MASCULINE IDENTITY IN A "WOMAN'S" ROLE:
STAY-AT-HOME DADS IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

Elizabeth Sharp

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies masculinity and its effects and influences on men who adopt the traditionally feminine role of primary caregiver. Through a discussion initiated by questions of gender and identity, power and hegemony, this thesis examines the experiences and opinions of men who, in acting outside of hegemonic social expectations, have re-evaluated, and perhaps, re-defined their notions of what it means to be a man. These issues are addressed through a pairing of theoretical and qualitative research of eight stay-at-home dads in Prince George, British Columbia.

The primary goal of this research is to illuminate the transitions and barriers of hegemonic masculinity and identify how, or how not, masculine identity changes in a time and culture which encourages gendered change yet maintains traditional standards. As a result, this discussion explores what it means for masculinity – both individually and culturally - when men are not the family breadwinners.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction:
Discussing Masculinity and Research Contexts

When we speak of the inheritance of man we do not merely refer to the genes, the biological destiny of maleness but to the social expectations, the cultural notions of what it means to be a male.

Anthony Clare, 69

It's the question of whether gender shapes your roles or whether roles shape your perception [of gender].

Samuel (research participant, 2009)

This thesis is a study of masculinity and its effects and influences on men who adopt the traditionally feminine role of primary caregiver. Through a discussion initiated by questions of gender and ideology, and power and hegemony, this thesis examines the experiences and opinions of men who, in choosing to act outside of hegemonic social expectations, have re-evaluated, and perhaps, re-defined their own notions of what it means to be a man.

In their traditional contexts, femininity and masculinity are binary constructs used to define the characteristics that separate men and women. However, as Michael Kimmel argues, “masculinity and femininity are [also] relational constructs;” as one sex role changes, change in the other sex is inevitable (122). As gender ideologies have broadened and called into question traditional social, institutional, and even family structures through the influence of women's movements, the oppositional character of masculinities and femininities has transformed. Although we are socialized to recognize common gendered stereotypes (for example, femininity encompassing emotion and weakness while masculinity is characterized by strength and independence), these characteristics are not necessarily realistic or universal.
Within any society there may be various traits recognized as either masculine or feminine and as David Morgan notes, “the relationship between them may not always be stable; there may be contradictions of status and there may be room for challenge or negotiation” (200-01). However, since the Industrial Revolution, men (and masculinity) have continued to be associated more closely with the public sphere, and (are still often) viewed as protectors and providers (Townsend, Griswold). Although these ideas of gender may have shifted, to some degree they are still upheld by certain culturally specific behaviours and attitudes which indicate the significant pressure on men to perform to a normative standard. This “standard” or culturally constructed paradigm is commonly known as hegemony and is a theoretical framework within which this research is based.

In the opening quotation, Anthony Clare’s description of masculinity speaks to the idea that there is an accepted and expected idea of masculinity; men, particularly white, heterosexual men, are generally at an advantage in our current social structure (Connell xi). While this may be true, it is critical that masculinity also be understood as contextual and subjective rather than universal and static. As Connell and Messerschmidt point out, hegemonic masculinity is not normal, but normative (832); it is a standard of measure rather than a universal application. This becomes even more prominent when men perform roles that have traditionally been considered un-masculine, leading one to question why, though the defining characteristics of womanhood have changed significantly they have not necessarily reflected nor caused similar changes to concepts of manhood.

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1 I chose to use the term “womanhood” over femininity here because in many ways the definitions of “feminine” have not changed over time, whereas what it means to be a woman has changed in ways which are not necessarily associated with traditional forms of femininity (including being independent and identifying with a career). Masculinity, on the other hand, as a process and its reliance on power, needs continual renegotiation to be in “accordance with the fluctuating economic, cultural, and political” situations of a culture (Eley 322). In this way, “masculinity” and “manhood” become almost synonomous and are often used as such in this research.
As we have moved into a post-modern world, gender ideologies and behaviours seem to exist on more of a continuum rather than at opposite ends of a spectrum. Where domesticity and nurturance were once dissociated from manhood, the contemporary man may identify with the nurturing traits of fatherhood just as women identify with the world of paid work. However, because fathering does not correlate to masculinity as mothering does to femininity, it is still unusual for even the most active of fathers to adopt a domestic identity; likewise it is unusual for others to expect fathers to adopt domestic roles.

While it is conceivable that a new era of fatherhood is upon us, the ideologies surrounding fathers as primary care givers continue to tread on unsteady ground. Although fatherhood has always been considered an aspect of masculinity, its framework has changed over time. Fatherhood, which was once based on paternity and virility, has progressed into a more active or “new” fatherhood encompassing more paternal participation and nurturance. However, the link between active fathering and being a “good” father is distinctly separate from being a good father and the primary caregiver. This marks the ideal that men (and their masculinity) are defined by their paid work and further perpetuates the division of gendered spheres. While the “nurturing father” has become a more common concept in North American culture, the provider role remains definitive of masculinity and is a predominantly male responsibility (Connell; Townsend; Clare; Loscocco and Spitze; Lupton and Barclay; Morgan).

The concept of a gender continuum is similar to the idea of Gender Scaling (discussed by R.W. Connell [1987] among others). However, where scaling measures the diversity between masculinities and femininities of a given context, I feel that the concept of a continuum moves away from using gender polarities to compare and contrast masculinity and femininity and allows for a more holistic definition of gender. For example, in defining one’s gender identity, ideology, or behaviour on a “continuum” one would not have to identify as being either, or more masculine or feminine, but could view themselves as being both masculine and feminine, and eventually the opposition of terms would become redundant. This becomes clearer in the examples of my research participants who viewed themselves as enacting and identifying with both masculinity and femininity, while feeling that they did not fit into either category.
Through an analysis of hegemonic masculinity with regard to public and private spheres, the role of masculinity, femininity and feminism, as well as men’s (and society’s) ability to deconstruct (and re-construct) individual masculinities I will explore what it means for masculinity – both individually and culturally - when men are not the family breadwinners, and argue that hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy create barriers for men as well as for women. Within these contexts specific issues regarding gendered housework, child care, and the various influences on men who identify as active fathers and stay-at-home dads will also be addressed. These issues will be addressed through a pairing of theory and a case study of eight stay-at-home dads in Prince George, British Columbia (BC).

This thesis not only analyzes the choices of eight northern men and how their roles have or have not marginalized them, it also investigates gendered ideological constructs and how they reflect, influence, and inform one another. I examine how culture and society construct and conform to ideas of masculinity and how those ideas are perpetuated and/or resisted. By reviewing literature on male primary care giving, the divergence between gendered domestic roles, and public versus private ideals of masculinity, I argue that regardless of how new contexts of fatherhood have become popularized, ideologically, the behaviors of male primary care-givers are still aligned with hegemonic masculine ideals.

**Identities and Ideologies: Fatherhood, masculinity, and the domestic**

Masculinity is used to reference a variety of socio-cultural contexts including male identity and cultural ideologies, as well as individual characteristics of what it is to “be a man.” Such characteristics typically include socially constructed ideals of male strength, power, heterosexuality, independence and aggression, as well as encompassing roles of
protector and provider (Connell and Messerschidt [2005], Kimmel [1994], Brandth and Kvande [1998], Coltrane [1996]). Regardless of the varying degrees and inconclusiveness of masculinities, these basic traits are generally recognized by most people. Because hegemonic masculinity celebrates these dominant forms of masculinity they are removed from the possibility of censure (Connell and Messerschmidt 834). Although “masculinity” connotes these types of male qualities it is often used synonymously with “male identity.” The interchangeability of these terms implies an inability for men to identify themselves beyond the boundaries of hegemonic ideologies. Comparatively, “ideology” is also often confused with that of “identity” even though ideology is implicative of one’s belief system and identity is more a vehicle for those systems (Kroska 368); therefore, these terms should not be viewed as being interchangeable within this discussion.

Besides the convoluted nature of the terminology, the diversity of masculinities and the multitude of influences that affect the formation of identity makes masculine identity conceptually difficult to define. Therefore, in following the idea that identity is formed through both individual perception and culturally constructed ideologies masculinity may be defined as being “whatever [one] thinks it is” (Clatterbaugh, 37). This is a relatively post-modern viewpoint and one which many assume regarding their own definitions of gender identities and ideologies. It is particularly relevant for this study in that is allows room for men who do not “fit” into traditionally constructed ideals to identify and locate themselves within recognizable gendered contexts. This is demonstrated by the participants in my case study as many felt that they had “decided for themselves” their own definitions of masculinity and femininity. In his discussion of the different ways of defining and articulating masculinities, Kenneth Clatterbaugh argues that this sort of self-defined gender
identity is “illustrative of the struggle to become masculine, [it is] not simply or idiosyncratically autobiographical” (37). Though some men, such as my participants, feel that they redefine masculinity for themselves by resisting popular or hegemonic ideals, they still remain “generally convinced that there is some standard of masculinity that they are trying to achieve” (37). Specific examples of this will be discussed in chapters two and four.

Gender identity is the rational and often irrational ideal one forms about oneself and encompasses a reflection of, or rebellion against, cultural ideologies and stigmas. Because identity is partially formed from one’s relationship to hegemonic ideologies of class, ethnicity, religion, physical make-up, occupation, and sexuality among other things, “masculinity is best seen not simply as some kind of quality that is attached to individuals, but a kind of cultural resource, of a set of potentialities which may be realized and shaped in particular contexts” (Morgan 111). In following this, my analysis reveals that masculine identity is as much the result of hegemonic ideals as it is an individual formation of selfhood. This will be discussed in the following chapters with relation to participants’ identities as men, fathers and homemakers.

In relation to the flux of women entering the world of paid work, the dynamics of the “family identity” have also shifted and become more expectant of men as active fathers. Scott Coltrane notes that, “[b]efore the modern era, father-child relationships were ruled primarily by duty, and although fathers’ associations with their children were not devoid of emotion, they were characterized by obligation” (1998, 86). This reference to a fatherhood of the past is an example of the changing dynamics of contemporary fatherhood as well as the way in which we understand the role, responsibilities, and ownership (or paternity) of a male parent. This is demonstrated by the various meanings around fatherhood and the
varying degrees of participation adopted by fathers. For example, “to father” means “to impregnate a woman and beget a child, thus describing a kinship connection that facilitates the intergenerational transfer of wealth and authority” (Coltrane 2004, 225). The term “fatherhood” is definitive of a “biological and social relationship between a male parent and his offspring” and “reflects ideals about the rights, duties, and activities of men in families and in society... Fatherhood thus reflects a normative set of social practices and expectations” within a certain culture. *Fathering* on the other hand is a relatively contemporary term and “refers more directly to what men do with and for their children” (225). The variance in these terminologies, although useful, can also become convoluted and confusing. For example, a father may not necessarily be an active father or participate in the act of fathering. Relative to this, an active father may be different from a stay-at-home dad, which may be viewed differently from a primary caregiver. Furthermore, these terms have a different meaning in comparison with other titles such as “homemaker.” While “stay-at-home dad” is definitive of a man whose full-time job is to care for his children, the title of homemaker implies a responsibility of not only performing childcare, but also maintaining and “making” the home. As well, the definition of care-giving also takes on different levels of meaning. Care-giving is an activity that connotes the provision of basic care such as supervision as well as emotional care such as love, support and nurturance. I define care-work to include the above as well as more subtle and acute forms of care provided by the primary caregiver such as family planning (with regard to planning events and appointments), housework, and the emotional work which often accompanies these activities, such as worry and guilt. This will be discussed further in chapters two and four.

Because fatherhood serves as the vehicle for an analysis of masculinity within this
research, it will be discussed as both a gender role and identity. As the definitions above reveal, these two contexts are not always unified. Aspects of the terms listed above (such as fatherhood, identity, masculinity and ideology) will be used throughout this study, and therefore, it is important to recognize and understand their nuances as they defer to domestic work, gender roles, and identity.

In light of the various definitions of men with regard to their domestic roles, childcare and housework still do not seem to fit within contemporary notions of hegemonic masculine activities except as directly linked to fatherhood (and even fathers who participate in such activities may receive some criticism from outsiders). As a result, the emotional work associated with the domestic sphere and childcare is still often recognized as a “subordinate” form of masculinity (Connell 1987, 110). Unlike the traditional definition of a “good” mother, the idea of the “good” father is not necessarily indicative of fathers being primary caregivers or assuming the domestic role. In fact, the breadwinner role has continued to be a defining characteristic not only of manhood but also of being a good father. Possibly the most cherished masculine role is to be a family’s sole, or at least primary wage earner (LaRossa 33-34). Jean Potuchek states that, “breadwinning is not just a matter of behaviour… but also a matter of the meaning attached to that behaviour,” implicating its connection to identity (4). She further emphasizes that breadwinning involves paid employment as well as the day-to-day obligation to financially support a family (4), and although many wives are employed, they are not automatically considered breadwinners (6).

The link between work and fatherhood is one which defines a successful masculine role; because of this, paid work and the provider role become almost synonymous with successful fatherhood. Nicholas Townsend states that “providing is something that men do
as fathers. Devotion to one’s job is both a sign of commitment to fatherhood and an activity that detracts from the time a father spends with his children” (128-29). It is this type of struggle between contradicting ideologies and behaviours which is identified as a limitation that hegemonic standards place upon the participants of this study.

Unfortunately, many men seem to be less inclined to adopt a domestic identity as the domestic sphere is interpreted as subordinate to the power afforded by the financial provider role. Although feminism and gender studies critique the ideological gendering of spheres, popular culture, media, and contemporary ideologies still perpetuate the idea. This is shown particularly through the domestic duties (including types of child care and household chores) performed by men, as well as the ways in which some men who stay at home continue to dis-identify with the “feminine” duties of the domestic sphere. This was shown in a case study by Andrea Doucet who argued that men who stay at home full-time maintain a link to “manly” types of work, and was further exemplified in my own case study by participants who felt shy, embarrassed or defensive of their lack of breadwinning. The idea that some male primary caregivers feel the need to justify their behaviour or protect a sense of masculinity by retaining links to culturally identifiable characteristics of masculinity suggests that no matter how popular a “new” form of fatherhood has become, it is still subject to the cultural pressures of hegemony. Findings such as these have inspired questions regarding the very nature of masculinity and work-identity and whether or not men feel the need to form, or re-form their masculine identities as a result of performing non-traditional roles.

In cases where men feel torn between the reality of their non-traditional role and what North American culture appropriates as “male” work, one wonders if this presents a sense of confusion or frustration among men. This difficulty in adapting one’s masculinity within the
boundaries of hegemony contributes to the idea of there being a masculinity “crisis”.

Authors such as Susan Faludi, R.W. Connell and Roger Horrocks argue that the masculinity crisis is the result of an inability to reconcile hegemonic standards and changing realities of gender. Horrocks argues that patriarchy has begun to disintegrate (or at the very least change forms) because feminism has placed ideologies and behaviours of the genders in a constant state of flux. Because of this, he argues that masculinity itself has become the “crisis” of men by placing them in a situation where they must somehow retain a sense of masculinity while denying the traditional ideologies of patriarchal-manhood. Horrocks states that we have put men into a “no-man’s land,” where they feel “guilty about their traditional areas of power on the one hand, but [are] afraid to go into new areas, that seem dominated by women” (31). This thesis attempts to identify how men who have been placed into traditionally feminine roles cope with the “no-man’s land” of the domestic sphere. As will be seen, most men seem to transition into this new space by resisting some of the more basic hegemonic masculine values and in this way equip themselves with the tools needed to overcome a potential gender “crisis.” However, this does not mean that men do not face barriers when they transgress gendered roles, and in many cases men rely on hegemonic forms to help relocate their own masculinities.

Masculinity, as an identity as well as an ideology, exemplifies the nature of culturally constructed values and how by performing those values we inevitably perpetuate both positive and negative characteristics. Unfortunately, the gendered barriers enforced by hegemony often marginalize individuals who behave outside the normative standards of their particular culture; an example of this is in the continued disparity between public/private gender roles. On the other hand, because gender exists on a continuum where all genders
inform each other, the traditionally bipolar categories of hegemonic masculinity and femininity have become increasingly inadequate for understanding the formation of gender identities. Fidelma Ashe approaches this by discussing masculinity as a process. She claims that gender is not a fixed concept because it is only achieved through “repetitive practicing of normative ideals” (96). This seems to be especially true when men adopt traditionally feminine roles such as homemaker and primary caregiver, resulting in questions of how and where men locate themselves within the gender continuum. In an attempt to address these types of questions the men in this study were asked to discuss concepts of masculinities, femininities, feminism, and fatherhood, and how they reconcile these concepts within their own roles and identities as stay-at-home dads.

The personal, political, and regional

I have lived my entire life thus far in Prince George, the “northern capital” of British Columbia (BC): a city within which I have spent significant periods of time researching, volunteering, organizing, and being an activist for gender-based issues, both local and global. Through these activities I have become familiar with various forms of marginalization regarding both men and women. I have also become accustomed- though not acclimated- to the stigma in Prince George (and other northern communities) surrounding non-normative gender behaviour, including activities and ideologies linked with feminism (which, oftentimes, is viewed as little more than an offensive word).³ It is not the aim of this project to undermine the continuing inequalities of women by examining men’s issues of marginalization or subordination, nor does it imply that the issues of one gender are relative to those of another; the aim is to further reveal the effects and barriers created by patriarchal

³ These statements are purely auto-ethnographical and are not meant to reflect the values or experiences of any other individual.
climates and hegemonic gender constructs.

My upbringing in a small northern city paired with my egalitarian-feminist ideologies and activities have lent me sensitivity toward those who are marginalized (or subordinated) by the "rules" of hegemony. The disparity in treatments of one gender over another, regardless of which is the marginalized, has been an issue of contention for me from a young age. I believe that patterns of intolerance encouraged by hegemonic ideologies perpetuate inequality of all kinds. Judith Lorber articulates this by stating that hegemony is "the value base that legitimizes a society's unquestioned assumptions" (184). Although this belief system is, perhaps, the root inspiration behind my research, there are a number of other reasons for my desire to examine the barriers men face as a result of hegemonic masculinity.

For example, while growing up in the north the livelihoods of many of our family members, friends, and neighbours were derived from resource extraction industries such as pulp and timber mills, logging, reforestation, and mining. As stated by Statistics BC, the "[n]atural resource extraction and processing industries provided the foundation upon which British Columbia's economy was first built, and are still the dominant industries in many rural areas and smaller centres of the province" (http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/qf.pdf, May 18, 2009). This resulted in Prince George's earning and maintaining the reputation of being a blue-collar "mill town." As resource extraction jobs retain a predominantly male labour force (and have such significance in northern communities), northern masculinities often valorize the physical strength required in resource extraction and maintain and value the traditional male-breadwinner model of the household. While one in four employees in resource extraction industries are women, they typically earn less than their male coworkers due to the types of jobs they perform (such as administrative positions, or textile
manufacturing). As well, BC statistics for 2009 reveal that while more women are involved in the paid work force than previously, men maintain more full-time employment and make up to 75% of the resource extraction labour force (upon which northern BC is economically grounded).

The male-breadwinner ideology seems not to be mutually exclusive from the geographical and “small city” social climates of northern BC. Therefore, as one whose ideologies are not necessarily those of the “northern” mainstream, I am curious about men’s attitudes and behaviours that are unique to their communities and the formation and survival of such attitudes that move against normative currents, as well as how men’s identities are affected when they decide to act outside accepted gender norms.

Although it is a slight digression, before going any further, geographical terminology must be addressed. There is some contention regarding definitions of “rural” and “northern”. This is especially true with regard to Prince George, as it is geographically located in the central interior of British Columbia and cannot be considered rural because of its population size, educational and health facilities, and other cultural indicators. Therefore, Prince George’s “rural” atmosphere is really only in relation to the larger and more economically diverse centers in southern BC; thus, for the purposes of this research Prince George is recognized as a “small city” rather than a rural one.

