.

## Chapter 3 - Results

### 3.1. Measure of Commitment

Results were obtained from the 8 items which measured different aspects of parental commitment. These included estimates of the number of hours per week of availability to the children and of sole responsibility for the children, as well as the number of hours per week spent on feeding and food preparation, and on play, leisure and assistance with schoolwork. Furthermore, estimated proportions of responsibility for sick children, of responsibility for household tasks and for financial contribution were reported. Means, standard deviations, as well as minimum and maximum for each item are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Frequency Statistics for Items Measuring Commitment*

	No. of fathers	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Availability (Hrs/week)	55	41.24	20.16	7	98
Responsibility	56	24.48	35.65	0	150
Feeding/meals	55	5.55	6.58	0	42
Play/leisure	56	13.61	11.87	2	70
Schoolwork (Hrs/week)*	56	2.21	2.51	0	12
Responsibility for sick children %	56	32.50	29.86	0	100
Responsibility for household tasks %	55	38.64	31.63	0	100
Financial contribution %	56	70.70	32.85	0	100

\* For subsequent analyses the 2 items measuring assistance with schoolwork and time spent on play and leisure were combined, as they appeared to measure a similar kind of involvement.

As can be seen from Table 2, the wide variability indicates that fathers with high and with low involvement were represented in the sample. The item measuring satisfaction with sole responsibility indicated that 50% of fathers wished to remain the same, 32.9% wished to be somewhat more often, 8.9% much more often and 7.1% somewhat less often solely responsible for their children.

Prior to analysis, the variables were assessed for accuracy of data entry. Three fathers were found to have failed to complete 1 item each. As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), cases with missing data were allocated the group mean for that item. All obtained item scores were standardised to Z-scores. Z-scores were then checked for outliers ( $Z > 3$ ). In 4 cases, due to outliers, the Z-score was truncated to 3. Truncation was considered appropriate as the scores were found to be high but did not appear to pertain to a separate population. Finally, data were checked to ensure that assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and singularity were not violated.

In order to assess the validity of combining items into a measure of involvement, a standard principal components analysis was performed. According to Tabachnick and Fiddell (1996), exploratory factor analyses are used to describe and summarise data by grouping together items that are correlated. Usually performed in the early stages of research, they provide a tool for consolidating variables and generating hypotheses about underlying processes (Tabachnick & Fiddell, 1996). The sample size was small, but as noted by Tabachnick and Fiddell (1996), in the case of strong, reliable correlations and few, distinct factors small samples may be adequate. The total variance explained by the underlying general factor is presented in Table 3.



Table 3

*Principal Components Analysis Explaining the Total Variance of Items Measuring Commitment*

Components	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.13	59.01	59.01

Employing a minimum eigenvalue of 1 as a criterion (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), only 1 principal component was identified through principal components analysis. This factor was interpreted as a dimension of paternal involvement. Table 3 indicates that this component accounted for 59.01% of the variance. The loadings of individual items on this factor were determined and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Loadings of Individual Items onto the General Factor of Paternal Involvement*

Items	Factor
Availability	.841
Sole responsibility	.821
Meal preparation/Feeding	.840
Responsibility for sick children	.823
Responsibility for housework	.825
Play/Help with schoolwork	.590
Proportion of financial contribution	-.767

As indicated in Table 4, items loaded with consistent strength onto the general factor. The item "Please estimate the proportion of financial contribution you make to the family's income" has an inverse relationship with the factor. That is, with an increase in the proportion of financial contribution, the level of involvement tended to decrease. As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), in order to examine the internal consistency of the involvement factor a Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. The coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Inter-Item Reliability Analysis Through Cronbach's Alpha for the Factor Paternal Involvement*

Item	Corrected	Alpha if
	Item-total	Item Deleted
	Correlation	
Availability	.64	.47
Sole responsibility	.62	.48
Meal preparation/Feeding	.75	.46
Responsibility for sick children	.77	.44
Responsibility for housework	.46	.53
Play/Help with schoolwork	.43	.55
Proportion of financial contribution	-.67	.85
Reliability Coefficients for 7 items Alpha		
=.62		

As can be seen from Table 5, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the involvement factor is .62. This suggests that the measure has satisfactory internal

consistency. None of the items can be considered redundant, since the alpha coefficients all fall into the optimal range of .03 to .07 (Mine, 1979; cited in Cummins, 1997). Inspection of the alpha coefficients when were deleted reveals that if the item which examined the proportion of financial contribution was deleted, internal consistency of the factor would increase from .62 to .85. The omission of any other item would decrease the alpha coefficient. Based on these results, all items except the proportion of financial contribution were combined as the sum of Z-scores to form a measure of involvement or as a dimension of paternal commitment. The item measuring the proportion of financial contribution was treated as a separate measure or dimension of paternal commitment. For all remaining analyses paternal commitment was comprised of two dimensions, involvement and financial contribution.

### 3.2. Quality of Life, Social Provisions and Self-esteem

The relationship between the level of Paternal involvement and the proportion of the father's financial contribution and quality of life was investigated. Relationships between the independent variables involvement and financial contribution were explored separately for objective and subjective quality of life as the dependent variables. Similarly, multiple regression analyses were carried out for the dependent variables social provisions and self-esteem. Regression techniques are recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) to explore relationships in observational and survey studies. In order to explore possible interactions between the independent variables, in each of the analyses a third variable consisting of the product of the independent variables was formed.

