# Influences that Impact a Father's Philosophy on Parenting

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## Introduction

### Fathers and Parenting

Over the last decade, extant literature on fatherhood has focused on contextual factors and meaning of the role fathers perform within the family. The roles and responsibilities of fathers in the United States have changed over the years. The literature on fatherhood has shown that, apart from the traditional role of fathers raising their biological children, modern day fathers enter a family as stepfathers, adopting a child, or stepping into a stay-at-home parenting role. Recent changes in the role's fathers play may be attributed to socio-economic changes such as the increase in the number of women in the labor force, changes in family structure and dynamics among others (Cabrera et al., 2014). In summary, characteristics that define fathers in the United States has changed and continues to change with time.

In a study to identify the role of parents in predicting adolescent aggressive behavior, Yang, Schlomer, and Lippold, (2022) found that fathers play an equally important role especially in the development of boys across the lifespan. Their study further showed that paternal hostility, to a very large extent contributed to predicting adolescent aggression among adolescent girls and boys. Thereby emphasizing the invaluable role that fathers play in the development of children.The literature on fatherhood has shown a shift in the role of fathers. Modern day fathers are now more involving with respect to time spent with children and in the day-to-day household chores (Cabrera et al., 2014)

Traditionally, fathers have been perceived as breadwinners and final authority of the home that is also emotionally distant. However, the most important role of fathers as major contributors to the development of children has not been highlighted much in the literature on fatherhood. From a family systems perspective, families are perceived as an integrated system of subsystems which include fathers. Understanding the role of fathers in terms of their parenting philosophies, approaches, and contextual factors that influences their fathering philosophies will substantially contribute to the literature on fatherhood. The literature on parenting and parent-child interaction is inundated with studies involving mothers and the role they play in the development of children, leaving little attention to the role of fathers. The few studies that focuson the role of fathers have received little attention.

In a study to explore characteristics that fathers believe exemplify a good father, Morman and Floyd (2006) identified the philosophy that men attach to their fathering role. However, their findings did not explore the specific factors that influence philosophy of fathering and how fathers develop their personal philosophies on parenting. This qualitative study addressed these gaps in the literature by exploring the factors that influence good fathering characteristics. The study further identified broader techniques to assist fathers in enhancing these relational attributes with their children.

**Theoretical Framework**

Theories serve to systematically understand phenomena that define our existence and enable us to generalize about specific understandings (Goldhaber, 2000).They further tend to provide guidance for parents and caregivers on how to identify and deal with parenting challenges. Theories have the potential to shape the way and manner parents respond to their children (Holden, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Albert Bandura's (Bandura, 1993) social cognitive theory provide a better theoretical framework to better understand the influences on fathering philosophy. The unique thing about the bioecological model is that it deviates from single-focused processes to holistic and multi-level processes when explaining phenomena (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The bioecological theory places the individual (in this situation, the father) in an interdependent relationship where to clearly understand his philosophy of fathering, an exploration of all the levels and systems the father finds himself is put into consideration. The implication for this is that father's environment and context is key to understanding his fathering philosophy. According to the bioecological theory, five environmental systems namely, micro systems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem simultaneously influence fathers'behavior and philosophy of parenting(Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Explaining these systems further, the microsystem includes the father's immediate family, friends, coworkers, members of his religious affiliation among many others that directly affect him. His micro system is the system with the most direct influence on him. The mesosystem of the father typically deals with the interactions of the different aspects of his microsystem. A challenge or failure in the interactions in one microsystem can affect the other microsystems. For example, when the father has challenges with his immediate family, this can affect his productivity at his microsystem of work or even the micro systems of direct interaction with coworkers.The exosystem is a setting in which the father may not have to actively participate but still have impact on his fathering philosophy. An example is when major decisions made by other people like his employer who may be directly or indirectly related to the father dramatically affect his fathering philosophy. His macrosystem deals with the culture he lives in. This includes parenting style patterns, beliefs, and traditions. The father's chronosystem involves the environment and events throughout his life course. It contains the transitions that are made throughout his life. For example, when he first became a father, was he married when he first become a father among others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1993) provides insight into an understanding of fathering philosophy. To clarify this, fathers learn and acquire knowledge on fathering and good parenting through observation and social interactions with good role models and father figures while growing up.The availability of these role models and father figures provides an opportunity to potential fathers to learn and imitate positive parenting. This is made possible because of the primary assumption of the theory that humans are product of their environment and that, they imitate what they see in their environment.

