

ABSTRACT

The Role of Identity Negotiation in Father Involvement:
Southern, evangelical, and professional identities' influence on father involvement

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Despite efforts advocating heterosexual marital equality in the United States, barriers to father involvement (FI) persist. In effort to identify the causes of this disparity, FI research frequently examines how various group identities influence an individual's degree and type of FI. Yet, few studies have explored the interplay between these identities. In response, the following study used a qualitative iterative analysis approach to explore how men negotiate the tensions they experience between their regional, religious, and professional identities and their identities as fathers. Specifically, the study used writing prompts and interviews to examine tensions experienced by 10 fathers who identified as Texan-Southern, dual earner, and evangelical Christian. Additionally, thematic content analysis was conducted on the texts mentioned as central to participant's father identities. The findings of this study provide an applicable example of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) deployed in FI research and practical implications regarding how fathers make sense of FI.

The Role of Identity Negotiation in Father Involvement:
Southern, Evangelical, and Professional Identities' Influence on Father Involvement

by

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DEDICATION

“To my parents, whose love and support made this endeavor possible.”

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study was galvanized by the lack of research exploring fathers' experiences in negotiating the array of messages they receive throughout their lives, which influence their understanding of what father involvement (FI) should be. For the sake of this study, FI refers to the extent and quality of spousal support, housework, and child-care provided by fathers. FI is a worthy topic of research due to its influence over every aspect of family life, including marital success, child development, and mother and father life satisfaction (Agache et al., 2014b; Flouri et al., 2016; Gager & Yabiku, 2010; Henley & Pasley, 2005). Motivated by the consequence of mindful FI, the following study explores how fathers' efforts (or lack thereof) to negotiate their social and personal identities may help or hinder their involvement in family life.

In 1989, sociologist Arlie Hochschild published an ethnographic study on the division of labor between married heterosexual parents in the book, *The Second Shift*. The book's namesake refers to the measurable time in a 24-hour day employed parents spend on housework and childcare. In her original study, Hochschild discovered that the additional hours working women put into the "second shift" each year in comparison to their husbands amounted to an entire month's difference (A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012). This statistic along with the ongoing feminist revolution spurred conversation in scholarly fields such as communication, psychology, and sociology regarding the concerning disparity of father involvement (FI) in the United States. One approach to studying this issue has been to examine the communication practices that influence FI.

A recurring theme in quantitative and qualitative marital labor research is to examine how specific sociocultural and personal identities may predict or influence FI (e.g. Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Henley & Pasley, 2005; King, 2003; McKinney et al., 2018; Roubinov et al., 2016; William Bradford Wilcox, 2004). Beginning in the early 1990s scholars took a particular interest in the use of identity theory in fatherhood research (Pasley et al., 2014). As two notable theorists in this branch of research, Kari Henley and Kay Pasley, explain, “According to Identity theory, it is through social interactions that statuses (e.g., father, husband) and roles (e.g., provider, nurturer, disciplinarian) are given meaning, and behaviors reflecting these status and roles are either inhibited or reinforced” (2005, p. 60). While this theory developed by Sheldon Stryker (1987), has proven practical in affirming the link between father identity and FI, there have been calls for studies to refocus on motivations for fathering, influencing contextual factors, and change in identity over time (2014, p. 314).

With the exception of a few notable studies that compared centrality of father identity and worker identity, scarcely any studies have attended to the complexity of negotiation across multiple identities (McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014; Rane & McBride, 2000). In other words, studies have not yet explored how communication in more than one identity group may collectively act upon an individual’s fatherly identity and thus his fatherly behavior. Consequently, there is a gap in existing research explaining how fathers negotiate which identity messages influence their understanding of what good FI is. Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), which examines the identity negotiation communication strategies individuals engage in to validate their social and personal

identities, may provide a new theoretical framework for scholars to better understand the complexity of identity formation (Collie et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey, 2015a).