Prior to analyses, data were screened for accuracy of data entry and for outliers. In 7 cases fathers were found to have not completed all items, these cases of missing data were eliminated listwise. Of these cases, 4 were found in the self-esteem measure, 1 in the social provisions scale and 2 in the scale for objective quality of life. Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and independence of residuals were tested and found to be met, with the exception of the variable product of paternal involvement and financial contribution which was found to be skewed and kurtoid. A decision against using transformations was made on the basis that they can complicate interpretations, and F-tests are considered to be robust to violations of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The ratio of cases to variables was considered satisfactory given Tabachnick and Fidell's (1996) recommendation of  $M-550+8$  times the number of variables.

The results of the multiple regression analysis carried out to explore the relationship between the independent variables involvement, financial contribution, as well as the product of these variables, and objective quality of life (W-54) are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of the Standard Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Objective Quality of Life*

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Involvement	-4.17	-.42	-1.74
Financial contribution	2.35	.06	.30
Product of paternal involvement and financial contribution	-3.49	-.A9	-2.70**
			R <sup>2</sup> =.16*

adjusted R<sup>2</sup> =

.11\*

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ,

The regression was significantly different from zero,  $F(3, 47) = 2.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . As can be seen from Table 6, the only independent variable to be a significant predictor of objective quality of life was the variable made of the product of levels of involvement and proportion of financial contribution ( $t = -2.70, p < .01$ ). Observation of the unstandardised regression coefficient B indicates that there is an inverse relationship between the product variable and quality of life. That is, as the proportion of financial contribution increases, the inverse relationship between involvement and quality of life is enhanced. Altogether 16% (adjusted 11 %) of the variability of objective quality of life was predicted by the scores on the independent variables.

A second multiple linear regression analysis was performed between subjective quality of life ( $N=56$ ) as the dependent variable and paternal involvement, proportion of financial contribution and the product of the two as independent variables. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*Summary of the Standard Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Variables Predicting Subjective Quality of Life*

Independent variables	B	$\beta$	t
Pat~ Involvement	-.52	-.12	-1.12
Proportion of financial contribution	3.39	.34	1.96*

Product of paternal involvement	-,70	.29	-2.43*
and financial contribution			R=20 <sup>2</sup>
			adjusted R2 = . 15 <sup>2</sup>

\* $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 7, the regression was significantly different from zero,  $F(3,49) = 4.08$ ,  $p < .05$ . Two of the independent variables were found to be significant predictors of subjective quality of life; proportion of financial contribution ( $t = -1.96$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the product variable ( $t = -2.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Observation of the B coefficients indicates that there is a positive linear relationship between the proportion of financial contribution and subjective quality of life, but that this relationship becomes inverse when financial contribution and involvement increase together. Altogether 20% (adjusted 15%) of the variability of subjective quality of life was predicted by the scores on the independent variables.

A third standard multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to investigate whether the availability of social provisions (AT--55) could be predicted from the level of involvement, the proportion of financial contribution, or the product of the two independent variables. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Variables Predicting Social Provisions*

Independent variables	B	$\beta$	$t$
Paternal Involvement	-1.33	-.48	-2.44*
Proportion of financial contribution	-.52	-.04	-.25
Product of paternal involvement	-1.02	-.49	-3.00**

and financial contribution

$R^2 = .18^*$

adjusted  $R^2 = .13^*$

---

$p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$

The regression was significantly different from zero,  $F(3, 48) = 3.62$ ,  $p < .05$ . As can be seen in Table 8, two variables were *found* to be significant predictors of the availability of social provisions, the level of involvement ( $t = -2.44$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the product variable ( $t = 3.00$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Observation of the B coefficients indicates that the relationship between criterion and predictors is in both cases inverse. Altogether 18% (adjusted 13%) of the variability of social provisions was predicted by the independent variables.

To investigate whether paternal involvement and proportion of financial contribution were predictors of self-esteem (N=52), on their own or in interaction, a fourth multiple linear regression analysis was performed. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Variables Predicting Self-Esteem*

Independent variables	B	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Paternal Involvement	-.49	-.28	-1.18
Proportion of financial contribution	-2.34	-.32	-1.56
Product of paternal involvement and financial contribution	.19	.14	.76
			$R^2 = .09$
			adjusted $R^2 = .02$

$p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Table 9 shows that the regression was not significantly different from zero,  $F(3, 45) = 1.40$ ,  $p > .05$ . No significant predictors for self-esteem were found. Altogether only 9% (adjusted 2%) of the variability in self-esteem was predicted.

A final multiple linear regression was conducted to explore the relationship between the participants subjective quality of life score and their scores for social provisions and self-esteem. The results are presented in Table 10.



Table 10

*Summary of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Of the Variables Social Provisions and Se~(-Esteem and Subjective Quality ofLife*

Independent variables	B	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Social Provisions	.50	.58	3.83***
Self-esteem	4.68	.04	.29

$R^2 = .35^{***}$

*adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .33\*\*\*

$p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ,  $p < .001$

As can be seen from Table 10, the regression was significantly different from zero,  $F(2,48) = 13.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only social provisions were found to be a significant predictor of subjective quality of life ( $t = -3.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Together the two variables accounted for 35% (adjusted 33%) of the variability of subjective quality of life.

