

# Exploring Fathers' Opinions of Parenting Research: A Focus Group Study

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## Rationale

- Fathers play a crucial role in promoting children's mental health, physical health, cognitive functioning, and overall well-being<sup>1,2,3</sup>
- Close relationships between fathers and children are linked to improved mental health for both parties<sup>2,3,4</sup>
- However, fatherhood has received disproportionately little empirical attention compared to motherhood<sup>1,5</sup>
- Fathers are typically excluded from parenting research, so their views on child-rearing are often overlooked<sup>5,6</sup>
- Engaging fathers in research has been challenging for several reasons, such as fathers being disinterested in research, mothers acting as "gatekeepers," and fathers not being targeted properly<sup>6,7,8</sup>
- Yet the reasons behind fathers' lack of participation remain unclear, as they have yet to be directly asked<sup>5,6</sup>
- This is especially problematic because family composition is changing (e.g., increases in single-father families and same-sex couples raising children)<sup>9,10</sup>
- Thus, there is a knowledge gap regarding fathers' views of contemporary father-child relationships; research is needed to reflect their views, especially given changing societal trends and family compositions<sup>5, 10</sup>

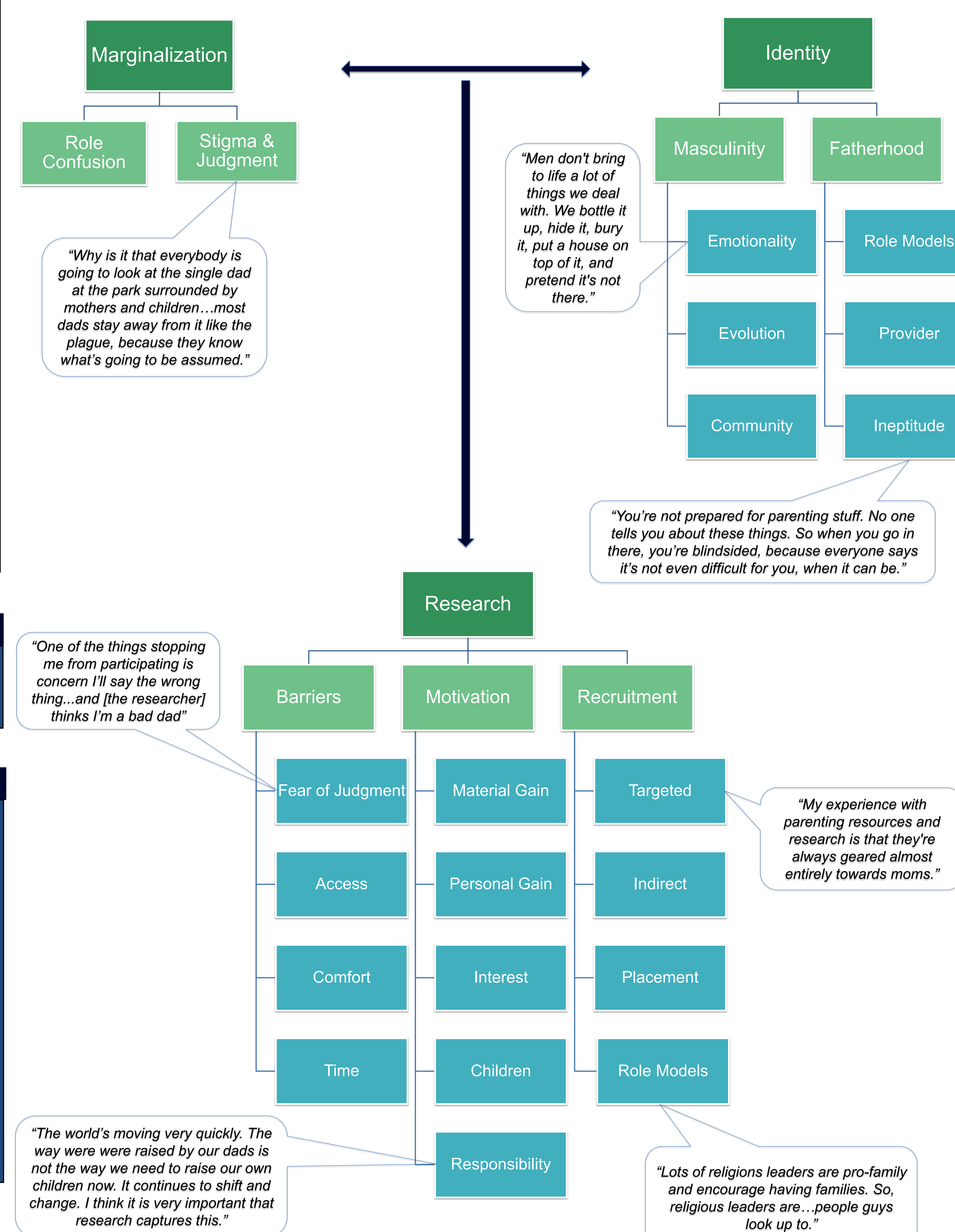
## Purpose

- Qualitatively investigate factors and barriers that are affecting fathers' research participation
- Elucidate avenues to overcome any identified barriers

## Methodology

- Recruitment occurred through online forums (e.g., Reddit), physical locations (e.g., sports venues), and word of mouth (i.e., snowball sampling)
- Participants included 8 fathers ( $M_{age} = 46$ ;  $M_{number\ of\ children} = 2.22$ ) residing in the Okanagan, British Columbia
  - 100% heterosexual; 100% male; 66% White
- Focus groups were conducted via Zoom by two male facilitators
  - "What might prevent you from participating in psychological research?"
  - "Why do you think fathers have typically not engaged in parenting research?"
- Inductive thematic analysis<sup>11</sup>, guided by Interpretive Description (ID)<sup>12</sup>, was completed using NVIVO12

## Thematic Analysis



## Conclusions

- Fathers feel marginalized and stigmatized by the psychological community and society in general
- They perceive that they are viewed as secondary to mothers in parenting importance, which adversely affects their participation in parenting research
- Facets of their identity they hold important as both men (e.g., dependability) and fathers (e.g., being a provider), conflict with their perceptions of what research entails (e.g., emotional vulnerability, judgment of parenting)
- Researchers must deliberately address these concerns to increase fathers' participation in parenting research

## Recommendations for Research

- Explicitly target fathers in recruitment material<sup>10</sup>
- Access dads through both physical and online venues where they are present (e.g., Reddit forums, sports venues, religious institutions); work with institutions to accomplish this when possible
- Ensure that studies are respectful of fathers' time; making research virtual can help in this regard
- Convey the value and importance of their participation; emphasize the potential impact on their children
- Make sure external incentives are aligned with dads' actual preferences (e.g., gift cards to technology stores)
- Communicate that fathers will not be judged nor compared to mothers with respect to their parenting

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