The theories identified provided the framework for the current study and led to the attempt at answering the following research questions:
1. How do you define a good father?
2. How has your relationship with your father influenced your role as a father?
3. How have your friends, and religion influenced the way you are as a father?

**Literature Review**

**Influences of Fathering Behaviors**

It is without a doubt that fathering behaviors such as nurturing, forms of discipline, acting as role model for children are to a larger extent influenced by contextual factors. In identifying predictors that have effect on fathering behavior, paternal depression (Shafer et al., 2019) and paternal stress (Bronte-Tinkew et al, 2010) has been shown to play an important role in fathering behaviors and child well-being.

Contextual factors that influence fathering behavior can be the immediate family context of the father, his workplace environment, religion and participating in religious activities, societal influences as well as friends.

A study by Shreffler et al., 2011 on how contextual factor of work affects fathering behavior showed that when fathers work at least 60 hours a week in a highly stressful work environment, it tends to create work-family conflict. This work-family conflict has been shown to further lead to lower parenting satisfaction and increased stress for fathers. Conversely, positive work environment has been shown to positively affect fathering by increasing parenting satisfaction and lowering stress for fathers. Cooklin et al (2016) in their study showed that fathers who reported a positive work environment experienced warm and supportive father-child interactions.

Another important factor that influences fathering behavior is the availability of social support. According to the American Psychological Association dictionary of Psychology (APA, 2018), social support encompasses the provision of assistance to others with the sole purpose of helping them cope with any biological, psychological, and social stressors. Social support may take the form of practically helping an individual in diverse ways such as doing chores, offering advice among others. It may take the form of tangible or emotional support which allows individuals to feel valued, understood and accepted. Social support has been shown to impact the frequency and positivity of fathering behaviors (Castillo & Sarver, 2012). In addition to the above, the mother of the child or wife has been shown to be a very important contextual factor that influences fathering behaviors (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999), fathers' relationship with his own father (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991), societal or socio-cultural influences (Morman& Floyd, 2002), and friendship (Walker, 2010) can also not be ignored

**Fathering and the role of mothers**

Mother's perception of fathers parenting ability (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999) and fathers' role as a gatekeeper (De Luccie, 1995) significantly impact father's involvement in the process of parenting. In a study by Zemp et al (2016) on child behavior problems and parenting, the authors found that mothers and fathers report of an improved parenting relationship was positively correlated with father's report of an improvement in their parenting practices. Thereby emphasizing the invaluable role of mothers in enhancing fathers parenting behavior. More so, studies have shown that mother's positive evaluation of fathers and their role in parenting led to higher levels of fathers' involvement in child-related activities (Pasley, Futris, & Skinner, 2020). Another study found that mothers who possessed nontraditional, egalitarian gender role attitudes showed a more supportive attitude of their husband and encouraged more father involvement with their children than did mothers who held more traditional gender role attitudes (Hoffman & Moon, 1999). The above speaks to the complex nature of the mother-father relationship and the ways in which mothers can influence both the father's involvement with his children and the value he associates with being a father.