## **Chapter 4 - Discussion**

The present study had three aims. The primary aim was to examine the relationship between paternal commitment, measured as levels of involvement and levels of economic support, and quality of life. It was found that increased levels of involvement combined with increased levels of financial contribution were predictive of a decrease in both objective and subjective quality of life. However, when the amount of economic contribution was considered on its own, it was found to be a predictor of subjective but not objective quality of life. A secondary aim was to explore the negative effects of paternal involvement. Specifically, the relationship between father involvement, social support and self-esteem were investigated. As hypothesised, higher levels of involvement alone and in combination with economic support was found to predict a decrease in social support. Contrary to predictions, however, no predictors for self-esteem were found. The third aim was to examine the relationship between quality of life, social support and self-esteem. This part of the investigation was primarily intended to confirm the validity of the finding of this study. In the case of social support the relationship was found to be positive, as predicted. For self-esteem, on the other hand, contrary to predictions, no significant relationship was found.

### **4.1. The Measure of Paternal Commitment**

Before conducting analyses, consideration was given to the operationalisation of paternal commitment. When assessing the validity of collapsing individual items measuring different types of father-child interactions and types of child care into a single measure of involvement, item scores from this scale were found to load on a

single factor with a high level of internal consistency. One item, however, showed an inverse relationship with the factor and its omission improved the factor's reliability estimate. On the basis of these findings it was decided that this item was indicative of another dimension of paternal commitment and could thus be used as a separate independent variable. It was therefore considered legitimate to operationalise for this study paternal commitment in terms of two dimensions, economic support and involvement. Overall, this bi-axional scale makes it possible to include the breadwinner role in the study of paternal commitment. It had been recommended (e.g. Pleck, 1997) that the economic support fathers give their families should be incorporated in the construct of paternal commitment.

The use of this scale has other advantages over previous studies (e.g., Lamb, 1987; Russell, 1983), in as much as it allowed for paternal involvement to be studied on a continuum, as well as in interaction with the provider role. No information is lost through categorisation of participants, and individual combinations of levels of both involvement and breadwinning can be explored. The exploration of these combinations is particularly pertinent for today's families where frequently both parents are in paid employment. A further advantage is the simplicity and time efficiency of administration and scoring of such a measure of paternal commitment.

#### **4.2. Paternal Commitment and Quality of Life**

The main aim of this study was to explore the relationship between two dimensions of paternal commitment, involvement and economic contribution, and quality of life. It was found that an inverse relationship between paternal involvement and both

objective and subjective quality of life was enhanced when the proportion of economic contribution increased. In other words, fathers' quality of life, both subjective and objective, were low when a high level of involvement in child care was combined with a high proportion of economic contribution. This suggests that fathers experienced a role-overload that was detrimental to their quality of life. This would support many of the findings reported in a review by Pleck (1997), where the stress of the combination of work and family roles led fathers to experience high levels of stress. Much of this stress was attributed to fathers being unable to honour work commitments due to their child care obligations, and this was observed to manifest in poor health and diminished well-being (Pleck 1997).

In the past, stress on mothers' psychological well-being due to demands of work and parenting have been emphasised (McLanahan & Adams, 1989). It appears that today's fathers experience similar stresses and that men, not just women, need to balance work and family commitments (Mel, 1995). According to McLanahan and Adams (1989), these negative effects, resulting from the dual role of parenting and working, have become more pronounced over recent decades. When they examined trends in the effect of children on their parent's psychological well-being, which included measures of quality of life, they found that changes in employment and marriage status were associated with a decline in well-being for women.

It has to be borne in mind that, although significant, the dimensions of paternal commitment investigated only accounted for a small proportion of the variability of quality of life (16% for objective, 20% for subjective quality of life). Quality of life is a complex construct (Cummins et al., 1994) and it is likely that parenting is just one of the many possible contributors. The importance of this

contributor for mothers, however, has been acknowledged. In studies concerned with the psychological well-being of mothers, the parental role was found to be central to the stress they reported (Russell et al., 1999).

The findings in the present study were complicated by the inclusion of a proportion of single fathers. These fathers typically indicated high paternal involvement. In their case, however, other factors may have contributed more powerfully to the lowering of quality of life than simply paternal involvement. For example, these fathers may have been experiencing less satisfaction in close personal relationships than fathers who were in a couple. The stressors of single fathers could have included on-going tensions with the children's mother, difficulties in fulfilling parental obligations and problems forming a new relationship. Furthermore, these fathers may have had stressors associated with living in a single income family and with having the sole responsibility for household tasks. It is recommended that in future studies of paternal commitment and its implications for fathers, single fathers be examined as a separate group.