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4 For this, and further information on gendered employment in BC’s resource extraction workforce, see the “Guide to the BC Economy and Labour” web page at, <http://guidetobceconomy.org/maior_industries/manufacturing.htm> and, <http://www.guidetobceconomy.org>


6 Prince George has a multitude of public and private recreational and cultural facilities, a university, a college, art galleries, and hospitals, to name a few examples. The population of Prince George is approximately 77,000 people (<http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions/towns/?townID=3659>), much higher than the 10,000 people signifying a “rural” community.
With regard to Prince George’s location, it is considered by most residents to be a northern city although it is located in central BC. In many ways the title of “northern” carries with it similar connotations as “rural,” in that “the north” is not viewed as being as progressive as cities in southern BC. Perhaps because Prince George is the largest city in the northern half of BC and is considered the “gateway to the north”, its residents, culture, and politics, are considered northern. Using terms such as “small city” and “northern” to describe the status of Prince George reveals the culture, dominant ideologies, regionalism, and way of life as something more than just the measure of a population or as a “location with identifiable boundaries on a map” (du Plessis, et al.).

While this research was inspired by the effects of regional ideologies on gender hegemony, it is also representative of my interest in the rather contentious combination of men and feminism. The more I learn about and identify with feminism the more I wonder how it affects the lives of men, or more accurately, how it has changed men’s lives and ideas of masculinity. Although it may seem clear to me how my participants are affected by feminism, and while contemporary men have more opportunity than the generations before them to choose a role in the domestic sphere, it is clear that men can face multiple barriers when adopting non-traditional roles. My aim is to use the experiences and ideologies of my participants to help clarify the relationship between feminism and masculinity as well as analyze the influences feminism has had on them as individuals.

As Sandra Harding notes, examining the researcher is as important to critical enquiry as examining the subject matter (1987, 8-9). She states that “the beliefs and behaviours of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the

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7 For example, the Provincial government identifies each area of the province according to population based “regions”; Prince George is located in “Region 5, North” (www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/contact/region.htm).
results of research” (9). It is because of this that I had with some trepidation considered my position as researcher in this project as a limitation of sorts. Authors such as David Morgan and Gill Reynolds examine female skepticism regarding men who write about feminism but the issue of women writing about men or masculinity is rarely analyzed. As will be discussed in much more detail in chapter three, I am the opposite in almost all contexts to my participants, and at the outset of the research I feared that this would create a barrier between me and the men I interviewed. I worried that perhaps I would be unable to represent their stories accurately which is pinpointed by Reynolds as being the “debate concerning feminist research among men” (107), and can be likened to controversies around men doing research on women (or men doing feminist research). However, as I spoke with each participant I found that, for the most part, they were eager to talk about their situations, their identity as fathers, the changes and challenges they have faced, and their ideas about gender. Although my position may have inhibited the participants to some degree, it seems to have been the participants themselves who, in the end, made me feel more comfortable within the paradigms of the research.

Nicholas Townsend notes that feminist analysis has opened up discussions of gender and has incorporated and encouraged more open dialogues regarding masculinity and fatherhood (2). Through my own feminist standpoint I hope to add to these dialogues throughout the following research and case study.

**Research Limitations:**

Although there is a plethora of literature regarding the relationships among contemporary fatherhood, masculinity, and family dynamics, investigating many of these
avenues within this project was limited. For example, there is a multitude of arguments on the dynamics of fatherhood with regard to the psychological and social well-being of a family; however, I do not investigate aspects of father-child relationships, nor the potential social or psychological impacts of stay-at-home fathers on the family. My overall focus for this study is to bring to light the fissures and relations between changing gender roles and how they create new gender dynamics, as well as to investigate how individuals react to these changes. I do not feel that the psychological aspect of father-child relationships was necessary in achieving these specific goals. Although policies such as child custody or parental leave contribute to the lives of many men (and, in fact, provided the opportunity for some of my own participants to become primary caregivers), this research is formed specifically around a dialogue of ideology and identity; therefore I chose not to detail public politics regarding fatherhood. As well, an in-depth analysis of violence, sexuality, sport, media, and other gender dynamics are necessary for a more holistic account of masculine identity. Due to the constraints of this particular research, this analysis is specific to the culturally constructed components of masculine identity through full-time stay-at-home fathers. This is also why I did not develop discussion around the psychological context of identity. Although these are all important topics and I understand their inherent correlation to gendered roles, I decided to focus primarily on sociological aspects directly related to the dynamics of changing masculine identity as it exists for the participants of my study.

There were also some unavoidable limitations within the qualitative portion of this research, the most prominent being the number of participants recruited for the case study. As will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, the recruitment of participants proved to be especially challenging and led to there being only eight stay-at-home dads involved in this
study. Because of the limited number of participants I felt inclined to include the experiences of those whose circumstances fell outside of the initial requirements. These and other limitations regarding the empirical research are discussed in chapters three, four and five.

**Chapter Layout:**

This project has two main components: the first, which is laid out in the following chapter, includes a theoretical examination of masculinity and fatherhood. The theoretical base informs the qualitative findings in three ways: 1) it provides the background information needed to locate masculinity and fatherhood in contemporary Canadian society; 2) it helps conceptualize and contextualize masculinity and male identity with relation to feminism, femininity, and gendered spheres; and 3) it promotes the relationship between theory and practice on the subject of masculinity and male identity. The second component of this research involves a qualitative analysis of northern stay-at-home dads through one-on-one interviews, which makes up chapter four. Through theoretical and qualitative methods I forge a link between the ideals of gender roles and the personal experiences of eight fathers in Prince George, BC. The pairing of theoretical and empirical research is necessary for an experiential account of contemporary masculinities. This will be discussed further in chapter three along with a description of the case study methodologies, interview format, and a brief overview of the research sample.

Chapter four provides the analysis of the interviews, relating them to the theoretical discussion of changing masculine identities and ideologies, the disparity between hegemonic masculinities and femininities, and also reveals the formation of a separate gendered "space" formed by the participants. The fourth chapter begins by illustrating some of the challenges
faced by the participants including the tensions in transitioning from public to domestic spheres and the forms of isolation which they experience as stay-at-home dads and homemakers. This chapter concludes with an examination of how these men identify their individual masculinities in relation to cultural and personal ideas of masculinity, femininity and feminism.

The fifth chapter of this thesis summarizes the results of the research while also acknowledging some of its challenges and pitfalls. The concluding chapter pays further homage to the challenges of changing gender ideologies in a northern landscape and hypothesizes about the potential for future change.

When I started conceptualizing this research I wanted to gain an understanding as to how feminism had (or had not) influenced men in choosing a “woman’s” role within a male-dominated economic environment and how that role might affect one’s masculine identity. Not only did I uncover some of the tensions which occur as a result of transcending hegemonic boundaries, but I also discovered that ideologies and behaviours can (and do) remain mutually exclusive from one another when hegemonic gender boundaries are challenged. Because of this, the case study of eight stay-at-home dads further exemplifies that men adopting non-traditional roles are not necessarily transforming masculinity but rather creating a space within a gendered continuum where they can include more feminine (or less masculine) behaviours without removing themselves from a normative system of values. Although these men are indeed pushing gender boundaries, I argue that manhood is not necessarily being redefined as hegemonic masculinity remains the framework within which they modify their behavior. Although the case study seems to stray slightly from its original purpose of explaining the direct effects of feminism on men, in the end, the example
of domestic agency taken by my participants reveals how feminism has challenged traditional
gender ideologies and thus, allowed for the shifting of roles identified here.
CHAPTER 2

Fatherhood and its mal/contents: A theoretical examination of masculinity, crisis, fatherhood, and domestic practices

Through theoretical analysis, this chapter explores the roles of breadwinner and homemaker, the influences of feminism on masculinity and the idea of the “new” father. It also provides insight into the question of masculinity “crisis” and its presence in the lives of men and fathers. In an effort to bring to light some of the features affecting the formation of both hegemonic masculinities and individual identities this chapter is divided into five subsections. Each section examines how personal and socio-political forces affect the construction of hegemonic ideologies. In turn, this examination helps identify tensions between fatherhood and masculinity, convention and change, and ideology and practice. This chapter identifies some of the current theories around masculinity, fatherhood, and transformation of gender roles, establishing the theoretical base of this thesis.

Hegemony and Identity:

The context(s) in which hegemony will be used in this thesis are thoroughly discussed by authors such as R.W. Connell, Gwyn Williams, and Geof Eley among others. In an analysis of Antonio Gramsci (who defined hegemony in relation to class structure), Williams states that hegemony is

an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and
political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral
connotation. (187)

In addition to this, Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is also based on men’s
domination over women. Because of this he argues there is “no femininity that is hegemonic
in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men” (1987, 183).
Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity also borrows from Gramsci’s version in that it
is an “ascendancy achieved in a play of brute social forces that extends beyond contests of
brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes” (184). Although this
gender categorization is practiced (but perhaps not acknowledged) at a societal level, it
should not universalize the roles and identities of all men. In fact, as Connell notes,
hegemony “does not mean total cultural dominance [nor] the obliteration of alternatives. It
means ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play” (184). In
other words, the hegemonic ideals of a culture may not necessarily correspond with the
realities of individuals due to the constant re-constructing of its ideological boundaries.

Similar to Connell, Geof Eley states that hegemony is “characterized by uncertainty,
impermanence, and contradiction” (322). The borders of hegemonic masculinity are elusive
and contextually defined by class, culture, ethnicity, religion, personal relationships, and
sexuality among other variables, making it increasingly difficult to define ones self within the
boundaries of what is socially “acceptable”. It is a process open for “modification” and
society provides “opportunities for contesting as well as securing” its legitimacy (322).
Therefore, if the foundation of hegemonic masculinity is power over women and subordinate
masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what all men embrace but what they
are socially motivated to identify with (Connell 184).
As noted in the previous chapter, hegemony may remove dominant forms of masculinity from censure; however, hegemony also allows for variations in form. For example, the strong silent loner, the nurturing father, the quiet intellectual, the loud and active “man’s man,” and the “chivalrous romantic” all represent ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 106). These variations, although distinct, abide by the basic hegemonic formulae of masculinity: power and stoic independence. However, as Edley and Wetherell state, “[m]anliness… is a contested territory; it is an ideological battlefield” which continuously changes over time, and while there may be multiple variations and definitions of masculinity, this does not mean that they happily coexist (106). The active “man’s man” and the thoughtful intellectual are indeed different types of “manliness” and represent the tension between one’s sense of masculinity and the contexts within which it is constructed and measured. Indeed, it may be this very ambiguity that is important to the process of hegemony as hegemonic masculinities do not always correspond with the lives of every man (Connell and Messerschmidt 838). In other words, individuality remains intact while one’s masculinity still conforms to hegemonic ideals. When individuality prevails over hegemony, however, it is usually considered a “subordinate” or marginal form of masculinity. This seems to be where stay-at-home dads find themselves; even though they may identify with masculinity, stay-at-home dads disassociate themselves from popularized notions of manhood, especially when they do not see their role as being included within those notions.

Hegemonic masculinity is often distinguished as a form of power and control over women and other “subordinate” groups of men. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt note, hegemony is also “an idea that embeds certain notions of consent and participation by
the subaltern groups” and might therefore not survive as a normative concept if it was consistently resisted (841). Hegemonic masculinity must, then, have positive aspects that appeal to everyone or it would have faded. For example, stereotypical masculine traits such as rationality and gallantry paired with roles such as father and provider can be considered positive facets of normative masculinity (840). In this sense, stay-at-home fathers possess the masculine “asset” of fatherhood, and perhaps of an identity as a “good” father. These men also forge unfamiliar terrain and as a result, claim a certain amount of personal success in an area which was, traditionally, not theirs to claim. In addition, “negative” aspects such as aggression and violence are often valorized by the media, as is a portrayal of men being domestically inept, making it difficult to pinpoint hegemonic characteristics as always being positive or negative. On the other hand, Brandth and Kvande note that, “[b]eing hopelessly clumsy with children is not considered particularly masculine. Being able to master a new challenge, even if it is childcare, is however, regarded as an important masculine attribute” (309). While domesticity may be a more recent addition to the “repertoire” of masculinity, evidence of Brandth and Kvande’s comment is provided by the participants’ of this study.

When discussing the expansive contexts of masculinity in this way one must keep in mind that hegemony (and the construction of gender hegemony) is a system of classifications and boundaries meant to eliminate or exclude non-normative forms. While there may be varying profiles, as noted above, the unanimity of certain masculine qualities is crucial to distinguishing between the “weak” and “strong” within the structure of hegemony. Therefore, while maintaining some of the more idyllic traits, stay-at-home fathers also represent a “subaltern” group; their proximity to the feminine sphere, their links to conventionally feminine behaviours, and their tenuous or absent connection to breadwinning
places them in a marginal, or “weak”, masculine paradigm. This is not to suggest that men who are full-time stay-at-home dads are marginalized by socio-political or economic forces; they are neither isolated nor restricted from the institutions and social comforts of their communities. However, based on the examples provided in this and following chapters, I argue that stay-at-home dads are often (or often feel that they are) isolated and restricted from certain gender ideologies and parenting practices; consequently, they may be inhibited by their role in ways that female homemakers are not.

In his article, “Varieties of ‘Real Men,’” James Messerschmidt reveals how men produce certain kinds of behaviour viewed as being “essentially male” to other men of their social group (and class). Although the framework of his discussion is around the relationship between crime and masculinity, similar arguments can be formed to explain how stay-at-home dads might display their own sense of masculinity based on their social (and in this case, domestic) circumstances. Connell and Messerschmidt discuss further how men construct masculinity according to social circumstance, as well as in response to personal situations. They state that “[m]asculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (836). For the men in this study, the fact that their position is supported, and for some, encouraged, by their partners, is significant to their ideologies of masculine fatherhood, and possibly allows them to adopt more feminine behaviours without fear of judgment. Though the domestic sphere affords men the freedom of behaving in less traditional ways, masculinity is measured by other men (Kimmel, 1994), and therefore men performing traditional feminine roles may feel the need to alter how they represent themselves when addressing outsiders or when in social situations. Thus, the tension here is
perhaps not in how they maintain traditional or hegemonic masculine behaviour, but when they feel they must enact it. Specific examples of this are shown in the case study with regard to the attitudes taken by participants when describing their role to others.

While the domestic sphere is more likely to promote and legitimize male domestic responsibility, community institutions are highly influential to self-perceptions and domestic ideals and may discourage attempts to transcend the norm. As Goddard states, gendered roles “are both imposed on the individual from the outside and assumed by the collective body of society. The gaze becomes, therefore, the expression of the ideal each gender holds for the other and for itself” (26-27). Therefore, men who feel the need to reform their identities must still face the pressure of doing so within hegemonic standards, thus leading to a potential for confusion, or crisis, regarding the standards by which ideology and behaviour are measured.

The “Crisis” of Masculinity:

The advent of participatory fatherhood paired with the social expectations of masculinity may bring about a shift in identity and ideology for men. With regard to this, discussions of changes in fatherhood seem to inevitably blur into conversations about masculinity crisis.

In the last century, and particularly within the last sixty years, changing economic and socio-political issues have altered many ideas of gender roles in society. For the most part discussion on this topic has centered on the affected roles of women, especially with the flux of women into the paid workforce. Recently, however, there has been much discussion around changes in the ideologies, roles, and behaviours of men; this is especially true
regarding men and the domestic sphere. Some argue that these changes, many of which have resulted from feminism, disable men’s power and challenge traditional notions of manhood, influencing a sort of crisis (Tiger, Horrocks, Faludi). While the idea of masculinity in crisis is not a new concept, it seems recent due to the conscious and systematic way masculinity is now studied (Horrocks 8).

Although there are viable reasons for “crisis” theories, some of which will be discussed below, I argue that masculinity in both its traditional and contemporary forms is not in jeopardy. As contemporary behaviours affect gendered change, traditional contexts are expanded rather than eliminated and new standards of masculine hegemony are confirmed. While gendered change may inflict an atmosphere of anxiety- or crisis- I argue that it is the limitations of hegemony which inflict feelings of desperation or loss of control. In spite of this, “crisis” theories regarding the current state of masculinity reflect the feelings of contemporary society and should be recognized.

If industrialization is considered one of the first significant changes to gender ideology and behaviour in North America, the second most important influence upon hegemonic gender ideals was the growth of feminism at the turn of the nineteenth century and again with Second Wave feminism in the mid-twentieth century. First and second-wave feminism are responsible for exposing the damaging effects of patriarchy and are credited (and cursed) for current gender ideologies around equal opportunity, sexual rights, and family rights. Because the mobilization of feminist ideologies and behaviours is seen as largely responsible for modern conceptions of gender, it is often viewed as the root cause for masculinity crisis (Horrocks 6).

Because hegemonic masculinity is a measure of male power the most common
argument is that the masculinity "crisis" has been brought on by men’s threatened sense of power, both publicly and privately; the most widely recognized cause of this is feminism. If masculine identity is largely “tied up with patriarchy and its rule, then it is likely that the stability and confidence of the male has always fluctuated as the patriarchal system itself undergoes shocks, disasters on the one hand, triumphs on the other” (Horrocks 6). Edley and Wetherell note that for centuries men’s ability to subordinate women was due in part to their “stranglehold on the meaning” of masculinity and femininity (107). Through this control they were able to create and maintain what it means to be a man or woman and what types of work constitute men’s or women’s work (107). Because these discourses continue to change it may feel, for some, like a threat to the very foundation of manhood.

A facet of feminism’s influence on a masculinity “crisis” is revealed in the biological argument regarding the relationship between feminism and paternity. Although most gender theories have moved beyond the idea of masculinity as a biological trait, there is still some acceptance of this. In Decline of Males, Lionel Tiger argues that feminism has mobilized a transformation of biology, and thus a reversal of gendered power. He argues that with changing reproductive practices and the advent of birth control women have undermined men’s power to define themselves through paternity, making men powerless and their basic biological function unnecessary. Anthony Clare makes a similar argument that the “rise in number of single mothers suggests not merely that men are inadequate as partners and fathers but that they are simply redundant” (7).

Traditionally, masculine identities have been linked to things such as sexual virility and work. That the necessity of these roles has seemingly diminished in society is posited by authors such as Clare and Tiger as a factor in the current masculinity crisis. For example,
Clare argues that paid work can no longer be defined as particularly masculine (even if it
does contribute to a sense of individual masculine identity) because women also do it, and
this contributes to the “crisis” of failing masculinity (69). However, one can argue that
women have merely made room for themselves within masculine contexts/spaces rather than
forming entirely new, feminine, institutions of work, and therefore hegemonic masculinity in
this context is not necessarily under threat from women.

Alternatively, men have not made concurrent movements to “make room” for
themselves within traditional feminine spaces. Susan Faludi discusses and argues this as
being the basis of gender crisis for men. Faludi is of the opinion that hegemony limits
masculinity, confines men, and (despite feminism) imparts a sense of lost control. She goes
on to discuss masculinity as a limitation to men’s ability to think themselves “out of their
dilemma” (14); she indicates that, if men are the “makers and enforcers” of masculine
hegemony, it is difficult (or impossible) for them to rise up against their own system (14).

Although there are many stay-at-home dads who discuss their own feelings of
redundancy resulting from an inability to locate (or identify) themselves within either the
workplace or the home, the role of feminism in providing a greater domestic role for men is
irrefutable. Because of this, one can argue that feminism has opened up alternate avenues for
men to proceed with specific aspects of masculine behaviour (active fatherhood, for
example); the participation of stay-at-home dads provides an opportunity to override some
feelings of the redundancy mentioned by Clare and therefore, places more onus on the
structure of hegemony as a source of potential gender crisis. In addition to this, men do not
lack opportunity to realize and adopt changing means of regaining individual control.  

\[ \text{control} \]

In this context, “control” is used in reference to that which one has over the formation of identity, rather than a
control implicative of roles of power and subordination.
is shown by men who choose to become stay-at-home dads and homemakers as they push
gender boundaries in an attempt to “make room” for themselves. There are some areas that
have expanded to be more inclusive of men (such as traditionally feminine jobs, family,
feminism, etcetera), and thus men’s self-possession and sense of control remains in how they
utilize new and changing opportunities. A difficulty in accessing new and changing roles is
that men seem to cling to past models; “they’d rather see themselves as battered by feminism
than shaped by the larger culture” (14). Unlike feminists, who frame their battle against
patriarchy, most men are uncomfortable with this outlet for blame. Faludi posits that, “[e]ach
of our [gender] struggles depends on the success of the other’s,” and in light of this (or
perhaps because of it), “[t]he solution for women has proved the problem for men” (604).