In response to the missing avenue of communication research on FI, this study employed Tracy's iterative analysis method to explore the ways men engage in identity negotiation to socially construct their identity as fathers and how this, in-turn, influences their FI. Iterative analysis is a methodological approach cultivated from grounded theory (a popular qualitative approach originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss) (2009). As Tracy describes, "An iterative analysis alternates between emic, or emergent, readings of the data, and an etic use of existing models, explanations, and theories (Tracy, 2019, Chapter 9). Guided by this approach, I reflected on the active interests of those studying FI as well as the core assumptions of INT to determine the socio-cultural identity groups that would be focused on, form the research questions, and guide my process of analysis. The resulting study entailed interviewing 10 men who all shared four common identities as fathers, evangelical Christians, Texan-Southerners, and members of dual earning households. I argue this study consequently attends to the complexity of father's experiences by examining the identity negotiation process to understand how individuals make sense of their own father involvement in a society engulfed in haphazard discourse regarding the role of gender in the family.

The three socially constructed identities of this study were chosen both for their relevance to fatherly identity in the region I engaged, as well as their similarities and conflicting narratives. Initially Southern and evangelical Christian identities were selected for their statistical overlap in the demographic makeup of the United States, commonly referred to as the Bible Belt, and their perceived similar values with traditional

gender roles (*Adults in the South - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics* / *Pew Research Center*, n.d.; Norman, 2017). However, as I delved into the interview process, the discovery of a more specific identity, Texan-Southern, was uncovered.

Through the reflexive process of engaging with emerging data and asking, “What is a story here?” I recognized that Texan-Southern participants reflected on the religious and gender-related beliefs expected from the Southern identity but also expressed a cultural narrative of Western exploration and resilience. This process of refining focus through emic and etic readings of the data is a key aspect the iterative analysis process (2019, p. 188). Consequently, in response to this new discovery of Texan-Southern identity in the data immersion phase, I returned to existing literature on regional identity. I found not only the existence of communication research identifying Texas as a unique identity but also an emerging area of research in the field of linguistics examining border fluidity’s impact on identity construction and specifically, Texas residents claiming both “Southern and non-Southern” identity (Cramer, 2013; Hall-Lew & Stephens, 2012; Lawrence, 2012; Oxley, 2015; Shrikant, 2019; Trudeau & Vaughn, 2018). Thus, Texan-Southern identity was ultimately determined worthy of its own academic attention and the criteria of the study was narrowed from Southern to specifically, Texan-Southern.

Despite this change in regional focus, evangelical Christian identity was still prevalent amongst participants and centrally relevant to their process of identity negotiation. Indeed, beyond the large general Christian population in Texas which just beats the nation-wide average at 77%, Texas more specifically has a large evangelical protestant population, at 31% (NW et al., 2014). The significance of religion to father

identity negotiation lies in the centrality of religious identity to many Texan's everyday social groups and personal behaviors. For instance, 63% of Texan residents report religion as very important in their lives, 42% attend church at least once a week, and 63% report praying at least once a day (2014). As prior research suggests and the study findings further support, fathers who deem their status as evangelical Christians more central to their composite identity are likely to incorporate relevant religious identity-based knowledge into the negotiation of their identity as fathers (Collie et al., 2010; King 2003; Rane & McBride, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 2015a; William Bradford Wilcox, 2004). Therefore, religious identity, and more specifically, evangelical Christian identity, is worthy of attention in studying fathers process of identity negotiation.

As this study attends to identity tensions that act on fathers, it was important to not only include complementary identities—in this case evangelical Christian and Texan-Southern identities— but also to explore identities where strain could be expected. Therefore, the dual earner identity was chosen for both its prominence in American households as well as its demand on spouses to divide household and childcare labor in ways that cut against many of the idealized gender norms stemming from the religious and regional identity groups selected for this study (*The Rise in Dual-Income Families / Pew Research Center*, 2019; Thorstad et al., 2006) By selecting these three social identities as parameters for the demographics of this study, participants could draw from experiences of identity transformation as they dealt with dialectical tensions between their professional, regional, and religious identities regarding fatherhood. Consequently, there was opportunity for rich data collection that captured the depth of a group of

individuals' experiences while also providing specificity to avoid overstretching the breadth of this study.