**Father-Son Relationship**

Fathers' experiences with their father during childhood and throughout the life course is another factor that influences their parenting behavior. Research shows that father-son relationship is a significant predictor of a son's future parenting style (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991). From a social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1993) perspective, fathers may acquire beliefs about parenting and the role of a father through modeling, observing the behaviors of their father and duringtheir consistent interaction. Bronfenbrenner called this the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner 1981).Proximal process is the term used to describe the ongoing interaction between a developing person (In this scenario, the father) and their immediate environment which can be another person (In this scenario, the father's father). Bronfenbrenner and Morris(2006) posited that, this proximal process tends to be the engine of development and have positive effects on behavior. Therefore, the consistent father-son interaction has the potential of shaping the fathering philosophy of the son across the lifespan. In a study to understand father involvement and father-child relationship quality, Jessee and Adamsons (2018) concluded that the patterns of father involvement and the quality of father's relationship with children tend tobe passed down across generations. It is in view of this that to ensure active positive father involvement and its associated benefits for children, parent intervention programs designed for fathers should focus on promoting positive relationships with children which tends to have positive effect on children.

**Friends and Religious Influences**

Compared to the factors mentioned above, research on friends and religious influences on fathering is scanty and limited in its potential usefulness.  However, a few studies that have examined each individually have shown that good support systems (Walker, 2010; Rochlen, et. al, 2008) provides benefits to father's emotional well-being and his ability to parent effectively.  Meanwhile, King (2008) reported in a sample of 810 men that religious fathers were more involved and reported higher quality relationships with their children.  Further research, though, is needed to explore additional details about these two factors and how they relate to the other fathering influences mentioned above.

**Characteristics of Good Fathers**

In describing characteristics of a good father, the extant literature portrays a good father by his level of involvement, often called the "new, involved" fatherhood. There has been a recent rise in fathers that give much attention, time, and commitment to their families while at the same time fulfilling their role as providers in the home. These modern-day fathers are more likely to care for, nurture and engage in household chores and activities than previous generations (Coltrane, 2000). However, the literature on father involvement gives insight into core aspects of paternal involvement and the extent to which fathers exhibits these attributes may relate to their overall fathering quality.  In a conceptual model developed by Lamb, Pleck, Chamov and Levine (1985, 1987), father involvement was examined through a father's accessibility (i.e., father's availability to his children), engagement (i.e., direct contact with the child) and responsibility (i.e., participation in child-related planning).

Another way of conceptualizing a good father according to the literature on fathering and fatherhood is the father's ability to provide for his family. When fathers provide for their families, it tends to have intergenerational effects on children through observational learning, educational opportunities, and other aspects of developing human capital and needed skills. Father's ability to provide for their families have been correlated with enhanced father-child relationships (Seltzer, Schaeffer, &Charng, 1989), educational achievement and behavioral adjustment (King, 1994) and children's self-esteem (Elder, 1974). Finally, Morman and Floyd (2006) reported that fathers viewed being a role model, provider and protector, among other characteristics, as important components that good fathers possess.

**Methods**

**Participants**

A total of 33 fathers were recruited for this study following Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval from the first author's institution. Given the reluctance of males to participate in such research, students from a southwestern university were asked to solicit their father's involvement in the study, and the fathers received a $25 gift certificate to a national hardware chain of their choice for their participation.  The average age of these men was 54, with the youngest being 48 and the eldest at 82 years of age.  Thirty of the thirty-three men were Caucasian, one was black, one American Indian, and one Hispanic. Twelve percent of the men were divorced at the time of the study, and 88% were married.  The majority were self-employed or worked in blue collar positions, and only six had completed education beyond high school.

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription, and NVivo 14 was used for coding and storing data. The research team met weekly to review notes and discuss emergent themes based off  each participants' transcripts. In accomplishing this process, the research team read the open-ended transcripts and made marginal notes to facilitate the initial interpretation of the data. This was followed by segmenting relevant parts of the data for coding (Creswell, 2013). The constant comparative method was used for analysis (Maykut& Morehouse, 1994). Constant comparative analysis, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) involves breaking down data collected into distinct 'incidents' or 'units'.

Transcripts from research participants were then coded into categories. The research team utilized two forms of categorization of research transcripts. The first form of categorization of the data was the one derived from participants' own words or language and from their world view. The second form of categorization occurred when the research team identified aspects of the data as significant to the focus of the research inquiry. The objective of the first form of categorization of the datawas to recreate the categories used by research participants to conceptualize their world view and experiences. The second form of categorization assisted the research team in developing theoretical insights into the contextual and psychological processes relevant to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research team conducted an initial coding separately after which they compared the initial codes and grouped similar codes into sub-categories. These sub-categories were compared with one another and then grouped into higher levels of categories based on thesimilarities that were found. The final stage of the data analysis was the identification of emerging themes and the development of explanations for these themes by considering relationships among the themes.