The observed positive relationship between the proportion of financial contribution and subjective quality of life, can be explained through the breadwinner role remaining a central part of the paternal stereotype (Griswold, 1993). Uwis and O'Brien (1987) referred to socially constructed motherhood and fatherhood mandates, which emphasised fulfilment gained through motherhood for women **and through professional** success for men. These mandates have been in place for so long in Western societies that they have become internalised without having been questioned. The benefits of stereotypical role behaviour are implicitly accepted without substantiation. Furthermore, in the complex system of stereotypes, beliefs

and attributions (Augostinos & Walker, 1995), evaluations are not made on merit alone, but are strongly coloured by behavioural expectations. It has been widely acknowledged that people, through schematic processing, end up seeing what they expect to see (McKnight & Sutton, 1994). The relationship between financial contribution and subjective quality of life, the association of a high level of economic contribution with perceived benefits, may well be influenced by the traditional link between the provider role and patriarchal privileges (Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). In the present investigation, the positive relationship between economic support and subjective quality of life may therefore be **due** to a stereotypical outlook of men believing that the time and energy on earning an income is worthwhile and will be rewarded through an increase in quality of life. On this premise, the increased level of subjective quality of life can be interpreted as a self-fulfilling prophecy. This explanation of the results seems especially likely as no relationship was found between economic contribution and objective quality of life. For a deconstruction of gender stereotypes, as advocated by Weiss (1998), the discovery of possible fallacies, such as success as a breadwinner equating to maturity, respectability and masculinity, would be of great importance.

The exploration of social provisions appears to substantiate the findings regarding quality of life. In accordance with the findings of previous studies assessing the construct validity of quality of life (Cummins, 1997), a relationship between subjective quality of life and social support was found.

### **4.3. Social Support and Self-Esteem**

An inverse relationship was found between social provisions and both the involvement and the product variable. In other words, a decrease in the availability of social support, associated with high paternal involvement, did not change when fathers were also responsible for a high proportion of the financial contribution to the family's income. It appears that the lack of social support was an important problem for highly involved fathers (e.g., Greif & DeMaris, 1995; Lamb, 1987; Pleck, 1997; Russell, 1983). Furthermore, this problem did not appear to be alleviated by fathers having some social contact at the work place. These findings seem to be in accordance with several studies presented by Pleck (1997), which have reported that fathers who attempted to balance careers with responsibilities at home received limited support. Relationships with work colleagues may, in fact, add to the stress when colleagues fail to acknowledge the conflicting priorities some of the fathers have to juggle (Pleck, 1997). Furthermore, time and possibilities to extensively pursue friendships and social interaction may not be available to the fathers who have high commitments to both family and career. Also the fact that fatherhood is not really a "man's topic" prevents men from talking about their role as fathers. Oherson (1995) , for example, reported that fathers only talked about their paternal role approximately once a month. This may severely limit the possibilities for involved fathers to talk about and explore what takes up a considerable proportion of their time and energy.

No relationships between paternal involvement, financial contribution and self-esteem were found. This could indicate that the link between fathers' self-esteem and the stereotypical role of the breadwinner, as suggested by previous studies (e.g., Griswold, 1993), has weakened. However, the findings in regard to

self-esteem ought to be viewed with caution. They are contradictory to the relationship observed between financial support and subjective quality of life, which appeared to indicate persisting stereotypes. Furthermore, in the validity studies for the Comprehensive Quality of Life scale, Cummins (1997) reported a strong association between self-esteem and subjective quality of life. There are no clear explanations for this lack of association in the present investigation. Further studies with larger sample sizes are required to establish the present study's findings.

#### **4.4. Limitations and recommendations**

There are a number of limitations to this exploratory study. Paternal involvement was assessed using a scale developed for the study. The size of the sample used to determine the dimensions of the scale was small. As a result, the stability of the results is uncertain. Further investigations with considerably larger samples are required to determine the psychometric properties of the scale. Additionally, it has to be understood that the involvement scale provided a quantitative measure, no inferences regarding the quality of involvement can be made. It was considered appropriate to measure involvement in terms of time spent on various tasks, as the focus of the study was on the implications of how fathers spent their lives, either involved with their families or dedicated to their careers. Further to this, inherent in the notion of the co-parent, is the idea of a time commitment such that fathers contribute equally to child care tasks. Amount of time, more specifically shortage of time, can also be considered one of the main stressors of the dual role. Nevertheless, future studies, especially those concerned with the effects of paternal



commitment on children, require a measurement of involvement which includes an assessment of the quality of this involvement.

Overall, this study seems to be only partially consistent with studies which have identified the negative effects children can have on their parents' psychological wellbeing. McLanahan and Adams (1989) had examined trends in the effect of children on their parent's psychological well-being, which included an assessment of quality of life. Reviewing the developments between 1957 and 1976, they indicated these effects had become more pronounced over recent decades. Similarly, they reported the perceived benefits of parenthood to have declined. Fathers in the present study were only found to experience a decrease in quality of life when a high level of involvement was combined with a corresponding high proportion of financial contribution to the family's income.

Despite the reported issues relating to dual roles, the satisfaction reported by highly involved fathers (e.g., Russell, 1983), and the indication by the 40% of fathers in this sample, that they would like to increase their amount of sole responsibility should not be overlooked. No positive relationship between quality of life and increased paternal involvement was found. The high proportion of fathers, however, who wish for more time with their children on their own, suggests that some benefits of parenting, especially those of a very close father-child relationship, seem to elude the quality of life measure. Perhaps future studies of fatherhood should concern themselves more with fathers' personal growth and maturity, as suggested by Hawkins et al. (1995).

There is a strong possibility, especially in regard to attitudes of fathers towards the value of the parental role, that the recruitment method of approaching

fathers in the company of young children, affected the findings. Furthermore, as the study was correlational in design, no causal inferences can be made. To gain greater insight both into quality of life and social support much larger sample sizes are to be recommended. Thereby an investigation of individual domains and provisions would be possible, whereas in the present study only the total scores were used.