Similar to Faludi, Roger Horrocks argues that men are just as damaged by patriarchy
as women. Patriarchy has disempowered men by instilling “normative” ideologies of
masculinity which cause divisions among them. Thus, the system created by men is the very
thing causing harm, and the very thing that men are unable to escape. Horrocks posits that
because of this masculinity is not only in crisis, masculinity also is the crisis for men (1). If
this is the case, the rigid policing of hegemony is the root behind the “crisis.” The
normalization of middle-class, heterosexual, ethnic majority men marginalizes those who are
outside these categories, making changes to the cultural ideology of manhood difficult. In
addition, the maintenance of “normal” boundaries is supported by “a society that constructs
and sustains a particular fiction about masculinity” (Phillips 419).

Regardless of how masculinity is constructed or enacted, it is important to note that
ideology and behaviour are not always synchronistic or complementary and that this
incongruence often contributes to an environment of confusion and disillusionment for men.
However, such an environment does not necessarily mean that masculinity is diminishing or under threat of being nullified. Although men may feel powerless as individuals, this does not mean they are powerless as a group, revealing the discontinuity between the psychological and the social (Kimmel 1994, 136). As Kimmel notes, individual men may feel overpowered by their wives, children, or bosses on a daily basis, thus losing their sense of power or control. However, hegemonic masculinity remains powerful in a society which promotes patriarchy through institutions such as paid work and media. In following, the crisis for stay-at-home dads is perhaps in renegotiating their identities along with their location and behaviours. For men who have always been at home and have not transferred from paid work to domestic work, there may be less need to reform their masculine identities; however, they still face the same social and cultural influences regarding gender hegemony and, as will be revealed in chapter four, they may feel the need to justify their domestic role or redefine masculinity for themselves.

“New” Fatherhood and Stay-at-Home Dads:

Though the roles and behaviours of men have changed as a result of socio-political forces such as feminism, most ideological tenets of masculinity have remained relatively static within the domestic sphere with regard to fatherhood, housework, and breadwinning. With regard to changing ideals of masculinity and fatherhood, Deborah Lupton and Lesley Barclay address the idea of the “new” father. They point out that the “new” father, one who adopts a more involved presence at home, is not a new concept. While the idea of participatory fatherhood is over a century old, “new” fatherhood was coined during the 1930s and 40s (LaRossa 5). The traditional view of an active father was of
playmate, role model, and disciplinarian, whereas contemporary fathers are expected to be these things as well as more nurturing and participatory in the physical, emotional, and day-to-day work of childcare.

Wall and Arnold identify "new fathers" as those who are "ideally more nurturing, develop closer emotional relationships with their children, and share the joys and work of caregiving with mothers" (my emphasis, 509). The contemporary perception is that the role of the father should be equally divided between economic provider and domestic caregiver (Bowers Andrews et al. 605). However popular this perception of contemporary fatherhood has become, it is in opposition to the traditional male provider or breadwinner role discussed further below, and the hegemonic ideal of a masculine work-identity. Although employment has always been noted as an integral part of what fathers do and is often used as a measure of domestic success, the paradox, as pointed out in the previous chapter, is that if a good father is an employed (and financially successful) one he may often be absent from family life. The mixed message for today's father is that he should work steadily- but not too much- as well as be emotionally available; however, it is still the mother who is considered mainly responsible for this aspect of a child's welfare.

Although contemporary Canadian society recognizes the importance of participatory fathers, there are still many situations where men feel that their desire to be a good father does not correspond with their responsibilities in the public realm. Ross Parke and Armin Brott provide an analysis of men who feel the need to "sneak around" with regards to their parental responsibilities in order to prevent their employers from thinking that they are less committed to their jobs than they should be; thus illustrating that contemporary ideals of fatherhood are not necessarily compatible with patriarchal institutions such as the workforce.
(This incompatibility is also common among professional women.) It is cause for concern that men feel they must live a double life in order to fulfill their masculine "obligations."

This contradiction between ideology and practice (or ideology and work culture, as the case may be) seems to play out through work/life policies such as parental leave. Parke and Brott analyzed paternity leave and found that many men felt their jobs might suffer if they took the leave. While these types of policies exemplify the positive effects of feminism on fatherhood politics, Parke and Brott suggest that because men do not have the same biological reasoning as women for spending time with their young children, their family involvement is often viewed (by employers) as less of a necessity (129-133). Although the number of men taking parental leave has risen, the continued stigma around it perpetuates the separation of "masculine" and "feminine" spheres, of domestic and public identities, and further instills traditional hegemonic masculine roles.

Like many other facets of masculinity (and masculine roles) the concept of "new" fatherhood seems most applicable to men who are financially independent enough to spend the significant amount of time it takes to form active and nurturing relationships with their children as well as share in other domestic duties. Thus, it is middle-class, professional (and most likely educated) individuals by whom ideals of new fatherhood can be enacted. The classist nature of hegemonic masculinity is apparent in the view (one that is often still perpetuated) that a man should work enough to provide a comfortable lifestyle for his family, but still be home enough to provide the psychological and emotional support needed to raise healthy children. For working-class men, in contrast, breadwinning means long hours of work and vulnerability to the vicissitudes of the American economy...

To understand working class fatherhood, then, is to understand the marginal position
of men in this class and how their class position shape[s] their response to their fatherly responsibilities, [and] their ability to nurture and spend time with their children. (Griswold 36)

That the expectations aligned with “new” fatherhood seem to be more available for middle classes deepens the rift between working-class men and the domestic sphere. It also reveals a contextual difference between class-based definitions of masculinity. While the middle-class man fits within the hegemonic ideals of “family man,” the working-class father may still be considered masculine because of his provider role. The catch is that when a man is unable to sufficiently provide for his family his role as father is also undermined, revealing an inextricable link between paid work and what it means to be a “good father.” In other words, no matter how much participatory fatherhood is idealized, it is still trumped by men’s traditional role as provider. Because of this we get a sense of consistency between forms of hegemonic masculinity and how men (and society) define behaviour within the hegemonic boundaries of their social circumstances (Messerschmidt). This, along with other aspects of new fatherhood, further reveals the subordinate masculinities of men who stay at home full-time.

Glenda Wall and Stephanie Arnold recognize the disconnection between the ideal and the reality of “new” fatherhood. They suggest that the level of fathers’ involvement in family life is still less than that of mothers, and that the reason for this is that father involvement is still portrayed as an elective activity rather than an expected one (512). In relation to this, Brandth and Kvande relate how their female research participants often credit their husbands’ domestic involvement (sometimes over their own) as well as state how grateful they are for their husbands’ being active fathers (306). This marks the idea that participatory fatherhood
is an exceptional behaviour, and that men are not expected to be as involved as women in the raising of children. The result being that men need not identify with domesticity which may lead to a sense of dislocation when they find themselves working full-time in the domestic sphere. In such a situation they seem to belong in neither public nor private domains, thus signifying a type of transition in identity as well as location.

As a result of the above transitions, stay-at-home dads experience feelings of isolation and a loss of the “provider” role (Calvin Smith, David Morgan). Smith identifies the influence community has on creating and maintaining the gendered status quo as the “material manifestations of gender order” (146). He examines this through interviewing male caregivers who have experienced “gender order” through social isolation. For example, his participants often felt excluded from child play-dates, or “Mom-and-tot” groups, as these were typically geared toward mothers. That fathers are still often unrecognized as full-time parents and are, at times, even considered as unqualified in contrast to women, reveals how the expectations and desires for change are inhibited by culturally constructed rules of gender.

While the domestic sphere is more likely to promote and legitimize male domestic responsibility, public institutions such as the work place and media are highly influential to self-perception and domestic ideals and may discourage attempts to transcend the norm. As Goddard states, gendered roles “are both imposed on the individual from the outside and assumed by the collective body of society. The gaze becomes, therefore, the expression of the ideal each gender holds for the other and for itself” (26-27). Therefore, men who feel the need to reform their identities must still face the pressure of doing so within socially accepted hegemonic standards. This very situation is common to men who attempt to perform the role
of stay-at-home dad while identifying themselves separately from the domestic sphere. An example of this is in the activities and behaviours of stay-at-home dads who maintain a connection to hegemonic masculinity (which will be discussed further in chapter four).

From the various research on male and female provider roles, an overarching conclusion has been drawn: while most women work outside the home in some capacity, most men and women agree that breadwinning is a male responsibility (Potuchek, Kroska, Loscocco, Pfau-Effinger, Raley et al.). In relation to this, although stay-at-home dads relocate their masculinity within the traditionally female domestic sphere, they most often find ways to keep themselves connected to the traditionally masculine sphere of paid work (Doucet 279). Doucet analyzes how men in non-traditional roles align themselves with hegemonic ideals by retaining a link to the paid work force or by contributing to "masculine" household jobs such as renovations or repairs, thus enacting a "delicate balance of simultaneously embracing and rejecting both femininity and hegemonic masculinity" (296). That this "balance" does not require any redefinition of what it means to be a man endorses the broadening of hegemonic boundaries rather than the need to dismantle and create new ideals.

**Breadwinner: The Role of the "Good" Father?**

During times of social and economic change the need for a standard of masculinity is felt to be, perhaps, even more important. The continuing importance placed on male breadwinning is outlined by Robert Griswold who states that

> [d]espite men’s differences, breadwinning has remained the great unifying element in fathers’ lives. Its obligations bind men across the boundaries of color and class, and
shape their sense of self, manhood, and gender. Supported by law, affirmed by history, sanctioned by every element in society, male breadwinning has been synonymous with maturity, respectability, and masculinity. (Griswold 2)

Andrea Doucet discusses the tension between hegemonic masculine ideals of breadwinning and non-traditional masculine roles. She points out that the breadwinner role connotes other characteristics of masculinity such as protection of the family, and that “[t]o be placed in a position of primary caregiver without having achieved success as a breadwinner signals something out of sync with what many communities consider as a socially acceptable ‘moral’ identity for a male and for a father” (707). Given these arguments, one can see why breadwinning is still considered a measure of hegemonic masculinity. The discrepancy between ideology and practice is one way we can distinguish the different meanings attached to women’s and men’s employment.

The contradiction between attitude and behaviour is shared by a staggering number of research participants of various age groups, races, and economic classes in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Drago, Kroska, Potuchek, Loscocco and Spitze, Raley). Many of the women interviewed considered their employment as “secondary” to their husbands’ or stated that their earnings were devoted to “extra” things for the family (new clothes, gas for the car, entertainment, etcetera) rather than the basic necessities (mortgage payments, bills, etcetera). This was also found in cases where wives were full-time wage earners and among many conservative-minded couples where wives’ job status equaled or exceeded their husbands’. When husbands in couples with more conservative values earned less than their wives they evaluated their earnings more positively, often magnifying the value of their earnings, while their wives typically devalued their own earnings (Kroska 77). This
behaviour is defined as “deviance neutralization,” and occurs when one minimizes (or exaggerates) a certain behaviour in order to diminish deviance from the norm (66). Kroska’s findings show that no matter how liberal-minded the lower earning husband is, he is no more likely to contribute to extra household duties than is the conservative husband, thus revealing the tendency to neutralize the deviance of his earning less than his wife (85).

In most studies the majority of female participants worked outside the home at least part-time; however, even for those working full-time it was clear that providing was not as relevant to their identities as it was for the male participants. Karyn Loscocco and Glenna Spitze state that breadwinning is in fact one way in which men “do gender” (935), and that breadwinning is much more entwined with male identity than with female identity as “women have alternative sources of identity and fulfillment and men do not” (939). Potuchek also notes that the women in her study were more complex than the men in their consideration of breadwinning. Elements such as liberal versus conservative views, education, number and age of children, and length of time spent in marriage were all factors in how women considered breadwinning roles. An overarching result of her interviews was that women were able to question their employment as breadwinning, but for men there was no question; men’s employment was viewed as synonymous with breadwinning, exemplifying the greater influence of this particular gender boundary over their lives (68).

The results found by Kroska and others are important in demonstrating how, with the help of patriarchal social systems and institutions, ideals of male breadwinning continue to be perpetuated even though they contradict other notions of “successful” manhood such as active fathering. This reveals that, while public ideology may influence and maintain gender boundaries, it does not always implicate the behaviours of individuals. In fact the most
common result in the analyses mentioned here is that the participants’ normative ideology or attitude often differed from the prevailing behaviour regarding breadwinning. It is also important to note that in most studies behavioral change was not necessarily a result of egalitarian ideologies. Change made out of necessity rather than egalitarian ideals reflects a neo-traditional outlook rather than a conscious deconstruction of ideological boundaries.

Homemaker: The Role of the Father?  

Although the ideal of women’s belonging in the domestic sphere has become a “cultural symbol [rather than] an actual code of conduct” (Coltrane 64), this “symbolic” gender boundary has been slower to change than most other gendered practices, and regardless of the exceptions (and perceptions), women continue to do the majority of household labour (Coltrane, Kroska, Shelton, Sullivan). As women have forged into the paid work force and public spheres of society, there have been necessary changes made regarding gender behaviours within the private sphere. Unfortunately, North American culture has not necessarily made corresponding changes to ideologies regarding housework and breadwinning, two aspects of domestic life which still remain on opposite ends of the gendered spectrum though they are equally important in the success of a household.

The prevailing contention regarding the role of the “new” father is not regarding his domestic ability but rather his level of domestic responsibility. Most authors concur that while men have become more engaged in the lives of their children, they do not become as involved in other forms of domestic labour. This concept is overwhelmingly predominant in

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9 Housework and childcare may be seen as separate topics of discourse; however, they intersect within the framework of domestic labour and gendered care-work, and so, are discussed together here to expose the parallels (and discords) between gendered definitions of domestic work.
discussions on male primary care-giving, men who work from home, and theories of masculine fatherhood (Andrews, Brandth and Kvande, Halford, Wall, Smith).

There are many theories attempting to explain why after generations of social and political change there still remains a gendered division of housework. A possible reason for the gendered division of household labour is that one’s regard for housework may be related to the personal meaning it carries rather than to a gender ideology. For example, housework, like any other kind of work often depends on the reward it provides. If one finds no immediate reward in domestic labour, one may be less likely to do it on a regular basis. For women, housework seems to be linked to a sense of caring and thus their reward is in providing that care (Coltrane 1998, 17). Because housework does not impact men in the same way, “there are no gains for masculinity in doing housework,” and it is not usually included in fathers’ conceptions of caretaking (Brandth and Kvande 307). In relation to this, Coltrane theorizes that men need to “own” housework for themselves in order to willingly share in its completion (1996, 17). If women remain the “managers” of domestic labour it may be difficult for some men to view housework as something that is their responsibility, and thus they remain the “helpers” rather than equal participants.

Brandth and Kvande posit that the “differences between masculinity and femininity are marked by the fact that most men do not do housework,” and that they in fact “see themselves as active fathers, not as housewives” (310-11), thus reinforcing the stigma associated with “women’s work.” While men are likely to enjoy caring for their children they do not necessarily link housework to childcare, and seem to want to disengage with housework as a means of protecting their sense of masculinity. “That care work is easily combined with masculinity…but not housework, is a way in which [men] mark distance to
mothering and reinforce women's secondary status and their own dominance” (Berit and Brandth 307), thus upholding traditional hegemonic standards. This attitude is partially due to the “disidentification” process linked to men’s need to disassociate from (or dis-identify with) femininity in order to maintain their masculinity (Blazina 74).

Men’s committing more of themselves to domestic duties is not a threat to masculinity. That men feel the need to avoid aspects of these duties as a way of upholding a standard of masculinity, however, reveals that hegemony itself is a cause for concern. It reveals how hegemony is harmful to men in its limitation of ideological and behavioral change- a change which might allow men to become more accepted within domestic life.

Oddly, the concept of the “new” father rarely, if ever, seems to include equal domestic duties shared between spouses. Though the father is encouraged to take an active role in the emotional, psychological and physical welfare of his children, and is praised for doing so, he is rarely perceived as responsible for dirty dishes, laundry, organizing doctor’s appointments, play dates, or other “domestic” family affairs in the same ways women are. In this regard the “new” father is still quite traditional in his avoidance of much domestic carework. ¹⁰ This is where concepts of hegemonic masculine ideology and individual behaviour seem to meet on common ground. That a father is not often expected to participate equally in housework or in the “planning” aspects of childcare is often enacted in men’s domestic behaviour, revealing that housework is still devalued and considered women’s work and is not often considered by men to be an aspect of childcare. The distinction between doing housework and being responsible for it reveals a key difficulty in achieving gender equality

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¹⁰ This is not to suggest that men are not doing any housework, nor are they doing the same amount as the generations before them. Authors such as Shelton and Coltrane reveal a statistical increase of men who participate in domestic labour over the last three decades.
between public and domestic spheres, especially when men do housework but do not view it as, ultimately, their responsibility (Fassinger 212).

Rather than pursuing further arguments about how much work is done by whom, much contemporary literature on housework has begun to discuss the idea of gender-specific chores and the notion that the domestic sphere itself is divided by gender. The fact that men are becoming more involved in most aspects of family life has been shown; however, domestic labour is largely acceptable only as long as men are participating in more "masculine" chores. Authors such as Scott Coltrane (1996) and Beth Anne Shelton list typical masculine chores as including, but not limited to: outdoor work (mowing the lawn, cleaning the gutters, etcetera), automobile repair, and household repairs. While many men may participate in other chores such as cleaning up after children, driving, and preparing meals (Shelton 81), Coltrane and Shelton’s studies reveal that women typically take on day-to-day chores (which may include those from the “masculine” list as well as more “feminine” or gender neutral chores) whereas men’s labour occurs less frequently. This is not to imply that cleaning the gutters or fixing the family car is less important than what women do on a regular basis, but rather reveals that the amount of time spent on domestic labour is significantly more for most women than men.

The above example points to the Gender Ideology model, one of the more popular theories that describe reasons for stagnancy in shared household labour. Its basic tenet is that socially constructed gender ideologies designate gender appropriate household tasks (Coltrane 1996, 158). Amy Kroska points out that the Gender Ideology model is not necessarily meant to reveal who is doing more of the housework, rather how certain chores

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11 Other theories of housework division that are not discussed here include: the Gender Display Hypothesis (Kroska), Demand/Response, Negotiation, and Human Capital Theory (Coltrane 1996, Shelton, Kroska, Sullivan).
are perceived and divided according to gender (915). In Kroska’s account, the Gender Ideology model shows how couples with more liberal attitudes toward gender are more likely to divide chores more equally. On the other hand, the tensions between ideology and behaviour are often revealed in housework activities as the quality of chores often remains gender-based, even if the quantity is divided equally. For example, Kroska notes that liberal-minded women are not necessarily more inclined to do “masculine” chores than are conservative women. Likewise, men who have more liberal views of gender are more likely to share in more of the domestic labour (916), but not necessarily in chores considered to be “feminine” (Shelton).

The Time Availability model is perhaps the most liberal of the housework measurement models as it does not directly indicate a tendency for gendered divisions of chores. In its most basic definition, Time Availability states that housework is divided according to whomever has the time (Coltrane 1996, Shelton). Of course, it is possible that men and women will make more time for the gendered chores which suit them, ignoring the chores that do not.

The Relative Resource model is another theory which describes reasons for gendered (or unequal) divisions of domestic labour. Its premise is that the person with the most socio-economic power will do the least amount of housework (Coltrane 1996, Shelton). As discussed, men are traditionally tied to the workforce and the role of breadwinner has become engrained within male identity and within society’s normative ideas of masculinity and male roles; therefore, the fact that household labour is unpaid diminishes its importance for men, resulting in men’s spending more time at work and less time at home (or on household labour). Traditionally, women generally work fewer hours in paid employment
and make less money than their male spouse; therefore housework seems to “naturally” become their responsibility (to some degree this overlaps with the Time Availability model of domestic labour analysis). Thus, because women have less economic power they have less bargaining power with regard to domestic responsibility. This may contribute to women’s lack of economic opportunity because of the domestic demands on them (Shelton 151). The circle continues with these expectations reinforcing men’s responsibility to provide; thus, this model appeals to traditional hegemonic ideologies of gender. As Connell and Messerschidt put it, in situations outlined by the above theory, “[m]en’s behaviour is reified in a concept of masculinity that then, in a circular argument, becomes the explanation (and the excuse) for the behaviour” (840). This “circular argument” is evident in the way men are still widely viewed as breadwinners and not homemakers.