**Findings**

**Definition of Good Father**

**Dependable**

The extant literature on fathering has shown that a good father is one who demonstrates at least one of the following qualities: Involved and physically present in the lives of the children, emotionally supportive of his children while fostering positive relationship, being a good role model that children can look up to and imitate, being loyal and always there for his children.One of the key themes identified from the transcripts on how participants describe a good father has to do with dependability. A good father is the one that is dependable and one that children can always rely on in good and bad times.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) building on the theory of attachment defined attachment behavioral system as the likelihood of an individual to seek security and comfort in times of stress. This stress can be internal such as illness, fatigue or even hunger. Attachment behavioral system focuses not only on internal stress but also external.An example is a threatening stimulus (Bowlby, 1988). The intensity of this attachment system activation is dependent on the extent of stress. That is, the higher the stress, the more intense the attachment system is activated. Explaining this further, every individual is motivated to seek comfort in the form of proximity from an attachment figure which in most cases is the primary caregiver. If there is a dependable attachment figure available to achieve this goal, the individual begins to develop a feeling of safety and security which leads to the deactivation of the attachment behavioral system. The attachment behavioral system, according to Bowlby (1988) is prevalent and active throughout the lifespan and it is what motivate adults to seek proximity and comfort in times of stress.

It is in view of this that it is always important to have a dependable primary caregiver that the developing child can seek comfort and proximity in times of stress. The availability of a dependable father helps to deactivate this phenomenon and always puts the child at peace knowing that there is someone available to lean on in times of stress. This buttresses the theme of dependability as raised by the research participants as an important trait in determining a good father. One participant described a good father in the following ways:

*"My feeling is that the child's looking for somebody that they can count on being there when they need them. When he says something he means it and they can count on that, too, and I don't care if it's good or bad, but if it's discipline, if he says something he means it, and but you know he's always going to be there for you. Um, I think, I think kids appreciate that. Any kid will tell you, "Well, if he'd give me a snowmobile and a new car and a this and that and everything…" Well those things are all nice, but I think deep down eventually they're going to say he was always there for me."* (010)

The frequent use of the statement "being there" goes to explain how this father understood the significant effect of attachment behavioral system and the need to be a dependable father to his children in order to achieve the goal of deactivating the attachment behavioral system which subsequently promotes a feeling of security.

Another participant put it this way when asked what he thought makes a good father:
*"I would say to, um, present yourself, presenting a viable, uh, model of a marriage to a child. The good and the bad, the difficult, you don't cover it up"*(005*)*

**Clear Expectation**

Another important theme in connection to what participants thought constitutes a good father was that a father is the one who is able to establish clear and unambiguous rules in the house for all members of the family. That is, as the leader of his family, a good father should be able to set rules and expectations for his family which includes children. In addition to setting the rules and expectations for his family, a good father should be able to lead and direct members of the family on how to follow and abide by these rules in the home. The availability of family rules and expectations enforces family routines which has been shown in the literature to promote healthy family environment and a strong child mental health (Glynn et al, 2019). In their study, Glynn et al (2019) showed that the presence of family routines and clear family expectations help improve the mental health of children especially in times of distress. They further established that, preschoolers' depressive and externalizing symptoms were elevated in a family setting that did not have any clear rule and expectations. This goes to show how the presence of clear expectations in the home can be related to better mental health.One of the participants puts it this way:

*"….and, I think, I remember one time, um, having, when (name of wife) and I got married, having my two boys sitting down and writing out what are the rules of the house. And I was surprised at some of the rules…But um, uh, I think uh, my expectations, uh, were, were pretty high. That if they were asked to do something they should do, and um, if they didn't do it they were to tell me that and not lie about it….So uh, I think, when the kids know what the rules are, that um, you have a better relationship. I think if you one time it's ok to do something and the next time it's not, that fracture any kind of relationship…So, uh, I thought the rules, I think that's the only reason (wife name blurred) married me cause she read the rules (laughs)"* (668F).