In conclusion, the role of the co-parent is not without associated problems. What became apparent was the problem of role overload for fathers, similar to that experienced by women. Associated with increased involvement was also the paucity of social support. The social changes in the Western world over the last 50 years, such as increased marital instability and the economic necessity of dual incomes (Jamrozik & Adams, 1996), may well mean that dual roles will become a reality for many fathers. For co-parenting to become more appealing to men, greater effort is required to develop social support structures for stay at home fathers and to enable men to balance work and family commitments more effectively.

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## Appendix A - Regressions

### Variables Entered/Removed a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of a z-scores)		Enter

- a. All requested variables entered.  
b. Dependent Variable: TOTALQOL

### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.399a	.159	.106	.3723

- a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

### ANOVA b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.233	3	.411	2.967	.041 a
	Residual	6.514	47	.139		
	Total	7.747	50			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)  
b. Dependent Variable: TOTALQOL



### Coefficients a

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	3.676	.069		53.090	
	paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)	-4.173E-02	.024	.422	-1.741	.088
	Zscore(MONEY)					
	proportion of financial c product of total commitment and financial contribution	2.347E-02	.077	.060	.304	.762
		-3.488E-02	.013	-.489	-2.702	.010

a. Dependent Variable: TOTAWOL

### Regression

#### Variables EntomMernovedb

Model		Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)			Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: QOL total lxS % scale max

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.447a	.200	.151	9.2313

a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

**ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1043.857	3	347.952	4.083	.0125
	Residual	4175.633	49	85.217		
	Total	5219.489	52			

a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

b. Dependent Variable: QOL total lxS % scale max

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	67.972	1.531		44.389	.000
	paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)		-.517		.461	.267
	Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c product of total commitment and financial contribution		-1.122		.267	.019
			3.387		1.727	.054
			1.961		.054	.289
			-.701		.289	.019
			-2.429		.019	

a. Dependent Variable: QOL total lxS % scale max

**Regression****Variables Entered & Removed<sup>b</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of a z-scores)		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: total social provisions



### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.429a	.184	.133	10.8865

a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

### ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1286.096	3	428.699	3.617	.020a
	Residual	5688.731	48	118.515		
	Total	6974.827	51			

a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

b. Dependent Variable: total social provisions

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	74.357	1.832		40.584	.000
	paternal involvement	-1.335	.546	-.484	-2.444	.018
	involvement (sum of z-scores)	-.515	2.102	-.044	-2.45	.808
	Zscore(MONEY)	-1.024	.342	-.485	-2.996	.004
	)					
	proportion of financial c					
	product of total commitment and financial contribution					

a. Dependent Variable: total social provisions

### Regression



### Variables Entered/Removed b

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum Of a z-scores)		Enter

- a. All requested variables entered.  
b. Dependent Variable: total self esteem

### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.292a	.085	.024	7.3643

- a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)

### ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	227.521	3	75.840	1.398	.256a
	Residual	2440.479	45	54.233		
	Total	2668.000	48			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), product of total commitment and financial contribution, Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial c, paternal involvement (sum of z-scores)  
b. Dependent Variable: total self esteem

Coefficients<sup>m</sup> 63

Standardiz

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.000		19.877	1.324
					15.016



paternal involvement (sum .243 of z-scores)	491	.415	282	-1.183	
Zscore(MONEY)	-2.342	1.497	-.317	-1.564	.125
proportion of financial c product of total commitment and financial .454 contribution	1	.187	.247	.140	.756
	1			1	

a. Dependent Variable: total self esteem

### Regression

b

### Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	total self esteem, total social provisions		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: QOL total IxS % scale max

### Model Summary

Model	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.595a	7.8106

a. Predictors: (Constant), total self esteem, total social provisions

### ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	Sig.
1	1604.838	802.419	.000a
	2928.277	61.006	
Total	4533.115		

a. Predictors: (Constant), total self esteem, total social provisions

b. Dependent Variable: QOL total IxS % scale max

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COOM11~ 64

	Standardiz			
	60 .			
	Unstandardized	Coefficient		
	CCZM-i^nte 1			
Model 1	Std. Error 1	t	Sig.	
	7 QI P -T			
		1 W)7		
total social provisions	.503	.107	.582	
total ~ ~m - A.67-17~c7uc,,2	.161		.77e	

a. Dependent Variable: QOL total lxS % scale max

Appendix B 65  
Principal Components Analysis & Cronbach's Alpha

Communalities

Initial Extraction

Zscore(AVAIL) availability hrs/Week 1.000 .662  
Zscore(RESPONS) responsibility hrs/week 1.000 .674  
Zscore(FEED) feeding meal preparation hrs 1.000 .706

Zscore(SICK) responsibility for sick children 1.000 .678

Zscore(HOUSE) responsibility for household 1.000 .475

Zscore(PLAY2) play-schoolwork combined 1.000 .348

Zscore(MONEY) proportion of financial capital 1.000 .588

1 proportion of financial capital

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squares		Loadings	
	Total	% Of Total Variance	Cumulative	% of Total Variance	Cumulative	%
1	4.131	59.010	59.010	4.131	59.010	59.010
2	.981	14.009	73.019			
3	.570	8.138	81.157			
4	.509	7.266	88.423			
5	.354	5.058	93.481			
6	.250	3.571	97.052			
7	.206	2.948	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

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**Component MatrIO**

Compone

nt

Zscore(AVAIL) availability .814

hrs/week

Zscore(RESPONS) .821

responsibility hrsA~k

Zscore(FEED)

feeding/meal preparation h .840

Zscore(SICK) .823

responsibility for sick eh

Zscore(HOUSE) .689

responsibility for househ

Zscore(PLAY2) .590

ply-schoolwork combined

Zscore(MONEY) -.767

proportion of financial c

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. a. 1 components extracted.