New fatherhood and stay-at-home dads bring to light a “new” set of social expectations regarding the domestic behaviours of men. They also encourage an examination, and evaluation, of gendered types of care. As mentioned, it is not the purpose of this research to pose an analysis of the psychological or emotional aspects of fatherhood and childcare, nor the relationships between child and father. It is relevant, however, to address some distinctions of gendered care as it relates to the masculine identities and behaviours of fathers as well as how those behaviours are perceived by others.

The difficulty in discussing care-work is that, given its historical relationship with femininity, the discourse is heavily female-oriented. Sara Ruddick explains that because that which is considered “maternal” is both culturally and politically linked with what is considered womanly, a man doing “maternal” work (including housework) is engaging in feminine ideologies and practice (45). Even discourse which focuses on male care is often
referred to as a facet of mothering. Because of this the analysis of care-work performed by men is always in comparison to that done by women, rather than allowing for a discourse which holds male care-work as something in and of itself and thus, something that can be equally related (and relatable) to men and masculinity.12

Ruddick defines the role of “mother” as “to take upon oneself the responsibility of child care, making its work a regular and substantial part of one’s working life” (17). There are, seemingly, no equal definitions with regard to the care-work aspect of fathering (as can be noted in the definitions provided in the first chapter), even though all of my participants, for example, would (and do) argue that what Ruddick defines as mothering” is very much what they do as fathers. As will be analyzed in chapter four, this idea is contentious among men who do not liken their roles to that of mothering but rather as a distinct responsibility and behaviour of being a good father.

Ruddick further explains the demands of mothering as including the preservation of children’s physical wellbeing, and the fostering of children’s growth. To be a mother is to be committed to the needs of one’s child, and to meeting the demands of motherhood through works of preservative love, nurturance and training (17); fatherhood, on the other hand, has been deemed as being “a role determined by cultural demands [rather than] a kind of work determined by children’s needs” (42).13

This is also discussed by Doucet (2000) who argues that the maintenance of everyday family activities such as dentist appointments, birthday parties, and haircuts, for example, is a particularly maternal responsibility. This reveals that while men also offer physical, emotional and intellectual care, women still tend to do the majority of the thinking, planning,

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12 See participants’ discussion of the term “Mr. Mom” in chapter four.
13 This can also be said of mothering as perceptions of childcare and the needs of children are often culturally determined.
and worrying aspects of domestic care. Many fathers also provide other kinds of care such as “fun and playfulness”, “a physical and outdoors approach”, and “independence” (Doucet 2006, 112). These things were listed by Doucet as more masculine forms of care and as necessary as nurturing and other emotional care. Although “masculine” types of care may differ from that given by women, they incorporate “feminine” attitudes of nurturing with more masculine views of physicality and independence, thus revealing the unique style of male parenting. The participants of this study argued that although their form of care was different from their wives’, they still offered equally valuable care, and they all believed that the preservation and fostering of their child’s growth through nurturance, love, and guidance was of the utmost importance. These ideas of masculine and feminine care are based on the traditional model of the female parent being in the home; that these participants fall somewhere in between “masculine” and “feminine” forms of care reveals how traditional definitions of care change with new models of gender roles.

That this seems to be a “unique” style of parenting is, perhaps, a result of the short amount of time men have been expected to actively participate in of the domestic sphere. With this in mind, when Doucette (2006) asks the question, “do men mother?” perhaps it could be rephrased to ask “do men need to mother?” On the other hand, perhaps the question we should be asking is if the nature of fathering itself is transforming into something closer to traditional ideas of mothering? In answering either question, we can begin the process of re-identifying what it is to father rather than formatting the individual experiences of male parenting within female terms.
Conclusions:

As discussed, the standards of masculine hegemony are problematic in the formation of male identity and thus the underlying factor of a possible masculinity crisis. Although these standards are not dissipating, in order to exist in a changing world men (and society) seem to find "loopholes" in the hegemonic structure through which they transform non-normative roles and identities into those which can be measurably masculine. This is exemplified in the lives of male primary caregivers, or stay-at-home dads.

This discussion reveals that, although ideologies and behaviours are changing, the domestic sphere still remains a space divided by gendered roles, specifically in housework, breadwinning, and types of care. In light of this, "fathers neither reproduce nor challenge hegemonic masculinity... [they] create new forms of masculinity that, while enacted against a weighty backdrop of hegemonic masculinity, nevertheless incorporate varied aspects of femininities" (Doucet 2004, 279). Rather than deconstructing or re-constructing ideas of masculinity the stay-at-home father brings his own vision while still aligning himself within the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. For example, the non-traditional roles of stay-at-home dads exemplify how men have begun to reform traditional hegemonic masculine behaviour however, in many ways they still conform to "normative" standards of masculinity. In this way, these "new" male behaviours do not necessarily threaten masculine hegemony as in most cases men (and women) have constructed their behaviours according to hegemonic standards, thus revealing the incongruence between ideology and practice. Stay-at-home dads take the practice of "new" fatherhood to a different level. By placing themselves within the home full-time they at once apply the domestic behaviours expected of "new" fatherhood while also undermining the masculine responsibility of breadwinner. Because of this, the
ways in which they identify masculinity, and identify with masculinity seem to change. This will be developed further in chapter four through an analysis of men's reactions to hegemonic masculinity, and the role they feel it has in their own lives.
CHAPTER 3

Research Design, Data and Methodology

As the previous chapters and following case study show, discussing gender hegemony in the case of masculinity brings a multitude of social, political and personal dynamics to light. It is fair to say that the complexity of such a discussion seems to inhibit opportunity for more open and uncensored dialogue in many settings and for many groups, not least of all men. The sensitivity around gender dialogue makes the application of methodological frameworks that much more important. Although this research pulls from multiple methodologies, it follows the basic criteria of Grounded Theory, Phenomenology, and Standpoint theory (also Feminist Standpoint theory), and to a lesser degree, Feminist Action Research. Although the case study seems to fall within the guidelines of some of the above methodologies more than others, all four are important to this research as a whole. Along with the methodological layout, this chapter will also describe the methods of research such as the sample of participants, how they were recruited, and an explanation of the interview process.

Conceptual Framework

As Sandra Harding notes, examining the researcher is as important to critical enquiry as examining the subject matter; therefore, locating myself within the research process correlates to (or provides context for) the methodological structures of this study. It informs the type of research I conduct as well as the types of information I needed to extract from the participants. The difficulty in this was that I found myself falling into two very distinct categories; that of active researcher (with an agenda) and open listener (one with whom the
participants would feel open and comfortable). Because of this it became imperative that I find a way to strike a balance between the two.

My gender, age, and the fact that I am an unmarried woman with no children, meant that I had very little in common with the participants. However, commonality was not the only aspect which I feared would inhibit my role as researcher; I worried that the subject matter would be misunderstood, or too sensitive or controversial for the participants to feel comfortable discussing; it is not every day that a stranger sits across from a man and asks him to define his masculinity. I also worried that a “response bias” would occur in the discussions held with participants. Delroy Paulhus identifies this as a “tendency to give answers that make the respondent look good” (17), or to simply adhere to a “socially desirable” method of response. Given that some of the interview questions were set on opening up contentious and uncomfortable topics, there was the potential for this type of subconscious self-editing. However, it is beyond my expertise to either control or measure this type of response from participants, and in lieu of making such an attempt, I simply tried to make the interview environment as comfortable as possible.

In order to strike a balance between my conflicting standpoints I worked to create a rapport with my participants and often allowed them to lead the format of their interviews. I began each of the interviews by explaining my research purposes, what I was trying to learn, and emphasizing the importance of their participation; I encouraged their stories, anecdotes, experiences, and personal philosophies, and (when necessary) reminded them that there were no wrong answers to any of the questions. In this way I hoped to provide a space and opportunity for them to feel comfortable sharing their individual truths. In spite of this, there were indeed misunderstandings, hesitance, and general discomfort among the participants in
answering some of the questions.

With regard to conceptual frameworks this research takes place within both interactive and critical paradigms (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 14). This means that the research is based on qualitative analysis “derived from lived experience” as well as the examination of culture and power and their role in “promoting inequalities” (14). The subjectivity of participants contributes to the construction (or deconstruction) of theories as well as enables one to make a closer and more practical examination of the relationships and tensions between theory and experience, and ideologies and behaviours.

This is also feminist research in that it is written with feminist objectives of giving voice to a largely unrecognized group, as well as furthering gender research. Nancy Hartsock defines feminist modes of analysis to be

\[ \text{the practice of small-group consciousness raising, with its stress on examining and understanding experience and on connecting personal experience to the structures that define our lives, [which] is the clearest example of the method basic to feminism.} (35) \]

Therefore feminist methods are also applicable to this research whose purpose is to identify and critique hegemonic structures, their limitations and transformations.

**Methodologies**

As noted, this thesis combines theory and qualitative research in order to comprehensively examine and identify changing masculinities. Although there were research questions posed at the outset, no hypotheses were made regarding the project’s outcome. As well, because of the limited number of participants I was able to pay particular attention to each case individually, comparing and contrasting them to existing theories as
well as using participant experience to initiate new ideas. Because the nature of this project migrates between the real and ideal, and experience and theory, three methodologies were primarily used: Phenomenology and Standpoint theory for their promotion of the individual experience, and Grounded Theory for its analytical frameworks and promotion of formulating new theories and ideas through experiential knowledge.

**Phenomenology**

There are numerous philosophies on phenomenology; however, for the purposes of this discussion phenomenological research is considered as the “study of lived experience” which aims at gaining deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experience (Van Manen 9). This is suitable for my research as the intent is to identify masculinity and changing ideologies through the individual experiences of eight research participants. When using a phenomenological approach it is important to remember that the descriptions of experiences are not distinct or indistinct from what is real, but simply reflect one’s conscious experience (Hammond, Howarth, and Keat 2); therefore phenomenology does not offer a theory to explain the world, but merely offers insights through which we can have “direct contact with the world” (Van Manen 9).

Van Manen states phenomenology to be “the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience” (10). In this way phenomenology is less interested in objectivity or the “facts” of a given situation than in how the situation is experienced or perceived. In this sense, the standpoints and experiences

14 Phenomenology is discussed by Dermot Moran (among others) as being first developed by Edward Husserl. Other philosophers who contributed to Husserl’s philosophy, as well as developed other tenets of phenomenology include Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jaques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Franz Brentano.
of the participants are considered as primary evidence for the topic under examination. The significance of this is shown in the following case study where we see that masculinity is not easily defined for participants, nor is it easily measured; thus, in order to grasp the lived experiences of the participants, one must have an understanding of how they view masculinity and gender.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is also used in this study. Its enforcement of description (phenomenology) in letting things (such as experience) speak for themselves, and its claim that all phenomena can be interpreted (hermeneutic) are useful (Van Manen 180). My case study forms itself within a methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology in that it offers description and analyses of lived experiences while offering comparative analysis of the theories around masculinity.\textsuperscript{15}

Because phenomenology “describes rather than explains” (Moran 14), it complements grounded theory (discussed below) which uses phenomenological description to bear new ideas and theories.

\textit{Standpoint}

Standpoint theory was formed in the 1970s and 1980s as a “feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power” (Harding 1). It originated from various epistemologies such as Marxian ideas of class consciousness and socialist feminism, and psychoanalytic feminist theory of the gendered unconscious (Lorber 178). As well, Harding notes that Standpoint theory has also been produced from works on race, ethnicity, anti-imperialism and Queer movements, which do not necessarily claim

\textsuperscript{15}Hermeneutic phenomenology in the case of this study should not, however, be confused with a more critical form of phenomenology in which participants would critique their own interview records in order to compare them with their experiences (Caelli, 16).
Marxist or feminist ideologies (Harding 3). Because of this, the theory can also be viewed as a more “organic epistemology, methodology, philosophy of science, and social theory” to be used by the oppressed to gain voice (3).

While men’s voices have traditionally been the voices of power, this research reveals how the definitions of gendered power can shift when men become “outsiders” to normative culture as a result of adopting non-hegemonic roles. Lorber states that “our social location shapes our view of the world;” however, marginalized (and minority or non-normative) voices are often excluded from the collective “view” (183). A Standpoint approach promotes the critical examination of hegemonic ideologies through the experiences of a typically unacknowledged group- in this case, stay-at-home dads- who share non-normative roles, and as a result may share unique gender ideologies and behaviours.

Like phenomenology, Standpoint theory recognizes and includes individual voices of non-normative groups while still acknowledging that those voices reflect the constructs of the society in which they are a part. This can be seen in the way some of my participants push the boundaries of masculine behaviour and yet do so within hegemonic guidelines. As well, feminist Standpoint encourages the correlation between theory and practice. In concurrence with Hartsock, this thesis reveals how theory is in some ways an “articulation of what our practical activity has already appropriated in reality” (38).

Encouraging individual participation means that men can contribute to the construction of gender theories. As Doucet remarks, “[i]n the same way that feminists have exercised caution about the ways that we understand the voices of one gender against a landscape designed by the other, so too these cautions must be brought to bear when we

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16 Though, Susan Harding points out that Standpoint theories do not necessarily hold to this form of social relativism necessarily (2004, 131).
study men in female-dominated domains of social life” (2006, 32). Therefore, the uses of phenomenology and standpoint methodology are important as they promote experiential knowledge to define and describe men’s non-traditional roles.

A downfall of feminist Standpoint methodology is, as Susan Hekman argues, that it is prone to creating unnecessary tensions through the process of collecting what could turn into an “endless” amount of individual experiences. Hekman points out that attempting to recognize and validate all individuals’ voices can make research become endless or convoluted (235). Although the number of participant voices in this study is certainly not endless, Hekman’s argument is prudent when, in an attempt at inclusivity, one wishes to involve each individual experience. In light of this, and perhaps because of it, I chose to follow a Standpoint framework because it allows for a variety of individual voices while in turn creates a collective to which each participant contributes. In other words, though each of the participant experiences is unique, together they provide a common platform from which to critique socially normative gender constructs. In an effort to avoid endless or convoluted results, I found certain modes of analysis to be more efficient than others, including aspects of saturation and consensus theory, as well as a form of “open coding” (discussed below).

**Grounded Theory**

While Phenomenology and Standpoint methodologies are useful regarding individual experiential knowledge, Grounded Theory complements them through its inductive approach to qualitative analysis. Grounded theory uses “micro-level events” (phenomenology or experience) as the basis of “macro-level explanations” (theory) and as a result, is useful in
this research as it "makes qualitative research flexible and lets data and theory interact" (Neuman 334).

Details of Grounded Theory are derived from the study of the phenomena it represents and are developed through data collection and analysis. As Strauss and Corbin state, in a grounded theory methodology, "[o]ne does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss and Corbin 23). This “inductive approach” means that rarely are hypotheses used. Instead, the “researcher is interested in a topic or set of issues and then approaches an interview or document with these issues in mind” (38). By using experiential data as the “orienting stimulus,” the thematic analysis overcomes the problem of “outsider interpretation” by “staying close to the [insider’s] view of the world” (39). Therefore, this approach alleviates some tension between my position as agenda-driven researcher and listener, and encourages my analytical role as the vehicle for participant revelation. While my experiences, background, and education in gender issues lend to the standpoint from which I conduct the research, my hope is that this will aid in the analysis of participant experiences rather than override them.

In a grounded theory approach, the researcher interprets findings by learning how participants see the world, their definitions, or what the topic means for them (Neuman 335). This activity incorporates the standpoint of the individual which leads to gaining knowledge through an “insider’s point of view”- or phenomenology (Strauss and Corbin 27).

“[G]rounded theory methodology emphasizes the need for developing many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterizes the central phenomena studied during any particular research project “ (Strauss 7); this supports the need
in my research for understanding masculine experience within various contexts such as breadwinning, housework, and other socio-cultural dynamics of gender. In addition, some of the themes which emerged from these categories exemplified pre-existing theories; however there were also ideas and situations unique to previous literature.

Although a strength of grounded theory is its inductive formula, a deductive approach is also useful in that it allows us to examine how past and present theories are played out in real experience; it allows us to locate (or dis-locate) masculine ideologies and behaviours of the participants within both traditional and contemporary ideas of masculinity. Deductive critiques are important in this study because they illuminate the correlation between theory and practice which inevitably becomes part of the process in acknowledging new grounded theories.

**Feminist Action Research**

Although the previous methodologies are the most prominently used throughout this research, Feminist Action Research (FAR) should also be acknowledged as a contributing methodology. FAR is built around the process of “building knowledge to change the conditions of women’s lives” (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 34). Although FAR works toward maintaining and understanding women’s perspectives, it is applicable to this case study in its components of inclusion, participation, and (to a smaller degree,) social change (34). In a sense, FAR provides both a starting and ending point for the case study. The role of the father as primary caregiver is a relatively new one; therefore, including stay-at-home fathers in a research project on gender contributes to a body of masculinity and gender research that is lacking. As noted above, the sharing of their experiences may lead to a sense of greater
self-awareness which, in turn, may influence the way they perceive gendered behaviour and perhaps may even affect a wider ideology.

Although Standpoint and FAR theories are applied in this research, most literature reveals that they are primarily used for research on women, especially women of marginal and/or minority groups. Because of this I originally feared that applying these particular methodologies might displace the men (and the subject of masculinity) within this research as these men are not racially, economically, or otherwise marginalized. However, as noted previously, stay-at-home dads can be considered to represent a subordinate form of masculinity and perhaps even a minority group with regard to gendered ideologies and behaviours; because they do not “fit” into the form constructed by North American hegemonic ideas of masculinity (both ideologically, and in practice), they become a subordinate group, albeit, within a privileged one.

Analysis

Grounded theory is not just about collecting and analyzing, but “organizing the ideas which emerge from the data” (Strauss 22-23). For example, aspects of open coding can be seen in the relatively “unrestricted” approach to my initial analysis. Questions similar to Strauss’ “what is the basic problem faced by the participants?” and “what accounts for this problem?” were addressed (31). As it is defined by Strauss and Corbin, open coding is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (61). This is a basic form of qualitative analytic coding and is used in my process of analysis. I typically began the analysis of each interview by breaking down the results into categories determined by the sections of interview questions. For example, participants who

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17 Discussion around the resulting analysis will be addressed in the following chapters.
discussed their masculine behaviour in comparison or contrast to their fathers’ were placed in the category addressing “patterns of hegemony” or “transitions in masculine behaviour.”

Typically, each case began by a phrase-by-phrase analysis which, as Strauss and Corbin also note, contributes to how I sought future information and what I focused on in the following interviews (73). In following this step I found similarities and differences among the participants’ experiences- drawing on the similarities to create generalizations within the sample and also focusing on the unique phenomena so as to reveal the variety of experiences.

Like open coding, saturation is also a form of analysis consistent with grounded theory. Saturation is a measure of the comprehensive construction of a theory which may have resulted from grounded methodologies. It is defined by Morse as the point one reaches in data collection when no new information is being obtained (147). Saturation is also named by Guest, Bunce and Johnson as the “gold standard by which purposeful sample sizes are determined” (60). However, Morse argues that signals of saturation are determined by the researcher and by the “comprehensiveness of the results” not by a specific form of measurement (147); therefore, there are no set “rules” to analyse saturation (Morse 147).

While it is assumed that samples will continue until “theoretical saturation” occurs, this is generally not an option and was not an option in my sample (61). As mentioned, I did not know at the outset of the research how many volunteers would participate in the interviews, because of which it seemed impossible to predict that saturation would occur. As it happened, saturation occurred in a few of the categories of analysis, though sometimes only in the form of consensus.

Although the rules to reaching saturation are vague, it is suggested by authors such as Morse, and Guest et al. that approximately 6-12 interviews are needed to create the majority
of codes for analysis. Another opinion regarding sample size is that “small samples can be quite sufficient in providing complete and accurate information within a particular cultural context, as long as the participants possess a certain degree of expertise about the domain of inquiry” (74). Although these authors are referring to academic or professional expertise, I argue that the level of expertise is a variable which my participants meet. They are not scholars of the topic under scrutiny, though they can be considered “qualified” as they possess experiential knowledge of the subject.