**Relationship with Father and Fathering Philosophy**

**Unresolved Wound Motivation**

Based on the findings of this study, fathers expressed a situation of not having a healthy relationship with their fathers while growing up as a factor that influenced their fathering philosophy. The absence of a healthy relationship while growing up has built in these fathers the motivation and the need to correct this wrong in their own family of recreation. The absence of a healthy father-son relationship led to the development of an unresolved wounded relationship with their fathers. The effect of this unresolved wounded relationship has been the motivating factor for these fathers to do better as fathers than what they experienced growing up. In essence, unresolved wounded relationship has been the motivating factor influencing the philosophy of these fathers. These fathers aspire to be better fathers than what they experienced growing.

The extent of a father's relationship with his father or any father figure in his life growing up have the potential of influencing their philosophy on fathering.The findings of this study showed that afather's relationship with his father or any father figure in his life has the potential of influencing their fathering philosophy. It should however be noted that this unresolved wound motivation can either be positive or negative depending on the extent and nature of the relationship they may have had with their respective fathers while growing up. Fathers who experienced a tender loving care from their father while growing up, mentioned that it affected them in a positive way and made them want to also replicate the same love and parenting style. On the other hand, those that did not have positive healthy relationship with their fathers when growing up wanted to do better than their respective father as parents. An example of a father who wanted to do better than his father which has consequently shaped his fathering philosophy was captured below:

*"...and I was hoping that with my kids, I could do, to do better and to be more involved right from the start. You know? Daycare thing, changing the diapers, being more involved.... to be more involved on a different level. When I look back on it, even the limited amount that he (referring here to his father) was involved, there was the positive things in my life, so then I thought, I can do better and for even more positive results would come out."*(010)

Another participant expressed it this way:

*"....wanted this kid to grow up knowing that they had a father who cared and was somebody to come to, not only for discipline, but they could come to him for counsel because you know, hey, "Im a rubber (?) Ive lived my life, Ive got experiences I can share with you that will make your journey easier." Now if you don't wanna participate in that, well that is your choice, but you know, its there for ya, so I thought, that I didn't get from my dad. My dad was basically, "its my way or the highway." You know? "You always choose the hard way, you always learn the hard way, so that is what I am going to give you is the hard way cuz you don't wanna learn the easy way, you don't wanna do what I say." So instead of explaining to me, you know, what the easier way was and how to get there, it was either, Im just gonna tell you how it is and you are going to do it that way. SO there was you know, kids aren't going to do it."*(152F)

Based on the life course theory perspective on intergenerational ties, it is without a doubt that a healthy father-son relationship has long-standing implications for the well-being of children (Chibucos&Leite, 2005). The bidirectional nature of father-child relationship influences each other's well-being across the life span through the "linked lives" shared by fathers and their offspring. This is what has the potential of either positively or negatively affecting children across the lifespan when they assume the role of a father. Fathers provide structure and instill meaning into men's roles within their families (Roy, 2014) and this may continue after children are grown. Relationships between fathers and their adult children tend to evolve into more reciprocal ties over time. When these reciprocal ties are caring and affectionate, they may be a valuable source of social support that enhances each party's well-being. More conflicted or distant father–child relationships, however, may diminish each person's well-being.