**Reliability**

Method 2 (covariance matrix) will be used for this analysis

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## RELIABILITY

## ANALYSIS SCALE (ALPHA)

	Mean	Std Dev	Cases
1. ZAVAIL	-.0679	.9325	53.0
2. ZRESPONS	-.0367	.9313	53.0
3. ZFEED	-.0621	.7612	53.0
4. WICK	-.0332	.9903	53.0
5. ZHOUSE	.0103	1.0100	53.0
6. ZPLAY2	-.0455	.8826	53.0
7. ZMONEY	.0270	<b>1.0027</b>	53.0

## Correlation Matrix

## ZAVAIL

	ZRESPONS	ZFEED	ZSICK	ZHOUSE	
ZAVAIL					
ZRESPONS	1.0000				
ZFEED	.5679	1.0000			
ZSICK	.6981	.5429	<b>1.0000</b>		
ZHOUSE	.5351	.7053	.6405	<b>1.0000</b>	
ZPLAY2	.3536	.5677	.5058	.5528	1.0000
ZMONEY	.5524	.2514	.5030	.3037	.2308
	ZMONEY				
	ZPLAY2				
	ZMONEY				

**ZPLAY2 1.0000**

ZMONEY -.3250 1.0000

N of Cases = 53.0

	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	Variables
Statistics for Scale	-.2079	12.9941	3.6047	7

**Page 3**

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## RELIABILITY ANALYSIS SCALE (ALPHA)

## Item~total Statistics

Scale	Scale	Corrected			
Mean	Variance	Item-	Squared	Alpha	
	if Item	Total	Multiple	if Item	
	Deleted	Deleted	Correlation	Correlation	Deleted
ZAVAIL	-.1400	8.6187	.6403	.6315	.4715
ZRESPONS	-.1713	8.7306	.6171	.6232	.4806
ZFEED	-.1459	8.9846	.7517	.6276	.4625
WICK	-.1748	8.0874	.6970	.6037	.4402
ZHOUSE	~.2182	9.1449	.4631	.4933	.5332
ZPLAY2	-.1624	9.8494	.4270	.3489	.5515
ZMONEY	-.2350	17.6564	-.6726	.5235	.8537

Reliability Coefficients 7 items

Alpha = .6188

Standardized item alpha = .6531

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N A S H U N I V E R S I T Y

Date 10.5.1999

**Project Tide: Fatherhood and its implications for men's lives**

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY Caulfield/Peninsula Section

My name is Catherine Goldner and I am doing research under the supervision of Thomas Whelan, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology. The research project is a major component towards a Postgraduate Diploma of Applied Psychology at Monash University.

Over the previous three decades the Australian family structure has undergone substantial changes. These changes have been observed to have important implications for both children and parents. Much has been written about fatherless families. More recently the emphasis has shifted to a re-evaluation of the paternal role.

A recent conference identified the need for a father-friendly environment. In order to better support non-traditional fathers, greater insight into the nature of the co-parent is essential. To date, few objective investigations of this minority group have been conducted. This research is aimed at providing information about the impact of both traditional and non-traditional fatherhood on the lives of men.

I am looking for fathers of 18 years or older, with at least one child under the age of 10. These fathers will be asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding their current life situation. The completion of this questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes. The nature of the questions is not likely to be in any way distressing.

The completed questionnaires can be forwarded to me in sealed, reply paid, envelopes. In this way complete anonymity of participants will be ensured, as there is no information sought which would make participants in any way identifiable. Only my supervisor and I will have access to this data which will be stored for five years as prescribed by the university regulations.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. For any contact I can be contacted through the Department of Psychology, Monash University, Caulfield Campus (Ph.9903 2691). Research findings can be made available upon request to the same department as from November.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research (Project 9W188) is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans at the following address:

The Secretary  
The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans



Monash University  
Wellington Road  
Clayton Victoria 3168  
Telephone (03) 9905 2052 Fax (03) 9905 1420

Thank you. (~i"  
Catherine Goldner S

PO BOX 197. CAULFIELD EAST, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, 3145, AUSTRALIA  
FAX: (61) (3) 9903 2501 TELEPHONE: (03) 9903 269 1; 9903 2740

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## Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of five sections of questions regarding your current life situation. Please answer all questions by either ticking the box that you feel describes you best or by completing the response.

1. What is your Date of Birth? ... / ... L.

What is your country of birth?

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed? 11 Incomplete secondary school 11 Trade-certificate C1 Diploma 13 Degree D Post-graduate degree 11 Other, please specify

4. What is your current employment situation? 11 Full-time employment 11 Part-time employment 13 Unemployed

5. Which best describes your household?

C1 Mother, father, brother(s) and/or sister(s)

C1 Parent, step-parent, brother(s) and/or sister(s)

11 Parent, step-parent, brother(s) and/or sister(s), step-brother(s) and/or step-sister(s)

11 Mother, father, only child

C1 Parent, step-parent, only child

11 Single parent only child

D Single parent, brother(s) and/or sister(s)

6. How many children do you have?

Please indicate their ages: .....