It is also important to note, as Morse does, that “the quantity of data… is not theoretically important to the process of saturation;” the “richness” of the data derived is more significant (148). This is determined by the quality of similarities as well as singular differences among the participants’ experiences; often the situations which stand out from the others are what contribute to saturated results. Although my findings did not always reach a point of saturation with regard to variance of phenomena, a “consensus theory” or set of experiences or ideas was often reached.

Consensus theories are developed not through specific knowledge of research participants, but through their similarities of experience. Guest et al. state the first assumption of this theory to be that “an external truth exists in the domain being studied, that there is a reality out there that individuals experience,” and when participants share common experience these experiences can comprise truths (Guest et al. 75). A common external truth in the experiences of my participants seemed to be the existence of a dominating hegemony, and the acknowledgment that hegemony (even if they were unable to name it as such) was the challenge and limitation to their own behaviours and ideologies.
Methods: Recruitment and Sample

Over a period of approximately six months of recruitment I was only able to make contact with the eight participants used in this case study. Including the generally difficult task of volunteer recruitment, I have speculated that the low response could also have been due to a number of other possibilities which include: the (assumed) low percentage of men in Prince George who identify as stay-at-home dads, and the nature of the topic under scrutiny (individuals may not want to discuss their personal lives with a stranger). There is also the more obvious possibility (or probability) that stay-at-home dads simply could not spare the time from full-time childcare and homemaking to attend an interview which advertised no set time limits.

Originally, the criteria for the interview participants were that they had partners who worked outside of the home, that they were unemployed, and were the primary caretaker of at least one child under the age of fifteen. They must also have resided in Prince George (or a surrounding community of northern BC) for a minimum of five years. This precise plan was challenged by the limited number of respondents and thus, some of the original requirements were adapted until the following standards were formed: 1) each participant identified himself as a full-time stay-at-home father or primary caregiver, 2) all participants had partners who were employed outside of the home as the primary earner and, 3) each participant resides in Northern British Columbia; the length of residency varied from five months to thirty years.

As there were only eight respondents, specific criteria regarding issues of age, race, religion and sexual orientation were not practical. All of the participants were Euro-Canadian, and their ages ranged from early thirties to early sixties. Only one participant
shared his religious beliefs to be Christian though a few stated that they did not adhere to any religion. All participants were married or in long-term partnerships with women, and all children of the participants were their biological children. The homogeneity of this sample does not make it a comprehensive representation of men in Prince George; however, the data are significant in that they may represent a particular community of men. Furthermore, previous research (such as that done by Smith and Doucette, for example) reveals comparable findings to this case study, meaning that, perhaps, the experiences of these participants are not unlike those of other men in similar situations. Although issues of age, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic situations are important factors in discussing ideology and gender roles I did not make reference to them within the interviews; when this information was divulged it was unprovoked and usually within the context of the participant’s story.

The Interview:\(^\text{19}\)

At the outset of each interview participants were provided with a copy of the Principal Investigator information sheet which included some detail on the process of recruitment, confidentiality and contacts for the Research and Ethics Board if any ethical issues were to arise. Participants were also asked to review and sign a consent form which ensured their understanding of the nature of the interview (and interview topic), and the method of confidentiality used. These procedures, as well as those regarding recruitment criteria, interview questions, and dissemination of the final data were approved by the

\(^{18}\) Although Lee had a family previously to his current one we chose to focus primarily on his experiences and behaviours with the family he has now as it is the one with which his role changed from breadwinner to primary caregiver.  
\(^{19}\) See appendix for the full list of interview questions.
University of Northern British Columbia’s Research and Ethics Board.

Interviews were semi-formal and took place in a semi-neutral setting (a meeting room at the University of Northern BC) with the exception of one interview which took place in the home of the participant. In order to maintain conversational flow, each interview was semi-structured; however, all interviews included the same twenty-two questions which (for analysis purposes) were divided into four categories. Sub-questions were asked in order to have participants elaborate on particular topics of interest. The interviews were digitally and tape recorded, and were transcribed, verbatim, by me. Because all interviews and transcriptions are confidential all names of the participants have been changed.

Although the participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the interviews and retract or add information once the interviews were complete, they were not given the opportunity to review the final transcriptions. This created a limitation in the qualitative research in that the participants were unable to further reflect, correct, or change their transcriptions. This will be addressed further in chapter five.

Typically, each interview began with participants’ providing background information such as how long they had been stay-at-home dads, the number and ages of their children, and the circumstances that led to their current situations. This was followed by a series of questions regarding the participants’ role as a father and how fatherhood (and other fathers) have affected their ideologies and behaviours. The reason for including these questions was to gain participants’ perspectives on fatherhood and fathering ideologies. For example, the question “How are you the same as or different than your father?” was used to help identify how traditional masculine roles re-generate or reform. As certain aspects of fathering have become more common to hegemonic masculinity, the participants’ personal stories and ideas
of fatherhood, the experiences of influences from other fathers (both real and fictional), and their opinions of how society views fatherhood were important in understanding traditional and non-traditional ideologies of gender roles and fatherhood.

A second category of questions enquired about each participant’s partner. It asked about the nature of her career (for example: “What does she do?” and, “How demanding is her career?”). It also asked participants to describe how they divide household and financial responsibilities with their partners. The reason for this set of questions was to gain insight as to how the participants (and to a certain degree, their partners) reconciled the men’s atypical gender roles.\(^{20}\) It also allowed for analysis on the tensions within domestic identity: for example, the relationship between childcare, homemaking and care-work.

Another section of questions inquired about the responses (both positive and negative) that participants had received from others regarding their role. This category was meant to identify how these men are received by their community when acting outside the gendered norm and how this affects the way they identify themselves to others.

Finally, I asked the participants to define masculinity and femininity. In each case these questions were the most difficult for the participants to answer. There were frequent misinterpretations of feminism for femininity—although a discussion of each individual term was often achieved. The most difficult of all the questions was that which required participants to define masculinity. This was often responded to with much hesitance; more often than not I adapted this question into two (or more) questions, such as: “what does masculinity mean to you?” and “How do you think society defines masculinity?” This

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\(^{20}\) Although this study does not detail maternal/paternal care and housework theories at length, this set of questions also provides the possibility for further application and expansion of these discussions (see Andrea Doucet 2006, Sara Ruddick 1989, Scott Coltrane 1996, Beth Anne Shelton 1992, Berit Brandth and Elin Kvande 1998).
question was also often truncated into “provide three words or phrases that describes masculinity.” The reasons for this are discussed below in chapter four.

While the methodology and format of the case study sets the theoretical and empirical frameworks the following chapter provides a detailed analysis of the interviews. The comparison of similarities and differences between the men as well as their unique experiences reveal the relationship (and nuances) between the eight participants and the theoretical literature.
CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Research Data

When considering how gender roles affect the identities of stay-at-home dads one must also identify the impacts of hegemony, the challenges of spatial and ideological transition from paid work to home, and the tensions between masculinities and femininities. The theories behind some of these issues were discussed in chapter two; the following case study articulates these contexts through the individual experiences and ideologies of eight men who identify as stay-at-home dads in Prince George, British Columbia. As outlined in the first chapter, this study seeks to reveal how men who perform traditional feminine roles identify with masculinity. In doing so, the study examines how participants relate to social ideals of masculinity through fatherhood, and whether they are affected by a cultural crisis of masculinity. The experiences provided throughout this chapter build on the theories in chapter two and further fill the gap in information regarding changing gender roles in a hegemonic culture. This case study complements theories put forth by authors such as Doucette who argues that new masculinity does not necessarily throw away traditional ideologies, but adapts to include facets of femininity. The analysis of this study builds on this theory by revealing some ways in which contemporary masculinity (in the example of fatherhood) both accepts and denies aspects of femininity, and thus maintains a secure position within hegemony.

The Participants

Although each of the participants is unique, the situations that led them to be at home full-time can be broken into two groups. Some participants planned for the adoption of the
domestic role, while others became stay-at-home dads as the result of more situational reasons based on necessity and/or an inability to work outside the home. The fathers who fell into the first category had more of a conscious plan or strategy in becoming stay-at-home dads in comparison to those whose reasons were not pre-meditated. Regardless of the reasoning behind the transition, these decisions were most often enabled by the participants’ wives who earned enough to support their families financially. The first group includes Harold, Keith, Samuel, and Steve; the second group includes Edward, Lee, Shawn and Chris. The formation of these categories was based on my own analysis as well as how the participants self-identified.

Results of the analysis reveal that those who felt they had more control over their choice seemed to experience milder shifts in their views of masculinity and gender roles than those who felt they had little choice in their role. (Whether this is due to a pre-conceived belief system is inconclusive without further study.) I recognize that these categories are fairly rudimentary and overlap with one another; however, they provided one way in which to begin structuring- or coding- the analysis.

Within each interview the participants were asked to provide some background as to how they had come to their current roles. The first participant, Edward, had been living with his wife and first child in Ontario and had been struggling with the inconvenience of child care as well as the challenges of long commutes between work, daycare, and home. It was around this time that his wife was offered a career opportunity in BC. Once the move across country was made and his wife’s career established, Edward decided to become a stay-at-home dad. Although he maintains some paid work on a casual basis (and according

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21 Although the latter group may have had less power over their choice in becoming stay-at-home parents, it is incorrect (and unfair) to assume that they had absolutely no choice in the matter.

22 All names used in this case study are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.
to his children’s schedules), Edward has identified as a stay-at-home father and homemaker for approximately nineteen years and has three children between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one.

Harold has lived in interior and northern BC for approximately twenty-seven years and previously worked in the banking industry. He stated that although his job had been well paid and rewarding, his long term goal had been to be out of the workforce and at home as a full-time stay-at-home father by the age of forty-two, at which time his wife would pursue her education and enter the paid workforce. Harold achieved his goal by the age of forty and has been at home for approximately two years. He has four children living at home between the ages of five and seventeen. Although Harold was one of the only participants who, at the time of the interview, did not maintain part-time work, his family is still primarily supported through his previous investments.

Both Lee and Shawn suffer from injuries that make them unable to work; however, this is one of their only commonalities. Lee has lived in northern BC for more than ten years, and had worked in the trucking industry for more than twenty years when his injury led to surgery and his being at home full-time. The first statement he made once inside the interview room was that his new role “wasn’t by choice.” Although Lee was adamant on this point, he admitted later on in the interview that he did not regret staying home and described how it had changed him (and his identity) for the better. He has been at home for approximately one year. Where Lee felt he had no choice in being at home, Shawn stated that a contributing factor to his being at home (besides his injury) was that his wife had always been more career-oriented and had always earned more than he had. Shawn’s family had recently moved from the UK and had only lived in Prince George for five months at the
time of the interview. He has been a stay-at-home dad for the last eight years. Lee has one child who is ten and Shawn has two children aged five and eight.

The fifth participant, Steve, had also moved to Prince George from the UK three years ago. Steve stated that before his move to Canada, he had enjoyed his high paying job in the corporate world; however, he worked very long hours and was frequently away from home. He stated that the loss of time spent with his family was a driving force in his decision to stay at home full-time, and he had been considering a way to change his lifestyle when his wife found a job in Prince George. He still does some paid part-time work according to his children’s schedule. Steve has two children aged five and eight and has been a stay-at-home dad for just over three years.

Similar to other participants, Chris’ primary motivation for staying at home was that he did not want his daughter in full-time day care. He stated that he had never really identified with his job and that this, paired with the inflexibility of his wife’s career aided in his decision to leave work and stay at home. Although Chris’ time at home is only temporary as he is on an eight month leave of absence, once he is back at work his daughter will be in school full-time, allowing Chris to work during the day and be home for his daughter when school lets out (in this sense Chris’ role as primary caretaker can, perhaps, be seen as being longer term than his eight month leave). Chris has one child, aged five, and has been at home for approximately four months.

Keith’s situation was unique within the group as he worked full-time while also identifying as the primary caregiver. Although Keith was working full-time he only worked on the weekends, allowing him to provide the majority of the care for his children.

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23 In Keith’s case, perhaps the contention of his self-identified role as a primary caregiver lies within the terminology. Because of Keith’s position as a co-earner, perhaps he should be considered more a primary caregiver than a full-time stay-at-home father.
Keith’s wife worked long hours and was frequently away from home; therefore he was at home with his children more often than she, and identified himself as the primary caregiver based on the quantity and quality of time he spent with his children. Because of this, he assumed the majority of household chores and care-work and identifies with the role of homemaker and primary caregiver. I was hesitant, at first, to include his experiences because of his co-earning role; however, based on the types of care-work he performs and his own self-identity as a primary caregiver, I feel his contributions are important—perhaps especially because of their uniqueness; and, as Reynolds states, “[t]he moral imperative within humanist and feminist (or feminist-informed) research… demands that participants in research projects be enabled to define their own situation and/or identity” (111). It was very clear in the way Keith spoke of his role that he identified with the type of work and responsibility that accompanies the domestic role; he was not merely the parent who “looked after” his children on weekdays, he was also involved with the neighborhood and school, and other forms of care-work. It is also important to note that by performing this role, he enabled his wife to further her own career.

Like some of the other participants, Keith noted that he had never really identified with his job nor with his coworkers; thus, when he was presented with the opportunity to work weekends and be at home all week with his young children, he was extremely happy. Until the recent cancellation of his weekend shift he had been at home full-time for ten years (from the time his daughters were infants); his children are now eleven and nine. Keith has lived in Prince George for more than eleven years.

Lastly, Samuel stated that he had always wanted to be a stay-at-home dad and had never been very career-oriented. Samuel had stayed at home full-time for ten months during
the infancy of his first child; his children are now aged five and three and he has been at home full-time for the last two years. He has lived in Prince George for almost thirty years.

Although all of the participants identified as full-time stay-at-home fathers, they maintained varying degrees of paid work. Due to their injuries, Lee and Shawn were not engaged in paid work. Harold was also not engaged in the labour force, but still received financial support from past investments (which was a planned strategy enabling him to leave the paid workforce). In this sense Harold is still the primary earner although he is not working. Although Harold and Keith were still contributing to household incomes, their self-identified title of stay-at-home dad combined with their decision to adopt this role were important factors in their stories. Keith noted that if it were not for financial necessity he would not work at all and would prefer to be at home with his children all of the time. Of the eight participants, six stated that their wives' careers enabled them to stay home.

Originally, I had wanted to include only the testimonies of men who were unemployed as I felt that being a co-earner still reflected a hegemonic ideal of masculinity (that which is linked to power through earning). If I had disqualified the earners from this research, however, I would have had two participants; as well, I also considered that none of these men self-identified as breadwinners (not even Keith). Given that “breadwinner” is defined as a measure of masculinity as well as an identity, I consider the participants’ inability to identify with this role a basic element to their standpoints. The adamancy with which they defined themselves as full-time homemakers/caregivers and the pride they took in this role are important standpoints regarding the effects of identity and masculinity.
Masculinity and Fatherhood Identity:

During the interviews many of the participants took the opportunity to discuss their own parenting styles and beliefs. This may have been a result of the cathartic nature of the interview, or a way of confirming their parenting styles as good ones. In any case, their stories and standpoints on fatherhood and masculinity were remarkably similar, regardless of their individual backgrounds. As I listened to each participant describe his role as a father and his emotional connection to that role, it became clear that participants were defining the importance and necessity of fatherhood as a piece of their masculine identity. Although “fathering” is not traditionally synonymous with masculinity to the same extent that “mothering” is for femininity, many of my participants professed fathering to be a defining term for their sense of self, and thus, a contributing factor to their own sense of masculinity. Each participant of this study alluded to the ways in which his role at home has affected his identity as a man and father. As breadwinners they missed out on family life and the resulting emotional connection to their children; as stay-at-home dads they were faced with existing outside normative boundaries. The challenge for most participants was not only in response to their changing roles, but also in reconciling their identity as fathers with the hegemonic ideals of manhood. As a result, they realize the importance of adapting, both ideologically and behaviourally, to suit their changing role.

Relative Identity

Nicholas Townsend and Susan Faludi both suggest that male identities can be linked to men’s relationships with their fathers, and these authors assert that men’s identities and ideas of manhood either reflect or rebel against the attitudes of their own fathers. Faludi
found that men often work toward being everything their own fathers were not (596). This need to “resist” was practiced by almost all of the participants, revealing a generational shift in attitudes around masculinity and fathering. A commonality between the participants was in their desire – and struggle – to create an emotional relationship with their children that they had not received from their own fathers. Although it is still often unexpected for men to be as sensitive as women, for these men being emotional with their children (sons and daughters alike) is a priority and is the main thing they hope to do better than their fathers. Most of the participants revealed the desire to be (and described success in having become) more openly loving and emotional with their children than their fathers had been with them. Comments such as, “I try to ensure that I’m engaging with my children on a more emotional level,” and “[my father] was a little more remote… I’m not shy about showing [my children] I love them; I hug them, I kiss them, and I communicate with them,” were common among participants. Chris stated that for his father, “being a dad or being masculine didn’t include affirming children when they’re feeling uncertain,” whereas Chris assumed an opposite view of masculinity and fatherhood. He followed this by saying that his dad “doesn’t really lose points for not having [these behaviours] there, but I would lose points if I didn’t have [them].” For Chris and the other participants, dis-identifying with past examples has enabled them to identify with their own non-traditional roles.

Edward was unique in this regard as he felt his background and positive ideologies regarding men in feminine roles were formed as a result of the non-normative examples set by his father. Edward’s father was a writer and a stay-at-home dad, and therefore Edward recalled feeling that his transformation from working to stay-at-home dad was “perfectly natural.” That Edward’s upbringing was unique to the group reveals that men raised by at-
home fathers are not necessarily more susceptible to adopting the role themselves, and conveys this as an atypical route into stay-at-home fatherhood. On the other hand, the effects of Edward’s upbringing did make his own transition into the role easier, and I noted that Edward seemed to claim more ownership over his role than most participants; however, this could also be due, in part, to the fact that he had been at home significantly longer than all of the other participants. In any case, these experiences reveal that masculine behaviour is less about male ability to nurture and more about the desire to nurture. As a result of practicing the nurturer role these men seem to identify less with hegemonic ideas of masculinity.

Many of the participants found that examples from other men were often ones which they reacted against, and some participants noted how influences from other fathers reaffirmed their own roles. Since being at home full-time, Steve found that when he saw working fathers they made him glad to not be working anymore. Samuel noted that when he witnessed negative actions of other dads he felt his own role was reaffirmed his own role; he stated that “[I] see those kinds of things and it makes me feel better about the choices I’ve made.” Keith also discussed how witnessing poor fathering during his time spent in construction camps before he was a parent had influenced his ideas of fatherhood. He remembered how many of the men he worked with were “on their second or third wife and never grew up with their kids,” and he stated how he “learned so much stuff when [he] was single being around all [those] other guys who’ve gone down the wrong path” with regard to their families. Keith then stated, ‘that’s not my way; I want to do things different[ly].’

The examples of Steve, Samuel and Keith reveal a movement away from the role of breadwinner as being the masculine-father role - examples of which are common within their professional and social groups. Because these men choose a path less travelled, and one
which is often misunderstood among their peers, they can create a space which suits their individual needs, a space they seem to believe is unfettered by hegemonic “rules.”

When questioned about popular culture, almost all of the men I spoke with either could not identify how these ideas of masculinity influenced them, or they did not believe that it had influenced them in any way. Much to their chagrin they noted how popular media represents fathers as men who are often clumsy with children and hopeless with the household. These types of characters exaggerate the femininity still associated with the domestic sphere through men’s “inability” to perform within it. Participants considered these portrayals shameful and not masculine.

Samuel stood out from the others in that that he felt popular culture had influenced him to be a more involved father. He felt that “a lot of the contemporary stuff that’s coming up influence[d] [him] in the sense that [he] knew it wasn’t always expected that you had to be the guy that went to work.” As well, he felt that media had influenced the opening up of other practices for men, such as encouraging them to take a more active role in the birthing process. Although Samuel recognized that “a lot of people still don’t share [these ideas],” for him it has been the positive rather than the negative media attention given to fathers that has influenced him most.