**Friends and Religions' Influence on Fatherhood**

**Learning from Friend's mistake**

From a bioecological theory perspective, contextual factors play an important role in influencing human behavior. Friends, society, and affiliation with a religious organization among others encapsulates what Bronfenbrenner called the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This system directly affects human development and behavior. It is for this reason that this study decided to look at how the microsystems of friends, and religion influences fathering philosophy. With respect to the influence of friends in influencing fathering philosophy, participants did not express any direct influence from friends with respect to fathering philosophy. However, what was learned from this study is that fathers saw what their friends were not doing right when it comes to parenting and tried to correct that in their own parenting or determined not to repeat the mistakes friends were making with respect to parenting. The fathers interviewed generally did not see the need to directly learn from friends when it comes to fathering. However, they tried to correct the mistake of their friends when it comes to fathering by not repeating the same mistake. A participant expressed it this way when asked if his friends influence him in any way when it comes to being a father:

*"......Well in a, in a small way, probably. I have some very close friends that I love dearly that have children that, uh, they, I think they firmly believe that their children can do no wrong, and uh, I have vowed to never take that attitude because I know kids (laughs) and if kids can find trouble, you know they don't have to look for it, sometimes it just happens upon them, but there's not too many perfect kids out there. That's my feeling, so I let the chips fall where they may, I guess and about the time you start bragging them up too much, then that's when you get let down. I look at my friends and learn by what I see them doing that I didn't like,..."*(00010F)

It was interesting to learn from this study about how most fathers are not likely to discuss with their friends about how to be a good and effective father but rather resorted to other means of learning and developing their fathering philosophies.

On the contrary, the literature on mothers and parenting has shown that mothers tend to discuss and learn from their friends and other mothers when it comes to parenting and mothering philosophies.Alsarve (2019) found that when it comes to parenting and the development of mother's philosophies on parenting, their friends played significant role and influence. Friends were sometimes seen as 'family' because of the enormous support they received from friends. The support that mothers received from their friends were often surrounded by norms of reciprocity this is something that was missing from the fathers interviewed for this study.

**Friends as Discussion Boards**

Like the role the internet plays in today's world as being home to online messaging or discussion boards where subscribers can join an online community or support groups and discuss any problems or ideas they may have on a topic. Findings from this study showed that fathers tend to resort to their friends as discussion board instead of directly consulting or seeking help from their friends when it comes to parenting. Through informal conversations, they discuss issues relating to parenting with their friends and receive feedback from them. In general, fathers tend to discuss broad parenting decisions they had to make (anything ranging from where to put their children in school to whether they should buy their children a cell phone) with their friends.  In this sense, the fathers used some of their closest friends as a sounding board and sought their opinion or even their experiences under similar situations.  One participant described a relationship he shared with his friend dating back to his childhood and their overall influence on each other's fathering behaviors:

*I think a lot of the things that we talk about when we get together and just you know we've known each other for thirty, thirty-four, thirty-five years.  'Whatwould you do in this situation?...this is what I did' and that kinda thing and….you know we've talked about putting our kids in these different schools andwhat's the right thing to do and I think, you know looking back we probably both made the right decision* 
*(125F)*

Another participant expressed it this way,
"*…you know you bounce ideas off other people, um more so with Laurie than me I'd say.  You know the mom's cruise….talking with friends who have older kids, learning some of the things that, you know about what they've had to deal with, with things, you know, I've started to face or will be facing.  If I see somebody doing something that, you know dawns on me that, hey that's, that's really interesting, I think that's a cool thing, I may try that with my kids too..*"(201F)

The above goes to buttress the assertion by Murphy et al (2013) that not only do friends serve as sounding board for fathers but also very important resource to father's behavior. In their study to examine the influence of fathers' peer network on fatherhood, their findings suggested that peer networks are salient not only to father's health but their behavior as well. It is for this reason that friends of fathers should not be underemphasized when designing intervention programs for fathers.

**Religion and Fathering Philosophy**

Religion and religious beliefs and practices have been a major influence in shaping parenting values and worldviews in many cultures around the world.The literature on the role of religion in parenting has shown various positive family outcomes. Notable among them includes increased parenting satisfaction and marital harmony, and less stress (El-Khani et al, 2023). Parental religiosity serves an invaluable resource for parents especially those with children (El-Khani et al, 2023). The findings of this study was no exception as fathers reiterated the invaluable role of religion in influencing their fathering philosophy. It should however be noted that not all the fathers interviewed expressed being a part of a religious organization and for that matter the influence of religion playing any role in the development of their fathering philosophy. Some considered themselves as not religious and so didn't see religion as an important factor in determining their fathering philosophy. Some of the themes from the response of the fathers interviewed included the following:

**Bible and Fathering Philosophy:**

The fathers who indicated religion as an integral part of their fathering philosophy mentioned the bible as the first go-to manual whenever they face any challenge with their parenting. The Christian Bible may not have a direct section on parenting and resources for parents such as parenting a child with autism, or other special needs, parenting as a single parent or as blended family, it contains thoughtful and motivational biblical narratives with good and bad examples that fathers may learn from. The Christian Bible also has some clear instructions that can be applied to parenting. Participants in this study reiterated the invaluable life lessons from the Bible which to a greater extent influences their fathering philosophy. One father expressed it this way:

*"I look at the Bible as, that's our role and our command as, God didn't say you could take a back burner on parenting….There's a Biblical truth to that relationship of how I'm parenting.  So it's, I can't divorce it from what's going on" (335)*

The bible, according to the participants spells out the details about their fathering philosophy like what they need to do when it comes to parenting. Here is how one participant expressed the role of the Bible when it comes to relating and parenting his little children:

*"they're at an age where it's making sense or it's not, why do we pray, you know what's going on, of just thinking those things through with them and being intentional um, and even how I discipline of why I discipline with them.  Of just letting them in on, you know here's why I do what I do, not just cause I don't want you to do that anymore.  It's really that, you know God wants you to care for others, or to, you know share things, this is not all about you."(335)*

Another participant mentioned how the value systems that he develops as a father emanates from his faith and religiosity

*…. that, um, that that would be the, the single, both emotional and intellectual, factor that would have influenced.  In other words, the theologic-the theology of, of God's word, um, as interpreted by whatever church I was in, but certainly, the early church that I grew up in, uh, would have influenced greatly… it provides a good value system for the children and will help socialize them a little bit and hopefully they can make their own decision on their beliefs from there.*

The above explains the invaluable role of religion in influencing fathering philosophy. It is therefore important for family practitioners to always consider the role of religion when designing intervention programs for fathers.

**Summary and Implication**

Some family research scholars have asserted the difficulty in conceptualizing fatherhood and the role of fathers by arguing that the concept of fatherhood is a social construct (Furrow, 1998; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998; Zoja, 2001). That is, societal expectation of fathers could vary based on the socio-historical context and cultural changes. The same applies to the expectation of fathers (Morman& Floyd, 2002). The implication for this is that any model attempting to conceptualize the characteristics of a good father and consequently, fathering philosophy needs to consider the cultural background of the individual and the historical context in which the father is evaluated.  It is because of this reason that this study decided to adapt a qualitative design that explored in depth information and insights provided by fathers into their current cultural and historical context their influencing fathering behaviors.

The current study contributes to the literature on father-child relationship which has not been a major focus of family researchers because of the limited number of studies addressing this all-important issue. This study has the potential of setting forth a discussion on the most important role of fathers as major contributors to the development of children across the lifespan. According to the family systems theory perspective, families are perceived as an integrated system of subsystems which include fathers. It is because of this that the role of fathers in terms of their parenting philosophies, approaches, and contextual factors that influences their fathering philosophies should be a focus of family researchers.The findings from this study has

contributed into delving into the minds of fathers concerning what constitutes a good father and the contextual factors that influences their parenting philosophy.

Even though on the surface, it may be easy to outline what constitute a good father, hearing it from fathers themselves corroborate what the literature says about fathers and parenting.

Given the need to conceptualize specific attributes of a good father and what determine their fathering philosophy, this study took a step back and asked fathers about these specific contextual factors influencing their parenting philosophy. Findings will add further insight into a growing literature that assesses the meanings men attach to their roles as fathers, help generate questions and ideas for future research and offer practitioners additional contextual information to consider when implementing parent education classes for fathers. Understanding the role of fathers in terms of their parenting philosophies, approaches, and contextual factors that influences their fathering philosophies will substantially contribute to the literature on fatherhood.

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