7. Please indicate your level and nature of parental responsibility by estimating the number of **hours per week** you spend on the following tasks :

For how many hours per week are you available to your children when they are

awake?

How many hours per week are you solely responsible for your children?

How many hours per week do you spend preparing meals or feeding them?

For how many hours per week are you involved in your child/children's playtime, sport and leisure?

How many hours per week do you spend on helping with school work?

8. Would you prefer to be solely responsible for your child/children 11 much more often

CI somewhat more often  
(1 remain the same  
[1 somewhat less often  
[3 much less often

9. To what extent are you responsible for looking after children when they are sick?  
..... %

10. Please estimate the extent of your responsibility for household tasks, i.e.  
washing,  
cleaning ..... %

11. Please estimate the proportion of financial contribution you make to the  
family's  
income: ..... %

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**Section 1**

This section asks for information about various aspects of your life.  
Please tick the box that most accurately describes your situation.

**1.a) Where do you live?**

- |                           |    |   |
|---------------------------|----|---|
| • house                   | 13 | Do you own the place where you live or do |
| • flat or apartment       | C1 | you rent?                                 |
| • room (e.g. in a hostel) | 13 | Own 11                      Rent [1       |

**b) How many personal possessions do you have compared with other people?**

More than almost anyone	More than most people	About average	Less than most people	Less than almost anyone
11	1:1	1:1	11	13

**0) What is your household gross annual income before tax?**

Less than \$10,999 13  
\$11,000 - \$25,999 [3  
\$26,000 - 40,999 11

\$41,000 - \$55,999 E]  
More than \$56,000 E]

**2.a) How many times have you seen a doctor over the past 3 months?**

None      1-2      3-4  
(about once a month)

5-7      8 or more  
(about every (about ~ a  
two weeks) week or more)

11      11      c]      1:1      1:1

**b) Do you have any disabilities or medical conditions? (eg. visual, bearing, physical, health, etc.)?**

Yes 1:1      No 1:1

If "yes" please specify:

Name of disability or medical condition e.g. Visual Diabetes Epilepsy

Extent of disability or medical condition Require glasses for reading Require daily injections Require daily medication

---

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**c)What regular medicine do you take each day?**

If none tick box Cl or Narne(s) of medication:

**3.a)How many hours do you spend on the following each week? (Average over the past 3 mouths)**

Hours paid work      0 E]11-10 E]      11-20 E]      21-30 [1      31-40+11

Hours formal education 0 111 - 10 11

11-20 11      21-30 [1      31-40+0

Hours unpaid child care 0 Cl 1 - 10 Cl 11-20 Cl      21-30 11      31-40+

**b)In your spare time, how often do you have nothing much to do?**

Almost always Usually Sometimes Not usually Almost never

11                  11                  11                  11                  11

**c)On avera      how many hours TV do you watch each day?**

Hours per day

None	1-2	3-5	6-9	10 or more
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**4a)Row often do you talk with a close friend?**

Daily      Several times      Once a week      Once a month      Less than

Cl                  a week  
11

13

11

once a month

Cl

**b)If you are feeling sad or depressed, how often does someone show they care for you?**

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
13	11	11	11	11

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c) If you want to do something special, how often does someone else want to do it with you?

11

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
	11	11	E]	13

5. How often do you sleep well?

Almost always	Usually
11	11

b) Are you safe at home?

Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
11	11	11

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
1:1	11	11	11	11

How often are you worried during the day?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes
11	11	11

Not usually	Almost never
11	11

6a) Below is a list of leisure activities. Indicate how often in an average month you attend or do each one for your enjoyment (not employment).

Activity

- (1) Go to a club/group/society
- (2) Go to a hotel/bar/pub
- (3) Watch live sporting events (not TV)
- (4) Go to a place of worship
- (5) Chat with neighbours
- (6) Eat out
- (7) Go to a movie
- (8) Visit family or friends
- (9) Play sport or go to a gym
- (10) Other, please describe

Number of times per month

---

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b) Do you hold an unpaid position of responsibility in relation to any club, group, or society?

Yes 11                  NoD

If "yes", please indicate the highest level of responsibility held:

Committee Member

Committee Chairman/Convenor

Secretary

Group President, Chairman or Convenor [1

How often do people outside your home ask for your help or advice?

11

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
	13	13	13	

7. How often can you do things you would want to do?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually
11	11	11	E]

11

Almost never

11

b) When you wake up in the morning, how often do you wish you could stay in bed all day?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes
11	11	13

Not usually	Almost never
11	

c) How often do you have wishes that cannot come true?

E]

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually
	13	11	11

11



Almost never

11

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**SECTION 2:** How **~ORTANT** are each of the following life areas for you? Please answer by ticking the appropriate box for each question. There are no right or wrong answers. Please choose the box that best describes how important each area is to you. Do not spend too much time on any one question.