Work Identity

Although employment has always been noted as an integral part of what fathers do and is often used as a measure of domestic success, the contradiction, as pointed out by Susan Halford, is that if a “good” father is an employed (and financially successful) one he may often be absent from family life. This discrepancy was mentioned by many of the
participants as being a contributing factor in identifying with their current role. Many of the men said that their previous working life took them away from their families to the point where, as Steve noted, “I was aware that I was becoming, not a bad father, but a less than useful father to [my children] in that they were asleep when I left home and were already in bed by the time I got home at night.” Lee commiserated with this by admitting that he had been “pretty good” at being a bad father because he was “the guy that was never there.” In fact, when I asked the participants to tell me their definition of a “bad” father the most common response was that a bad father is an absent father. Although some of the dads admitted to experiencing some internal struggle with not fulfilling a breadwinning role, most identified that being a full-time father was worth it.

That their role as primary caregivers is more rewarding than their role as breadwinner reveals how oppositional hegemonic ideals can be to reality. Many of the participants viewed fathering as not only their full-time job, but their greatest responsibility. Though some of these men had been scrutinized for their non-traditional role, once they had committed to it none of them seemed to consider active fatherhood as a temporary lifestyle, but rather as a part of who they were as men. Lee had been a truck driver since he was sixteen, and described it as the only job he had ever known. His new role has contributed to changes in behaviour and ideologies regarding his responsibilities at home as well as within the community. It is probable that his previous resource-based jobs had not given him opportunity to deviate from hegemonic gender roles either in the workplace or in social and domestic spheres. Now he is beginning to feel more comfortable participating in what are traditionally feminine roles such as childcare, relationship building (with his son as well as with his neighborhood), and community work.
Harold believed that having a solid understanding (and experience) in the working world as well as having experience within the domestic sphere contributed to being a good father (and parent). Having both experiences created what he considers “a nice blend,” and the experience of “crossing roles [has] created this understanding and knowledge of both worlds” which he feels is important to being a well-rounded parent. This “blending” of experiences was also alluded to by other participants in the types of care they performed and the gender traits they adopted. Because of their desire to provide consistent emotional support, many of the fathers recognized a transformation in their behaviours and identities and took pride in their ability to be well-rounded, or what they considered “good” parents. I asked Steve if he identified differently with his role as father since he had been at home full-time and he answered:

definitely… I didn’t feel then that I was the parent that [the children] would turn to if they had a problem. Now, I still don’t feel like I’m the parent they turn to, but I feel that it doesn’t make a difference to them which one of us is there when they have a problem.

Although most participants were happy to be at home with their children, the transition from paid to unpaid work was difficult. Some of the fathers discussed their discomfort in adapting to an entirely different world of responsibilities, and others noted how they missed the income. Harold noted how “going from the corporate world where [he] was in management, in control, had authority, and all of those things implied within [his] title,” to becoming a full-time parent was difficult. He claimed that at first he was at a loss and was not sure what to expect or what was expected of him.

Susan Halford identifies the workplace as representing a location of “intellect,
efficiency and rationality”- the opposite of the domestic sphere (386). For some participants, this meant a shift in how they identified success, and much of the time rewards at home were more subtle than in the workforce. Keith, for example, remembers how grocery tellers would compliment him on his well-behaved children, while other participants expressed their successful moments as those when their child showed independence. Steve related that his reward was “just being there” to see his son blossom. Harold stated that his job in the home is

a complete change of focus... [i]n the corporate world it’s all bottom line, focus, results oriented, you know- results or die. Um, but here you measure your success in the smallest and most insignificant of details of your child’s life... at least, they seem insignificant when you’re in the corporate world, but those little childhood leaps, and learnings, and funny things, and all those things, become so much more important than usual.

One comment made by Harold was that his becoming a stay-at-home dad had changed his definition of fatherhood. He stated:

in terms of an eye opening experience, staying at home is just definitely different and has changed the experience of being a dad and what a “dad” means... Um, an at-home dad is definitely different than a working dad who’s just there for the happy moments and not here for the day-to-day torment and toils.

This speaks to his changing ideologies of fatherhood as well as how the change from his role as breadwinner/father to at-home father has affected his own self-identification. Similarly, Lee noted how his becoming a stay-at-home dad had forced him to re-evaluate his behaviour
and become a “better” father. Lee related that full-time fatherhood has contributed to his newfound extroverted personality. In reference to this interview he noted that he would never have done “something like this” before his role changed. Since becoming a stay-at-home dad Lee volunteers more and, much to the surprise of his wife, even chats with his neighbours. When I asked him why he had changed in this way he replied that he had previously been “too wrapped up [in work]. In my mind was, ‘you have to make money,’ and if you’re sitting at home you’re not makin’ money... But that got me nowhere, believe me.” His final comment reveals a conscious switch from a one-dimensional view of fatherhood as synonymous with breadwinner to a more holistic view which encompasses active fatherhood, home work, emotional care, and community service; behaviours that, as Doucet and Ruddick point out are often associated with maternal work.

In the case of the fathers who retain part-time work, their professional lives have also changed in that their paid work revolves around their children’s schedule. For example, Edward always makes it clear to employers that he can not work past three o’clock in the afternoon when his children are out of school. “My kids are first,” he said, “my work’s always second.” This attitude was not unique among the participants.

For Edward, trust was a main component of what he thought was important in being a father and was quite adamant about the open and trusting relationship he had with his daughters. It is obvious that the closeness he shared with his children was a source of pride and how he determined himself as a successful father. A few of the fathers discussed the challenges of entering a role completely foreign to them and thus having to form (or reform) a relationship with their child(ren). Lee noted that forming a relationship with his son was a challenge and that “just talking to him in the beginning... I had a hard time with that.”

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24 Lee’s job entailed working sixteen to seventeen-hour shifts, five days a week.
Forming an emotional connection with his son proved to be the biggest challenge for Lee as he moved from a stereotypical “man’s” job as a truck driver to a more emotional role as a full-time caregiver and homemaker. That he and the others face this challenge and attempt to overcome it is possibly the most significant conscious shift in behaviour (and identity) mentioned.

Although they are at home because of similar circumstances, it is interesting to note the differences in how Lee and Shawn identify with their role. Where Lee seems to feel that he has come into his own and has adapted his identity as full-time homemaker accordingly, Shawn felt uncomfortable and unable to completely identify with this role. During the course of the interview Shawn stated that women make better parents because of their ability to nurture and think of the “small things” regarding care-work. However, in another line of discussion he noted that “to this day” he carries a wallet full of band-aids for his daughter (who often needs them for comfort rather than necessity). Shawn’s contradictory ideologies and behaviours are curious, and reveal the pressures of hegemony in his need to neutralize the variance between his and his wife’s non-normative roles.

Another struggle for these men seems to be between their sense of ownership and the subordination that accompanies unpaid work. Chris stated if I was to buy something for myself I had to think very carefully about that, I didn’t feel justified in some ways… When my wife was working and I ‘wasn’t’ um, I found, um, I felt a little bit guilty… From time to time I felt like I wasn’t really contributing… Although that’s ironic because I believe- and always have believed that raising kids is a pretty fundamental job.
For Shawn, not having money of his own seemed to challenge his masculine identity more than his not having a career. He felt that his experience is quite different from that of stay-at-home moms who seem to “never want” for anything, whereas he finds it difficult to even ask his wife for money. The last sentence of his comment illustrates the difficulty in connecting gender ideology and behaviour. Although childcare is a priority for Chris, he struggles with the hegemonic “rule” that men care for their families through breadwinning. The essence of the feminine domestic sphere is due not only to the nature of the work, but that this work is unpaid, thus enabling a connection between hegemonic masculinity and power. That these men are uncomfortable with their lack of income is not surprising as this economic position is a social implication of powerlessness, dependence, and thus, femininity. The comments from Shawn and Chris show that while they have made the physical and emotional transition from the masculine to feminine sphere, the hurdle which is most difficult to overcome is the pressure of cultural hegemonies.

The subtleties (and absence) of domestic recognition is a challenge for some of these men, though as noted above, many mentioned that building close relationships with their children was an irreplaceable reward for giving up their role as breadwinners. That they may need to adopt more traditionally feminine behaviours in order to adapt to their roles seems necessary, however in most cases they are not entirely willing to identify with femininity.

(Dis)Identifying with Gender Dichotomies:

A commonality among most participants was in the way they identified with, or more accurately, dis-identified with, hegemonic ideas of masculinity and femininity. When discussing terms of masculinity, participants struggled between defining hegemonic
masculinity as they felt it was idealized by society, how they define it within the parameters of their own beliefs, and what they thought it was I wanted to hear. When participants were able to clearly articulate their answers they seemed to resist aligning themselves with hegemonic masculinities and popular stereotypes. The characteristics they felt described hegemonic masculinity included physical and emotional strength, and roles of provider/disciplinarian; however, these definitions were often followed by disclaimers such as “but I wouldn’t use those words to describe myself.” Chris stated that, “I’ve never really been hung up about what is masculine. I know what it is to see it and I know what society calls masculine and feminine, but I sort of decide for my own.” Harold viewed traditional definitions of masculinity such as “provider, protector, and disciplinarian” as negative traits. Regarding notions of strength and other culturally defined characteristics of masculinity he stated, “something I’ve been working on is becoming more in touch and more in tune with my emotions... So I see [images of masculine strength] as a negative and so when I see it in culture it’s something I rebel against.”

The participants’ “rebellion” against traditional masculine traits reveals a conscious attempt at deconstructing hegemonic masculinity to include aspects of femininity (such as emotions and sensitivity) in their own identities. As seen here, most of the participants disassociated with hegemonic masculinities and often saw themselves existing outside of those ideas. However, it was clear from their statements that most of these men had not consciously considered their masculinity (and identities within it) previously; therefore, it is possible that their day-to-day behaviours and ideologies adhere to hegemony more than they know or are willing to admit. Most participants also had difficulty defining terms of

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25 Because I do not have a comparison project of working fathers it is difficult to assume if this dissociation is directly related to, or resulting from, their non-hegemonic role.
femininity, thus revealing the struggle in locating themselves within a gender dichotomy which poses traditional characteristics as the measure of normalcy, though not necessarily their reality.²⁶

Although their immediate response was to deny their hegemonic behaviours, many participants felt that adopting both feminine and masculine characteristics (hegemonic and otherwise) made them better fathers and thus, better men. For example, many of the participants told me stories of their attempts to be more feminine- or at least, to participate in traditionally feminine activities; for example, Samuel has tried to learn how to style his daughter’s hair, and Lee has more heart-to-heart discussions with his son. Chris noted that being a father has made him more aware of his responsibility to his community, and he stated that “now my decisions take into account my wife and my daughter; family, and society at large.” Steve stated that

from [his] point of view a very important part of what [he is] doing as their father is [being] the guy who’s coaching sports and [is] interested in all these things that boys are interested in and still [doing] the cooking and cleaning and all that kind of thing. He felt that this approach provided his children with an understanding that being a man does not mean that they must follow all hegemonic examples.

Many of the men claimed to possess more traditionally feminine traits than masculine ones, not only in their current roles as primary caregivers, but especially when growing up and in their hobbies. For example, many of the dads related how when growing up they had always had more female friends than male friends (and some still do), and had never felt the need to participate in what they call “typical masculine activities like sports, beer drinking,

²⁶ As was mentioned in chapter three, it was participants’ difficulty in defining femininity and masculinity which led to the frequent adaptation of the interview questions.
fighting, or “getting rowdy” with the guys. In fact, while some of the men acknowledged the cultural ideologies of the “male breadwinner” role as masculine, they claimed to have never truly identified with this idea.

Edward noted that he does not think of himself as particularly masculine nor feminine; he stated that he is “not the average male, you know, watching the game and having a beer.” Chris noted that although his ideologies of masculinity had not necessarily changed since becoming a stay-at-home dad they had become more clearly defined. He thought that since being at home he considered gender roles more, and had time to “think about who [he is] and how [he] fits into the world.” For him, this includes rethinking his approach to fathering to include more traditionally feminine traits such as becoming more sensitive to the emotional needs of his child, revealing his desire to overcome barriers of masculinity and adopt more feminine behaviours of caring.

Although most of the participants voiced similar views to those of Edward and Chris, the contradiction between their ideologies and behaviours was most often revealed through our discussions of another piece of the domestic duty traditionally assigned to women: household chores and care work. For the most part participants felt that household chores were divided fairly between themselves and their wives according to time availability. Samuel summed up his situation by saying, “[s]ometimes, even if [my wife is] working and I’m busy on the farm she’ll do [more] of the [inside] housework.” When I asked Steve if his wife helps out with the outdoor farm work he felt that those chores were often excluded from his wife’s share. This reflects the discussion in chapter two regarding gendered chores, and reveals that, regardless of ideology, chores are often divided by gender, even in non-traditional households such as those shown here.
While the models discussed in chapter two appear most frequently documented and are important when addressing the social trends and influences on gendered housework, most of the participants of this study fell within the Time Availability, and Gender Ideology models. Nearly every participant stated that household chores are typically divided by time availability; common statements were that they performed the majority of the day-to-day chores while their wives helped out more on the weekends when they were home. In accordance with the Gender Ideology model, there were a few participants who noted that their wives refrain from completing the more “masculine” chores such as yard work (or farm work, as Samuel notes), or mechanics and auto repair as noted by Harold. In fact, most participants seemed comfortable performing the traditional “feminine” household chores such as cooking and laundry. With the possible exception of family and household planning, most of the participants stated that homemaking was their duty as the stay-at-home parent.

In some of the households the wives did the majority of the housework when they were home on the weekends. Shawn mentioned that his wife is “quite organized so she’ll go off and do the washing up... she sort of takes over the weekends and runs the house.” In most cases, the wives of these participants were also still mainly responsible for the planning aspects of domestic work such as making doctor’s appointments, organizing birthday parties, and etcetera. These findings exemplify conflicts between ideology and behaviour; although the men idealize a partnership that is not based on gendered behaviour, the female partner often remains responsible (whether or not through her own initiative) for much of (or at least equal amounts) of the care-work. While these examples do not necessarily reflect the Time Availability approach, they do have patterns identified by Gender Ideology theories of housework. The division of housework and care-work seems to be independent from the
level of choice involved in the roles; however, those who participated less in household planning and the more “gendered” chores were consistently the same participants who felt they had little choice in their role. Perhaps these men are more self conscious of their domestic role and thus threatened by fully adopting “feminine” responsibilities, or perhaps these are just examples of gendered ideology models of housework.

It is important to note that although these examples reveal a gap in some forms of home work, this is not a reflection of the participants’ inability to adopt a more “feminine” role. Although these examples portray the contradiction between ideologies and behaviours among participants (and their wives), there was one comment which stood out from the rest: one small phrase mentioned in passing that articulated a change in both gendered ideology and behaviour. Lee noted that when his wife is not working she “helps out” at home. As discussed previously, this differentiates the role of the primary homemaker and the secondary “helper,” and signifies Lee’s shift in identity along with his shift in roles.

Behaviors regarding housework and homemaking are one example of how some men dissociate from or dis-identify with feminine roles. Another example is with regard to men’s connection to the paid work force. While Samuel seemed to take pride in his role as “house spouse,” he also noted that he would like to be out working and was somewhat confused when people would say that his job at home was “cool.” Many of the other participants seemed unwilling or unable to separate themselves from the paid working world, and this was particularly common among those who felt their current position was not completely their choice. Although a couple of the participants noted that being a provider was a large part of being a father, they were quick to note that being a “provider” was not exclusive to financial provisions and included providing nurturance, support, and protection (both
emotionally and physically). For example, Lee stated that by being at home he was “still support[ing], just in a different way.” He noted that, “I make sure there’s a dinner there for her and coffee in the morning,” revealing how “primary caregiver” or homemaker encompasses care of the entire family.

As noted above, most of the men revealed the desire to adopt and adapt some feminine or “maternal” forms of care as well as provide the kind of care that Andrea Doucet notes as being more “masculine” (2006, 112). For example, although Harold has discussed other forms of involvement with his children, his need to be physically active with them supports Doucet’s theory that men tend to take part in more “masculine” activities with their children. Although this theory applied to Steve, who noted one of his favorite family activities was coaching sports teams, it also isolates the men who enjoy engaging in more feminine games with their children, such as playing “princesses” or “house” or quieter activities (as noted by Harold, Chris, and Samuel). The combination of “feminine” and “masculine” activities reveals a shifting away from maintaining hegemonic masculine characteristics within the domestic sphere; whether or not this is a conscious shift made on the part of the father, it remains a transition of gendered behaviour.

Although many women also maintain a connection to paid labour while they are at home with children, generally, they do not receive the same social pressures to perform a breadwinning role as do men. Doucet’s analysis of men’s aligning themselves with hegemonic ideals through paid work and “masculine” household jobs was reflected in most of my cases. This was revealed when participants responded to the question of what they “do.” Many participants stated that they do not always respond with their job in homemaking or child care. When speaking with others, Steve “almost always” tells people
that he is a stay-at-home dad, but that he is also a writer and does computer work on the side. When asked how he identified his job to others, Samuel admitted, “sometimes for half a second I hesitate in telling people what I do... I guess sometimes I justify [my role by saying] that I’ve got a farm and lots of other stuff to do which keeps me busy.” That these men are, at times, uncomfortable with openly admitting their primary job as a care-giver or homemaker confirms the sense of risk involved in identifying with non-normative roles. The discrepancy between ideology and practice is one way we can distinguish the tensions between traditional or hegemonic masculinity and domestic identity.

Challenges of Hegemony

As identified in chapter two, the challenge of changing gender roles stems not only from one’s masculine identity, but from the limitations of hegemony. This was alluded to by many participants when asked to define masculinity. Rather than describing problems with masculinity itself, they articulated issues which result from the limitations of normative standards; issues which are formed as a result of, or in relation to hegemony. When transitioning from the paid work sphere to the unpaid domestic one, repercussions include the tensions in trading or sharing non-normative family roles within a hegemonic culture, issues of isolation, the limitations of gendered discourse, and the conflict between ideology and behaviour (or, hegemony and reality), which is seemingly inherent to these issues.

A question which arose from discussing the challenges in transitioning gender roles concerned the behaviours of the participants’ wives. A few men noticed that the result of their being at home was a sort of pendulum swing in the behaviour of their wives in that they seemed to act more like the “man” of the house. This shift was identified by Harold as he
describes his wife’s role. He stated that

when I was working and not interacting on a regular basis with the kids, I’d come home and [she would say] ‘oh, this is broken and that needs fixing,’ and I needed to work on this or that… And now that I’m at home and… [my wife] will come home and be like, ‘ok, this person needs this fixing, and I’m going to fix this, and I’m going to straighten that up.’ So she takes on the sort of… I wouldn’t say authoritarian role, but sort of [acts as] the control person. She doesn’t do it all the time… But we’ve definitely seen a role reversal here.

That these men identify as more than “Mr. Mom” is shown in their sense of pride and possessiveness over their role. Keith noted that he felt a sort of ownership over his role and interpreted his wife’s domestic activities as being “incorrect” or abnormal in relation to his practices. He stated, “my wife would come home when I’d been at home with the kids all day. I’d be tellin’ her to ‘do it this way... The kids like it this way,’ because I was spending so much time with them… I was like, possessive of [my job].” A similar example came from Samuel, who stated that

by switching expected roles [my wife has] taken on some of the characteristics of the traditional dad in a sense. She gets frustrated with [the children] a little easier than I do and that kind of stuff because she comes home from work and she’s got [work] on her mind.

Because of this he felt responsible for making sure his wife and children were able to spend “quality time” together, a responsibility which exemplifies traditional feminine care-work.

The men were not the only ones to reveal inconsistencies between ideology and behaviour. While Harold and Samuel felt one type of challenge in shifting gender roles,
others identified feelings of displacement when it seemed that their wife was challenging their role or trying to “take over.” Chris stated that his wife often “jumps in and, um, starts taking charge when I was doing fine and didn’t frankly want her help or ask for it.” Steve stated that his wife

does feel that she is missing out on certain things… Whereas I can have more involvement with things. I’m working with [the kids] through things and am aware of their daily issues and, um, so I think that, particularly, for her [this role change] has been a difficult thing to adapt to.

Unfortunately, the boundaries of this study do not allow for a closer analysis of the wives and how they deal with the transition of gendered roles. However, the tension in “swapping” gender roles brings to light the impact of hegemony on the subconscious ideas and behaviours of both men and women.