**1. How important to you are the things you own?**

Could not be more important 11	Very important cl	Somewhat important E]	Slightly important 11
--------------------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------

**2. How important to you is your health?**

Could not be more important 11	Very important 13	Somewhat important 13	Slightly important 13
--------------------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------

**3. How important to you is what you achieve in life?**

Not important  
at all  
E]

Not important  
at all  
13

Could not be more important 11	Very important E]	Somewhat important 13	Slightly important 11	Not important at all 11
--------------------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------

**4. How important to you are close relationships with your family or friends?**

Could not be more important 11	Very important 13	Somewhat important <b>11</b>	Slightly important <b>11</b>	Not important at all <b>11</b>
--------------------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

**5. How important to you is how safe you feel?**

Could not be more important 11	Very important <b>11</b>	Somewhat important <b>1:1</b>	Slightly important <b>11</b>	Not important at all <b>11</b>
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

**6. How important to you is doing things with people outside your home?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important at all
--------------------------------	-------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

11

11

11

11

11

7 **How important to you is your happiness?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important at all
11	11	11	13	E]

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SECTION 3: How SATISFIED are you with each of the following life areas? There are no right or wrong answers. Please tick the box that describes how satisfied you are with each area.

1. How satisfied are you with the things you own?

Delighted	Pleased Terrible	Mostly satisfied	Mixed	Mostly dissatisfied	Unhappy	
		11	11	11	11	13

2. How satisfied are you with your health?

Delighted	Pleased	Mostly satisfied				
Mixed dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible				
E]	11	11	11	11	1:1	11

3. How satisfied are you with what you achieve in life?

Delighted	Pleased	Mostly satisfied
		1:1

13

Mixed Mostly  
dissatisfied Unhappy

4. How satisfied are you with your close relationships with family or friends?

Delighted	Pleased	Mostly satisfied
-----------	---------	---------------------

11

Mixed dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible				
1:1	1:1	1:1	11	E]	11	11

5. How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?

Delighted      Pleased      Mostly  
satisfied      Mixed

Mostly      Unhappy  
dissatisfied

6. How satisfied are you with doing things with people outside your home?

Delighted      Pleased      mostly  
satisfied  
11

11

E]

1:1

Mixed  
dis

7. How satisfied are you with your own happiness?

Delighted      Pleased      Mostly  
satisfied

1:1

11

1:1

11

11

Mixed Mostly      Unhappy      Terrible  
dissatisfied

11

11

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SECTION 4: How good is your current relationship with friends, family members, co-workers, community member and so on. There are no right or wrong answers, please tick the box that is most appropriate for you.

1. There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	13	11

2. I feel that I do not have close personal relationships with other people

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	11	11

3. There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
13	11		

4. There are people who depend on me for help

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	11	11

5. There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
11	11	

6. Other people do not view me as competent

11

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
E]	11	11

Strongly agree

11

Strongly agree  
13

7. I feel personally responsible for the well-being of another person

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	E]	11

& I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	11	11

9. I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1:1	11	11	11

10. If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
11	11	11	11

11.1 have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being

Strongly disagree Disagree 11

Agree

Strongly agn

11

12. There is someone I could talk to about important decisions in my life

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree

11

11

11

Strongly a

E]

13.1 have relationships where my **competence and skill are recognised**

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree

11 11 11

14. There is no one who shares my interests and concerns

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree

13

11

13

Strongly agree

11

Strongly agree

13

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**15. There is no one who really relies on me for their well-being**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**16. There is a trustworthy person 1 could turn to for advice if 1 were having problems**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>13</b>	<b>1:1</b>	<b>11</b>

**17.1 feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**18. There is no one 1 can depend on for aid if 1 really need it**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>

**19. There is no one 1 feel comfortable talking about problems with**

Strongly agree

11

Strongly agree

11

Strongly agree

11

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	StrC
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	

**20. There are people who admire my talents and abilities**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**21.1 lack a feeling of intimacy with another person**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**22. There is no one who likes to do the things 1 do**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

**23. There are people 1 can count on in an emergency**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>		

**24. No one needs me to care for them****11**

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	Disagree	Agree
<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

Strongly agree 11



Strongly agree  
11

Strongly agree 11

Strongly agree  
11

Strongly agree  
11

**SECTION 5:** Please indicate on the following statements how you usually feel by ticking the box that describes you best. There are no right or wrong statements.

Like Unlike  
me me

Cl 3. E] 4. [1 5. E] 6. [1 7. 11 8. 11 9. 1:1 10. 11 11. E] 12. [1 13. 11 14. [1 is. [1 16. E] 17. 11 18. E] 19. E] 20. 13 21. 11 22. 11 23. E] 24. 11 25.

Things usually don't bother me.  
 I find it very hard to talk in front of people.  
 There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.  
 I can make up my mind without too much trouble.  
 I'm a lot of fun to be with.  
 I get upset easily at home.  
 It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.  
 I'm popular with persons my own age.  
 My family usually considers my feelings.  
 I give up very easily.  
 My family expects too much of me.  
 It's pretty tough to be me.  
 Things are all mixed up in my life.  
 People usually follow my ideas.  
 I have a low opinion of myself  
 There are many times when I would like to leave home.  
 I feel often upset with my work.  
 I'm not as nice looking as most people.  
 If I have something to say, I usually say it.  
 My family understands me.  
 Most people are better liked than I am.  
 I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.  
 I often get discouraged with what I am doing.  
 I often wish I were someone else.  
 I can be depended on.