One of the most common challenges identified by the participants was from those whose wives had previously been homemakers; these men noted that they often felt the need to model their new role after the previous format of their wives. However, some of the men also admitted that the longer they are at home the more they are able to carve out their own routines and that they often adapt (and abandon) their wives’ practices for ones which suit their own style. Although there may remain a general awkwardness between couples in everything from methods of childcare to folding laundry, the length of time spent at home seems to correlate with the men’s comfort level in domestic duties and aids in a feeling of competence in their role.
Isolation

Among the challenges for many of the participants in adopting a non-traditional gender role was the various forms of isolation they experienced. In his discussion of unemployment David Morgan points out the influence of location on masculine identity. He argues that employment often affects men’s “spatial” identity which is realized when they become unemployed as they feel they do not have a space of their own (110). If the domestic sphere is viewed as a “woman’s place” then unemployed men may feel that without work they are caught in between spaces. The inability to locate themselves either within the paid working world or within the domestic sphere contributes to the isolation felt by some of the participants of this study. For example, Harold discussed how, initially, his ideas of full-time parenting included days filled with physical activities and outings as this was the example provided by his own father. He soon realized that this was an unrealistic ideal as “you can’t do that every day, all day, all the time,” and noted that “of course, [his] dad didn’t have to do it everyday, all day, all the time” because he worked outside the home. In fact many of the fathers who had previously worked full-time indicated their discomfort and their inability in “knowing what to do.” Harold stated that at first he had felt like “a fish out of water… a neophyte.”

Although participants identified many positive changes they had made both behaviorally and ideologically since being at home, these changes also contributed to a feeling of isolation from other men. Many of the participants found it difficult to identify positive influences in other men because there were so few who shared the same roles, responsibilities and experiences. For example, once he became a dad Keith found it difficult to find positive influences and develop social relationships because, although he was still
surrounded by men at work on the weekends, he felt isolated by the fact that there were very few who were as involved with their families as he was; he stated that “I thought I was just totally on my own.”

It was noted by many participants that women more than men seem to be supportive of stay-at-home dads. Many of the participants noted how they were always praised by women, and Keith remembered how a woman who had noticed that he was the primary caregiver had complained that “her husband would never do that.” However, other participants felt that female support was merely verbal and that their behaviour was not always encouraging. Harold stated that his role was a rarity among the families at his children’s school and that when among the women there he was often ignored. “I’m not sought out to discuss things,” he said; “when I’m there everyone sort of stops talking.” A few of the other participants also commented on this type of gendered isolation in social settings and in parent/child groups which seem to cater to mothers or female caretakers. While most participants claimed to have received verbally enthusiastic responses from women, the pressures of hegemonic practice outweighed their initial enthusiasm, possibly influencing their exclusion of men from their groups. Steve speculated that not being from Canada adds an element of flexibility in how people respond to his role. He felt that people chalk up his non-normative role as due to his “foreignness” and resultant “strange way of doing things.”

Edward was often the unique case in many of these discussions. When asked about his social relationships with the women at school, and the types of responses elicited from them, he always replied in the positive. He spoke of coffee outings and other social activities in which he participated with the mothers at his children’s school. He claimed to be included in their hallway discussions as they waited to pick up their children, and even referred to
himself as “one of the moms.” This reveals that although hegemony is the barrier for many, there are cases, like Edward’s, where the barriers are overcome. On the other hand, Edward mentioned that there was some tension among the husbands of the wives he associated with, that those men did not always appreciate his friendship with their wives, nor was he included in many of the men’s activities. In this way his inclusion by the women seemed to isolate him from men; thus, the barriers of hegemony can be seen when looking below the surface of his social relationships.

Besides isolation from individuals and groups, there is also a sort of social isolation identified by Calvin Smith (and discussed previously in chapter two), who analyzes the effect community has on influencing and maintaining the gendered status quo. This was also articulated by Chris, who discussed his annoyance at the lack of public facilities for men who provide childcare; his example was the lack of change tables in men’s washrooms. He followed this by stating that society merely gives “lip service” to the idea of shared parenting, for if it was truly encouraged there would be more public acknowledgement of fathers both spatially and ideologically. That fathers are still considered to be domestically unqualified by society reveals how the expectations and desire (of men and society) for change are inhibited by culturally constructed rules of hegemony.

I have included the following discussion regarding gendered care as an aspect of isolation because it shows how men have been, and are, not only shut out of the feminine dimension of the domestic sphere and its related activities of care-work, but isolated by the language of care and domesticity. As noted, care-work is often still regarded as women’s work, and is often synonymous with motherhood; this does not lessen when men perform care-work. With participants’ role at home came involvement in types of care in which the
participants had not previously consistently engaged. Authors such as Ruddick and Doucet list types of domestic care as including emotional care, maintaining the family’s physical health, as well as the moral training of children. The authors make a point of stating these to be feminine behaviours often enacted by mothers rather than fathers. As Doucet and Ruddick assure us, men are fully capable of performing these activities; however, men who perform them are often qualified as male “mothers” or as men doing maternal work (as implied through nicknames such as “Mr. Mom”). I argue that what stay-at-home dads (and likely many working dads) are actually doing is transforming the notion of active fathering from men who “can mother” to fathers who develop a form of fathering or a form of paternal care which simply adopts aspects of traditional femininity.

When asked how they felt about the idea that the domestic sphere is not a man’s place, participants did not believe that domestic and paid work spaces should be specifically gendered, though they admitted that society often subscribes to this ideology. Chris noted that although he does not believe the domestic sphere to be a woman’s domain, he recognizes how uncommon it is for a man to be at home. He related this to his own ideologies of manhood when he was growing up and how

when [he] got out of school [he] wasn’t really thinking how to build skills on how to be a good father, [he] was thinking of how to build skills on how to make as much money as possible so [he] could support [his] family.

Now that he is a full-time caregiver he recognizes that his ideologies have shifted along with his role from the public working sphere to the domestic one, including the type of care he provides his child.

The language of hegemony was also exemplified when the participants were asked
how they felt about being referred to as “Mr. Mom.” Approximately half of the dads thought that the term was humorous and took no offence to it; a couple of them even admitted to referring to themselves by this term. Samuel felt that people were too sensitive about terms and noted that the term is simply a “historical reference.” Keith also noted that although he was not offended by terms such as these, they did seem “a bit behind the times.”

On the other hand, some opposition to the term “Mr. Mom” came from Harold and Steve, who stated outright that they were not “Mr. Moms.” Harold noted that “I wouldn’t want to be called Mr. Mom, I’m an at-home dad not a Mr. Mom... I think that the [gender] roles of our society are blurry and I don’t think that’s an appropriate term.” Similarly, Chris felt that the term was a misnomer because our society has decided that women stay home and take care of the kids [while] men go off and bring home a slab of dinosaur... So ‘Mr. Mom’ is not accurate because it suggests a stereotype... and one of the biggest stereotypes is that a man is less adept to caring for children than is a woman.

These men felt that the term implied that men who care-take are just “playing” the role of mother rather than enacting what they see as their role as a father. As Steve noted, “it is just a silly expression to me because... that’s not my experience. I have a clearly different role from the boys’ mother. That’s it. It’s a different role, I just happen to be the parent that’s at home.” For these men the term further isolates them from their role as a primary caretaking father by identifying them as make-shift mothers and also feminizes the types of necessary paternal work and care that they feel they provide. The term “Mr. Mom” connotes a type of care that is temporary or secondary; it portrays a role similar to that of a baby-sitter, conjuring images of a man acting outside his realm (or perhaps, beneath a masculine
standard). Most of the participants here, however, reveal that their jobs at home were not simply a day-shift to fill while their wives were at work, but were a lifestyle that includes “masculine” and “feminine” forms of care-work.

That these men are contributing to a new idea of masculinity and fatherhood through their non-traditional roles is not to say that they do not adhere to any traditional ideas of fatherhood. For example, many of the participants spoke of fatherhood as a role that enabled them to guide and teach their children. Throughout history the role of “teacher” has been part of the role of the father as men were expected to provide moral and religious leadership, as well as intellectual guidance (Griswold, Bowers Andrews et al.). Other participants believed in the importance of maintaining a balance between “new” ideas of fatherhood and traditional ones, as Chris noted, he has “moved heaven and earth to be a disciplinarian and also a caring loving father.”

**Ideology versus Behaviour**

Chris told me a story of a male coworker who had taken parental leave and as a result had received a lot of teasing from another male coworker. According to Chris the teaser was quite a lighthearted fellow and “you couldn’t take offence at anything he said,” but the other man had become very frustrated with the teasing and had finally snapped at the man making the jokes. While Chris noted that he had never received any teasing about his role as full-time caregiver, he seemed to excuse the teasing that existed for others. Although the teasing in the above story may have been in fun, as Chris believes, I argue that it further exemplifies the fact that it is still often considered silly or unnecessary for men to take parental leave, and further dislocates men from the domestic sphere.
Following his story, Chris stated, “but I wouldn’t fall prey to that kind of [teasing] myself because in some ways I just don’t give a rat’s ass what other people think.” The fact that Chris defended his teasing coworker rather than the stay-at-home dad reflects the power culture assigns to normative behaviour and the confusion between behaviour and ideology. Other participants also noted that people responded with surprise or sympathy when they discovered that they were at home full-time, thus demonstrating the notion that men are not expected to be in the home. Keith described jibes he has received from coworkers and friends about his inability to “cut the apron strings.” When I asked him if the teasing bothered him he replied, smiling, “oh no.” In fact, while we conversed about the teasing he has received, he explained that he did not care about it because he actually felt sorry for men who worked sixteen-hour days and had poor relationships with their families.

That they are teased for doing a “woman’s” job reveals the challenges that some men might face when taking on a full-time homemaking role. Although men (such as those portrayed here) may wish to move away from traditional or hegemonic masculine stereotypes, in cases like Chris’, their culturally defined identity as men seems to “override their self-attributed identity as househusbands” (Smith 147-48). Chris’ final statement reveals his choice to identify with alternate ideas of masculinity in order to reconcile his atypical role; however, his excusing the actions of his teasing coworker implies that perhaps Chris’ behaviour is not fully cooperative with his ideology.

Although most of the participants claimed not to ascribe to hegemonic ideals of masculinity, many apologized, downplayed, or felt the need to excuse their “non-masculine” emotions and ideologies. For example, a number of the men seemed consistently unsure of how their experiences and emotional responses were helpful to my research and were often
apologetic about their lack of knowledge on the subject of gender. Samuel stated that, having a family had enriched his life and has “increase[d] the love, so to speak.” He followed this statement with a self-conscious chuckle and said, “that sounds cheesy, but you know… [shrugs].” Although the most common measure of success among the participants was the love and affection of their children, some seemed self-conscious when admitting this. That these men felt their non-normative behaviour to be “unworthy” for research reveals the shame associated with behaving outside hegemonic boundaries.

**Masculinity Crisis and Feminism**

Regarding the idea of a masculinity crisis, I asked the participants whether or not this concept had any bearing over their own ideas of gender. Most said that masculinity was not in trouble but agreed that it was changing. For example, Harold approved of the changes that have been made in masculine ideologies and said that, “we’re slowly breaking down the mainstream ideas of gender roles and gender specific ideas… so I think we’re evolving.” Others thought that male roles and responsibilities, rather than ideologies, are changing, which reflects the earlier discussion of the participants’ contradictory behaviour and ideologies. Edward articulated it best by saying that “you can’t have a bunch of super macho men… [because] it requires a subservient woman. Well… subservient women, they are few [these days],” and therefore contemporary masculinity has had to become increasingly open. Edward did not consider this a gender crisis. In fact it is probable that these men view changing masculinities as encouraging their non-normative roles rather than as a crisis.

When asked if he felt masculinity is in crisis Steve felt that there is definitely an element of society which believes that masculinity is in trouble; to this point he made a rather
shrewd comparison to the field of language studies. He stated that:

people always believe that the English language is in desperate trouble and it’s falling apart, and it’s just the end of the world and we won’t be able to communicate with each other, and that’s not true, it’s just changing the way it’s always changed... I think a similar thing is true for gender roles in that they’ve... changed, but since we started writing all this stuff down and fixing it, it’s become harder to make those changes.

Another reaction to the issue of masculinity crisis was that masculinity itself is not in trouble but society is becoming more “sensitive” and certain gender characteristics are being challenged by political correctness. When I asked Shawn if he felt masculinity was in trouble he simply replied, “I wouldn’t say that up here [in Prince George];” however, he followed this by saying that there is a possibility of masculinity as we know it disappearing because “women rule the world whether we like it or not.” This suggests that reactive forms of masculinity are caused by women, rather than by men wanting to change their own ideologies and behaviours. The latter of Shawn’s comments also suggests the feminization of some geographic locations. In comparison to more southern cities which have a milder climate, various market economies, and may espouse more liberal attitudes regarding gender, Prince George may be viewed as more “masculine” because of its harsh climate and landscape and resource based economy (which is often viewed as promoting traditional gender ideals).

There were also participants who reflected more positively on feminism such as Samuel, who felt that “feminism is that [he and his wife] are equal partners rather than [he’s] in control of everything and she’s not” and vice versa. Harold stated, “I am who I am today
because of feminism… feminism and all that I’ve learned about it has completely changed my life… Feminism has changed me in that I’m at home and wanting to be with the kids.”

Harold and Edward were the only participants to make a connection between their role as primary caregiver and feminist movements. Although they recognize the crisis of hegemony, they do not see themselves as activists against it. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that many men do not view feminism as a useful vehicle for their own change, nor an effective ideology to articulate a wider masculine transformation.

A “masculinity crisis” has been posited by different theorists as being a loss of male power (Faludi, Tiger, Clare, Connell). In maintaining this, it seems that for many participants, especially for those who had been at home the longest, their role has included a relocation of their authority and thus, they have maintained a sense of power and/or pride, and for many of the participants, the pride they have in their job at home exceeds that which might come from a paid job. Unfortunately, to retain hegemonic masculinity one must deny a connection to femininity, reinforcing the potential for gendered crisis. It has been shown that while many participants maintain a connection to hegemonic ideas of masculinity through gendered types of work and other behaviours of dis-identification, some contradicted the nature of masculinity in their willingness to identify with aspects of femininity and feminism. This reveals that the crisis is perhaps not a matter of gender per-se, but lies in the challenges of maintaining unrealistic norms.

In the discussions regarding feminism and femininity, their definitions and influences, there was much confusion regarding terminology as well as the challenge of having to articulate something that many of the participants had never thought about. For many participants, “feminism” was mistaken for “femininity.” Where definitions of femininity
included having an emotional approach to the world, being nurturing, caring, selfless, gentle, articulate, soft, kind, having strong communication skills, and being skilled in the domestic arts, the term “feminism” elicited responses which were often more negative. Shawn felt that feminism contributes to the feeling of there being a masculinity crisis. He viewed feminists as radicals and, in contrast, defined femininity to include women who are “not loud, not in your face.” In this sense, feminism is portrayed as a more masculine behaviour (in the sense of masculinity promoting individuality and strong will). One might conclude that Shawn’s feeling of feminism’s contribution to a masculinity crisis is in that it allows women to behave in masculine ways, thus, taking away from male hegemonic power. Shawn referred to feminists as “loonies,” and was affronted by the idea that feminists “wanted to change everything” in order to gain equality. Chris stated that his experiences with feminists were negative and his initial reaction to the question of feminism was that feminists were “militant lesbians,” and were to blame for political correctness. Comments such as these can be referred directly to some of the literature discussed in chapter two, especially that of Faludi and Horrocks. Because hegemonic masculinity is a measure of manhood and its relation to power, once this “power” has been removed through actions of political correctness, for example, it is natural that individual men feel the loss. During these types of responses it went unmentioned that the changes to “everything” had also contributed to the possibility of participants’ roles as stay-at-home dads.

Conclusions

As noted in the opening discussion, there are various influences that form one’s sense of masculine identity. These influences were examined by participants through

27 Although beliefs such as these were not necessarily shared by all of the participants, my own experience is that they are not uncommon among men (and women) in Northern BC.
conversations on representations of masculinity, adapting to change and reacting against hegemonic dichotomies, and concepts of gender and feminism.

The dialogue around masculine influences (from their fathers and from other men) reveals how the participants have reacted against traditional forms in an attempt to alter their behaviours and ideas about masculinity and fatherhood. This, combined with the adoption of some traditionally feminine behaviours (such as nurturing), suggests one way in which these men have come to define their identities as men and fathers and how they have formed ideologies around gender. Through their discussion of paid work, or rather their lack of it, the participants also bring to light how they have formed an identity- and resulting ideas of masculinity- through their unpaid work; thus discrediting the hegemonic notion of paid work as a measure of masculine identity.

An unexpected commonality between the participants was in their behaviours of dis-identification with hegemonic ideals of gender. Although dis-identifying with both hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity seems contradictory, it exposes the limitations created by hegemony in the way men may feel dislocated from space (belonging in neither the domestic nor paid working worlds) and cultural notions of gender (in that they do not fit neatly into a masculine/feminine spectrum). On the other hand, this contradictory action also enables men to adopt more non-traditional behaviours and ideologies and further expand their ideas of fatherhood and manhood. Such an expansion allows them to avoid a feeling of crisis and advances the creation of a space “between.” Although progress in altering behaviours and ideologies is inhibited by hegemonic barriers such as public perception and isolation, these men have found a way to combine notions of domesticity and
masculinity; providing them a sense of belonging and identity within their non-traditional situations.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

The particular definition of masculinity that is hegemonic changes over time and varies from society to society. In any particular situation, however, the dominant model of masculinity provides the basic cultural patterns of expectation and outlook that all men and women must confront, whether they accept these expectations, rebel against them, or espouse alternatives.

Nicholas Townsend, 5

This research has analyzed masculinity in the lives of stay-at-home dads. Within this framework I have reflected on relationships between masculinity, femininity, and feminism, revealing some of the ways North American culture constructs and manipulates ideas of “acceptable” gendered behaviour and the challenges produced by them. The case study exemplifies some barriers placed on men (and women) by hegemony through the transition from public paid work to domestic unpaid work spheres. Within this context these participants recognize the expectations and pressures placed on them to behave to a certain standard, a standard which is measured by hegemonic ideas of manhood. As the participants work to find their own niche spatially, methodologically, and emotionally, they unknowingly contribute to the broadening of ideals in masculinity and fatherhood. They do this by persevering through situations of isolation and feelings of helplessness against the standards by which their role is traditionally measured. They also broaden their own ideals of masculinity by discovering new forms of (unpaid) rewards in their domestic role; they measure their own success by the success of their family relationships, by accepting non-traditional (or feminine) aspects of care-work and by rebelling against negative ideals and behaviours promoted by media and by previous generations. In doing these things, these
men prove that masculinity exists on a continuum of change which often negotiates between traditional and non-traditional ideals of gender, masculine and feminine alike.

Through a context of change, the theoretical and case study analyses reveal the barriers of hegemony and the unnecessary crisis it inflicts on men and culture. The accounts from participants reveal how masculinity is in a state of flux, marking hegemonic ideologies as a barrier to a seamless transformation of gender roles; thus, it is hegemony which creates a threat of lost male power. Many authors (Faludi, Dunk, Coltrane, Connell, Townsend, etcetera) examine male identity as being inextricably linked to paid employment. As noted in the second chapter, Faludi links men's sense of control to their role as provider. Although the provider role and a paid-work identity are indeed cornerstones of hegemonic masculinity, I have shown that the men in this case study form a sense of masculine identity (and therefore, a sense of power) in their roles as full-time fathers and caregivers. Thus, their sense of self remains in how they utilize control and adapt a willingness to expand into new areas of work, paid or unpaid. While authors such as David Morgan argue that “[w]ork, in both the general and specific sense, is assumed to be a major basis of identity, and of what it means to be a man” (76), this research affirms how other factors such as environment, interpersonal relationships and interactions, responsibilities, and the connection between individual agency and social structure are all cornerstones in the construction of identity.

With regard to the sense of lost authority, there is also a sense of hopelessness in some participants which reveals that they may not identify themselves within the pattern of social change which, for them, seems to be aimed at women.\(^\text{28}\) While women are accepted in the paid work sphere, men are not necessarily accepted within the domestic realm. The

\(^{28}\) This is illustrated in chapter four through Chris and Shawn's feelings toward feminism's (and women's) being responsible for social change, change that they feel does not positively affect their lives.
challenge then, is in creating movements for changing the very gendered constructs enabled
by masculinity and patriarchy. While women have made change through feminism and
related movements, many men, including some of my own participants, do not feel that this
can be their vehicle for change. While feminism has enabled their current roles within the
home (and their wives’ roles outside it) this may not be the answer for assisting men in
gaining domestic status, nor in liberating the stigmatized domestic status altogether.

In many ways, the results of the case study reflected the theoretical analysis.
However, there were unique cases where participants differed from theoretical examples, and
these most often occurred with regard to care-work. There were many participants who
admitted that they did not play a strong part in the organization and planning of the
household. There were also some who treated their role as merely a day job rather than a
lifestyle. On the other hand, there were participants who felt that they did the majority of the
care-work from preparing their spouse’s morning coffee, to planning their children’s birthday
parties.

An aspect of theory which differed from the case study (and one which I found
particularly frustrating) was the language used to describe parental, family and domestic
care-work. In most cases, care-work is associated with the feminine; however, these men
prove that it is desire more than ability which guides domestic behaviour; therefore, the
language around care-work, and the domestic sphere in general, is also a symptom of
hegemonic limitations.

Reflections on the Research

The examples and information retrieved from the case study and their relationship to
the theoretical discourse satisfied most of the questions and goals formed at the outset of the research. The question as to whether or not masculine identities change when undertaking a new environment and lifestyle is affirmative. As any ideology or behaviour would alter under new circumstances, it is clear that the ideas and behaviours of the participants changed according to their roles; whether or not these effect a wider social change is unknown. However, the discussions which occurred within each interview opened up avenues which many participants had not previously considered and, like a butterfly effect, I hope that this will affect others simply through the behaviours and efforts of these eight men.

As for men becoming marginalized by their domestic role, this does not seem to be the case; their masculinity, on the other hand, becomes subordinated by the standards of hegemony. This was identified by some participants (in their experiences of isolation, for example) and alluded to by others. Given the traditional ideal of the domestic sphere being a feminine space, it seems unlikely that most stay-at-home moms cope with the same sort of subordination of gender identity. Men can and do identify with the domestic role though their ideals and behaviours may differ from that of women, or from traditional notions. Men are able to incorporate aspects of femininity and masculinity to mold a space “between” traditional gender behaviours. This at first may dis-empower them by displacing their authority, but also re-empower them as they identify with different methods and measures of success.

In relation to this, Doucette asks the question of whether or not it is “possible that fathers develop a concept of nurturing that incorporates both traditionally feminine and masculine qualities and, indeed, between maternal equality and paternal difference” (2006, 118)? The above research reveals that the most obvious answer is, yes. When men enter the
traditional feminine sphere they “move both between equality and difference and between the stereotypically feminine and masculine” (122). That many of my participants deny compliance with hegemonic ideals of masculinity does not mean that those same hegemonies have not informed their lives and roles as men and fathers. In fact, it seems that they are hyper-aware of the very definitions they resist, and the concepts that they have had to reform for themselves. Therefore “rather than duplicate the maternal terrain traveled, fathers alter it to incorporate differences, which could be viewed as traditionally masculine traits” (Doucet 123). It is through such behaviour that stay-at-home dads can change hegemonic ideals of masculinity, and cultural identifiers of domesticity.

In response to how these participants cope with the “no man’s land” of the domestic arena, most identified situations in which they felt powerless; however, they have all found (or are finding) their own niches over time. Part of the challenge in maintaining a sense of belonging and authority seems to be due in part to society’s own hesitation in associating men with the domestic sphere. The most notable example is the portrayal of men’s domestic “inability” in popular media which, in turn, both reflects and influences cultural ideals of manhood. What the participants of this study prove is that regardless of debilitating social skepticisms, or superstitions, about male domestic ability, men are capable, and sometimes quite willing, to adapt, cope with, and successfully initiate change within their domestic responsibilities.

Of the potential causes behind masculinity crisis, the underlying argument is that masculinity is seemingly under threat of a transforming gender order. As has been discussed, the difficulty in managing hegemonic ideologies with individual situations is one of the contributing arguments to the existence of a contemporary masculinity crisis and is a noted
challenge among stay-at-home dads. Regardless of the arguments that feminism has contributed to (or caused) a masculinity crisis, feminist movements have also aided in the progression of fatherhood and equal or shared parenting (May and Strikwerda 78), and have therefore, contributed on a grand scale to the positions of stay-at-home dads. In relation to this, Faludi notes that “[m]en and women are at a historically opportune moment where they hold the key to each other’s liberation” (595). On one hand, if unpaid domestic work were to operate on the same level of recognition and appreciation as paid employment, the househusband or stay-at-home dad, may not have to face the barriers which currently exist (not to mention the liberation and recognition this would bring for all stay-at-home parents regardless of gender). On the other hand, what is viewed as being “masculine”— spatially, economically, publicly and privately- can only change as more men assume domestic responsibilities. Such a movement, as Coltrane notes, “does not guarantee that gender relations will become equal, only that the content and meaning of gender will be transformed (1996, 234). Although feminism has certainly influenced the ideological and behavioural positions of men in the home, it was difficult to measure the effects of feminism on the participants of this study as many felt that feminism had not affected their lives at all except as a mild socio-political annoyance. Because the aim of this case-study is to gain knowledge through participant experience, the inability of some to identify with feminism spoke to their detachment from it, as well as to the exclusionary nature of an ideology created (largely) from the need of female liberation, recognition and empowerment.

**Challenges and Changes**

The challenges of this study were not numerous; however they were ones which had
me consider, and re-consider aspects of my processes, my identity as a female researcher in Men’s Studies, as well as some of the details of the interviews and transcriptions. The first challenge, which took months to overcome, was the lack of participation I received for the interviews (discussed in chapter three). However challenging the process of recruitment was, I feel that the participants involved in this study represent a varied sample of experiences and masculinities and contribute to the ongoing dialogue of changing masculinity. Many of the individual responses were similar to one another; as well, the findings of my case study have similar results to case studies by others (Calvin Smith and Andrea Doucett, for example); therefore, it can be assumed that the situations of these men are not wholly unique to men in Prince George BC, but are common to other men in similar situations in other Canadian communities.

The majority of challenges within the interviews as well as the theoretical review were with regard to the discourse of gender. In the interviews the questions regarding masculinity and femininity were, from the very start, difficult for all of the participants to define. As noted in chapter three, I attempted to rephrase these questions to make them more attainable; however, the confused (and at times, embarrassed) silences in response to questions on masculinity and femininity led me to believe that the concepts of the questions were only a portion of the reason they were difficult to discuss. The participants’ discomfort also speaks to the difficulty they had in locating themselves within a gender dichotomy. Their resistance to most hegemonic, traditional, or popularized ideas of gender further revealed to me the space “between” masculinity and femininity in which these men seem to find themselves, and further instilled the importance of imagining a continuum rather than a scale by which to analyze gender. The inability (or unwillingness) of these men to define
characteristics that are presumably common knowledge also reveals their own discomfort with being categorized in this way; thus the “disclaimer” provided by the participants following each categorization of gender.

I surmise that the extreme difficulty some of the participants had in understanding and answering the questions on gender traits exemplifies a reason for slow-changing gender ideologies; if we are unable to discuss, or comfortably identify gendered constructs, then how can we change them? This particular challenge speaks to the seemingly inherent nature of gender constructs, because of which it may have been difficult for participants to locate their experiences within the interview questions and may also prove difficult for them to locate themselves within the final analysis. Although the methods used for gathering the qualitative information were adequate, if I were to do the project again, I would consider providing the participants with the opportunity to edit or revise their own transcripts. This may alleviate some of my own nervousness in interpreting their words, and would also incorporate the participation of the men to a degree more correlative to Feminist Participatory Action Research.

Navigating language and its influence on perceptions of gender constructs was also a challenge within the writing and analysis of the case study as well as within the theoretical review. Feminists argue that women should not be described, circumscribed, contextualized, or unnecessarily compared to men. In light of this, qualifying male care-work as “mothering”- something we relate as almost innately feminine- should also be critically examined. What men do is not “mothering” just as women who fix their own cars or clean their own gutters are not engaging in “men’s work”. Indeed, as Doucet argues, men can mother (if we understand “mothering” to connote nurturing care) in the sense that they can
and do perform nurturing care, but the terminology is still implicative of something inherently female. This aspect of the research was challenging when trying to describe masculine domesticity and incorporate it into existing theory. However, the growing number of stay-at-home dads can only contribute to the expansion of language and dialogues around gender roles.

With regard to the interview process, I regret my self-consciousness. Upon reviewing each of the transcripts my own hesitations were revealed. I regret that I may have fostered some of the discomfort around the terminology mentioned above by insinuating to participants that the concepts were indeed “difficult” ones. Of course, I may never know if my nervousness made any difference to the outcome of the participants’ responses, but I admit that my apologetic tone was a symptom of the difficulty I had in resolving my own position as a woman doing men’s studies, and as one who is caught in the awkward position of being the interview facilitator and the open listener.

Opening up gendered dialogues through the pairing of theory and empirical research made the use of Standpoint methodology especially effective for this study. As Coltrane notes, “[t]his type of analysis, by focusing on how gender and its related standpoints are socially constructed under specific microstructural conditions, can tell much about the creation and maintenance of gender difference and gender inequality” (1994, 54). Narrowing the examination of masculinity through a study of men who take on non-traditional roles provided examples of the various inequalities which persist between social, political and domestic spheres.

However, studying individual behaviour in this way can also be problematic because participants’ “recollections of behaviour are usually confounded with their views of
appropriate behaviour" (Shelton 16). This seems particularly the case when discussing contentious topics such as gender (and perhaps more so when the researcher and participants are of opposite genders). This was exemplified when participants felt that they did not fit into hegemonic frameworks even when their activities and/or beliefs suggested otherwise.

Another challenge with examining individuals is the temporary and subjective nature of personal opinion. Opinions can change even within the same interview and a participant’s self-identification might actually differ from their day-to-day reality. As well, domesticity and domestic work often include tasks such as planning, organizing, and worrying which are not only difficult for participants to remember, they are difficult to measure. Allowing the participants to aid in editing their own interviews may have helped with this.

Another limitation within this research was in identifying a specific “northern” masculinity. Because of the paucity of masculinity research in the north, a study on regional gender ideologies would need to start nearly from scratch; it would need to involve aspects of qualitative and quantitative research and would surely necessitate a comparison with other regions. Because of this specific examples of “northern” masculinities could not be referenced; however, my experiences and those of the participants provide some insight into the nature of what a northern masculinity might encompass. This discussion and analysis could serve as a starting point for a comparison between urban and rural ideologies of masculinity.

Upon reflection, I wish I had more time, resources and space to explore how participants identify their role regionally. More discussion around gender constructs specific to the region, perhaps even a comparison between “northern” and “southern” (or rural and urban) masculinities would have allowed me to make a more objective analysis of “northern”
identities, and participants’ views of regional hegemonic expectations and ideals. This aspect of research would add an element to understanding regional dynamics of hegemonic (and subordinate) masculinities and the social challenges to which they contribute. An undertaking of this magnitude would include immense qualitative and quantitative research and was not feasible within the time constraints and scope of this project.

Considering all of the ways in which traditional constructs of masculinity inform contemporary ideals, it is promising that some men have willingly opted to engage in non-traditional behaviours, even if their first choice was not to become a full-time stay-at-home dad. Kirby, Greaves and Reid define critical inquiry as being useful in helping people “see themselves and social situations in a new way in order to inform participation, collaboration, and further action for self-determined emancipation from oppressive social systems” (31). That the men of this study are exposing their children to non-traditional behaviours is a step toward a future of more open gender roles. My hope is that through participating in this study these eight men will continue to think about and discuss their roles, behaviours, and ideas about gender through which a more open dialogue may be formed around “subordinate” gender roles (for men and women). As non-traditional practices are discussed more openly by the men who perform them, these behaviours may shift from margin to centre, from atypical to normal. In this way I am hopeful of a link being developed between the interviews in this study and a wider social knowledge and understanding of gendered change.

For the eight stay-at-home dads in this case study their position within the geographical community as well as within hegemonic gender systems had seemingly not caused many of them much concern. Perhaps this is because these men still manage their
ideologies and behaviours within an acceptable hegemonic framework; perhaps it is due to a pre-formed ideology of gender prior to their roles at home. In any case, their gratitude for my providing them the opportunity to speak about their situations and individual experiences revealed to me the anonymity (and oftentimes seclusion) that accompanies their roles. As well, most participants admitted that the interview made them conceive of, remember, and/or imagine things that they had not before, such as how they want their own children to perceive and identify with gender roles. Within the interviews participants were required to consciously consider concepts that they had not before. As a result, they openly shared with me their methods, ideologies and behaviours, while reflecting on who they once were and who they want to be. In this way, the research facilitated the “reflection and analysis of their [own] reality” (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 32), and in a sense, required a level of reflection of my own ideologies and assumptions. The participants further enforced my belief in the necessity of men in domestic roles and the ways in which this can benefit our shifting cultural atmosphere as well as our current socio-economic situation. Having men at home would encourage a new understanding of care-work and would further liberate the gendered divide between public and private spheres.

My analysis of participants’ experiences has led me to broaden my own feminisms and to realize that feminism is not an ideology for everyone, regardless of its influences toward positive social change. These men have chosen how they identify with masculinity, femininity, and feminism in a way which combines their own experiences with cultural influences. Though this may include aspects of feminism, it may not be considered feminist in the ideologies of participants. To recognize this was, at first, disarming; however, the more I reflect upon it, I recognize how this ideal fits into my own third wave feminisms. I
am sure that the participants experienced similar epiphanies throughout the topics discussed and it is my hope that they carry with them some of the conversations we had, contemplating and furthering the discourse through their own conversations and behaviours with others.

Although this dialogue is not final, nor without limitations, the openness with which the participants shared their experiences and beliefs of their non-traditional, and perhaps non-hegemonic roles, contributes to the changes of which egalitarian movements have worked. Because hegemony is not perpetuated by men only, but by entire cultures within which it is constructed; it is important to remember that gender hegemony is not merely the crisis of men, but of society.

**Conclusions: Why This Research, Why Now, Why Us?**

Research such as this encourages men to think about and discuss topics from which they were previously excluded; in this case childcare, homemaking, and perhaps even the dangers of hegemony. As Harding states,

> it cannot be that women are the unique generators of feminist knowledge… Men’s thought, too, will begin first from women’s lives in all the ways that feminist theory, with its rich and contradictory tendencies, has helped us all- women as well as men- to understand how to do. It will start there in order to gain the maximally objective theoretical frameworks within which men can begin to describe and explain their own and women’s lives in less partial and distorted ways. (135)

Standpoint and phenomenological research is somewhat partial and distorted as it is formed through individual experience; however, engaging in experiential knowledge of gender creates new levels of understanding. In the current socio-economic climate of Northern BC
(and nationally), we are facing, and will continue to face challenges of changing gender roles, making research such as this even more timely.

As contemporary trends affect gendered change, traditional contexts are expanded or eliminated and a wider range of hegemonic standards are confirmed. This should not however, be understood to mean that behaviour and ideology change at a common pace, nor are they always reflective of one another. This is evident through the inconsistencies between men’s adopting non-traditional roles while still maintaining aspects of hegemonic masculine ideologies. The non-traditional roles of stay-at-home dads exemplify how men have begun to reform traditional hegemonic masculine roles by dis-identifying with paid work identity and aligning themselves with traditionally feminine spaces and responsibilities. On the other hand, the behaviours and ideologies of these men can be contradictory in how they conform to some forms of hegemonic masculinity. After comparing theoretical debates with my qualitative results, I affirm that stay-at-home dads struggle between accepting and rebelling against hegemonic masculinity; it is within this struggle that men “espouse alternative” ideals and behaviors. Men who behave within conventional ideas of hegemonic masculinity may have less means and opportunity to consider their roles and behaviours; therefore, perhaps it is the non-normative position of stay-at-home dads which allows them the flexibility and opportunity to re-form masculinity for themselves. Thus, like women who work in a male dominated industry, perhaps stay-at-home dads also create for themselves a separate space where they can form and maintain an identity which may not exist for them within the boundaries of the cultural norm.

The primary goal of this research is to illuminate the transitions and barriers of hegemonic masculinity and identify how, or how not, masculine identity changes in a time
and culture which both encourages gendered change and maintains traditional standards. This is important in opening dialogue on gender issues and in working toward gender equality. The case study of eight men who perform non-traditional roles within a community which fosters a more conventional ideology of masculinity complements the theoretical analysis and provides insights into how some men transgress barriers of hegemony. Through transforming generational practices, re-defining ideas of success, and re-identifying traditional gendered notions of masculinity, these men are able to create an ideological and physical space which allows them to enact their non-normative roles while cooperating with hegemonic ideals.

Because men who perform traditionally feminine roles are challenged by the standards of hegemony, the secondary goal of this research was to analyze the men who perform the role of primary caregiver and how these roles have or have not marginalized or subordinate them. Because of the inconclusive nature of gender and the independent dynamics of each participant, there can be no finite conclusion to this question. However, it has become abundantly clear through this study that the masculinities of these stay-at-home dads are subordinated as a result of hegemonic standards. Although the individual situations of participants influence how they view their role and their identities, it is clear that traditional hegemonies are being challenged by these men in some way- whether it is because, or in spite of their job as a stay-at-home dad.

Before beginning this research I had expected to discover a new form of masculinity. What I discovered was not a groundbreaking attitude toward changing gender constructs, but rather a slow-moving alteration of behaviour not necessarily accompanied by similar changes in ideology. While some men may form divergent definitions of masculinity, Wall and
Arnold posit that society is comforts by the fact that men are able to combine traditional masculinities and contemporary ideas of fatherhood so that, culturally, we do not have to "redefine what is means to be a man" (521). As a result, while stay-at-home dads are challenging hegemonic concepts of gender, it will take more than a minority of men with changing behaviours to shift individual and cultural concepts of masculinity. However, ideas of gender seem to adapt over time (if only superficially); therefore, the opening up of dialogues which reveal the dangers of hegemony is necessary. Discussion of the characteristics, behaviours and ideologies of hegemonic masculinity reveals the negative impact it has on men and women. Furthermore, by analyzing the impact of hegemony on subordinate masculinities (such as domesticity), we broaden the dialogue between convention and reality. If the goal is to create a more egalitarian culture, we must continue to demystify the margins through experiential knowledge, making the relationship between theoretical and empirical research crucial. The changes which I envision for the future are not revolutionary, nor do they dismantle our current notions of gender. What I hope will occur is a blurring of gendered boundaries, where public and private are not nominally masculine or feminine.
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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

What does fatherhood mean to you?

How has fatherhood changed/affected your life?

What do you think is important about being a father (and why)?

In your opinion, what makes a good/bad father?

Can you tell me of one or two specific moments that were awkward/complicated for you as a father? Happy/successful moments?

How are you the same/different than your father? (re: how do masc. roles re-generate)

How do other fathers influence you?
Are there any examples of fathers in the media or on TV that have affected you? How do these images of fathers influence/effect you?

What were the reasons behind your choice to be the home worker/primary caregiver?

How has your choice to be a primary caregiver/home worker changed/affected your public life? Your private life?

Can you give me an example of a typical response you get friends/strangers when they discover your job?

Have your views of masculinity changed since you have been a stay-at-home dad? (or since having children?)

How do you feel about the term “Mr. Mom”?

How do you feel with the implication that the domestic sphere is not a man’s place?

What is your typical answer when you’re asked what you do (for a living)?

What role does she take on as a parent? What is her career?

Tell me about the “equalizing” aspects of your relationship (i.e. how you deal with/divide up finances/spending, housework, time with the children etc).
What is masculinity to you? (If you could define it in 3 words/phrases)

How do you see masculinity in yourself/actions?

Do you feel that masculinity (as you defined it) is suffering or in trouble?

Do you think popular ideas (community ideas) of masculinity effected/influenced you? How?

What is feminism to you? (If you could define it in 3 words/phrases)

Has feminism effected/influenced your life? How or why not?