The design of the study engaged with an intercultural communication theory, INT, to form its guiding research questions. INT's purpose is to understand the role of identity negotiation in the context of intercultural communication competence so that individuals can become more mindful of the communication process and, in turn, practice greater identity attunement. (Ting-Toomey, 2015a). The concept of mindful identity attunement (MIA) particularly aligned with my own research interests in studying the relationship between identity and FI. Thus, while the review of literature in chapter two provides some support for the use of INT to study fathers' experience in identity negotiation, this study sought to apply, solidify, and build upon the tenets of the theory within the context of fatherhood. Specifically, three guiding research questions were posed to flesh out fathers' experiences with, what INT refers to as, dialectical tensions and to identify the ways they engage in the competent identity-negotiation process to make sense of their own FI

To address the research questions posed, the study collected data from three sources. The first was an open-ended writing prompt that asked participants about the memorable messages they had received about fatherhood. The second was an in-depth interview with the same participants regarding their experiences in identity negotiation of their father identity. Finally, I collected content from texts referenced by participants as influential on the father identity. This included the Non-profit organization Faithful Fathering's website, the Bible, and the Christian self-help book "The Man in the Mirror" (*Home - Faithful Fathering*, n.d.; Morley, 2014; Zondervan Publishing House (Grand

Rapids, 2011). In line with iterative analysis, investigating the data entailed interview transcription, line-by-line coding, data immersion, primary and secondary coding, and synthesizing these codes into four overarching themes.

The first overarching findings of this study was the use of three identity negotiation tactics: tension avoiding, identity prioritizing, and MIA. The second finding illuminated the tensions between participant identities as members of dual earner households and fathers as well as the tactics used in and across the identity pairing to negotiate these tensions. The third and fourth findings entailed similar explanations but for Texan-Southern and father identity pairings and evangelical Christian and father identity pairings. These findings provided implications for communications scholars and those seeking to foster meaningful FI.

The following chapter reviews the existing literature and research pertaining to INT, as well as studies that have examined the individual relationship between FI and (a) professional identity, (b) regional identity, or (c) religious identity. Chapter three explains the methodological approach of the study and chapter four offers the resulting data. The final chapter attends to the significance and applicability of the findings as well as the study's limitations and opportunities for future research. The purpose of this study was to expand the use INT to provide communication scholars with an applicable example of how they might study the ways father negotiate messages from various identity groups which influence their FI in hopes of ultimately spurring mindfulness amongst those engaging in the significant task of fatherhood.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

The following literature review sets the stage for the study by first overviewing the study's guiding theoretical frame, then reviewing the existing literature on father involvement, and, lastly, posing the guiding research questions of the study. Specifically, I first elaborate on Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) and its relevance to the study of father involvement. I additionally address INT's similarities to other popular theories within communication research including relational dialectics theory, standpoint theory, and intersectionality. One activity of the study included asking fathers to write about and discuss the memorable messages they have received that influenced their identity as fathers. As such, the next portion of the literature review overviews memorable message research and its applicability to the study of FI. Finally, to prime the reader for the questions posed in the study, I review the existing research on father involvement as it pertains to the specific professional, regional, and religious identity groups examined.

Identity Negotiation Theory

There have been multiple iterations of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) since its original introduction in 1986 by Stella Ting-Toomey, but the key guiding concepts of this study come largely from the theory's comprehensive entry into the *Sage Encyclopedia of Intercultural Competence* (2015a). INT postulates, "an individual's identity is developed through "socio-cultural conditioning process, individual lived experiences, and the repeated intergroup and interpersonal interaction experiences" (2015b). In other words,

INT suggests one's composite identity is shaped by the messages (both verbal and nonverbal) exchanged throughout one's lifetime between their various personal and social identity groups.

According to Ting-Toomey, the importance of the identity negotiation process lies in its everyday influence on individual's behavior. Thus, the purpose of INT research, in short, is to supply individuals with the tools they need to reach *mindful identity attunement* (MIA) in their conventional lives. MIA is a heightened awareness and responsiveness to both social- and self-identity issues, which consists of engaging in introspective attunement to be "transparent with self's intentions, motivations, sociocultural identity, and personal identity security-vulnerability issues"(2015a, p. 8). This concept of mindfulness, along with INT's theoretical foundation in social constructionism, provides scholars with a theory that complicates the way human behavior is studied and embraces the concept of human agency.

The reason why INT was deemed more useful in the study of the interplay of identity's impact on FI rather than similar communication theories, such as relational dialectics theory, lies in its inclusion of other voices beyond those confined to dyads (L. A. Baxter, 2004, p. 189). Within each of the three identities discussed are a presumable sea of voices that send verbal and nonverbal messages that maintain, threaten, or uplift a father's identity (Ting-Toomey, 2015b, p. 1). This would presumably create a great deal of conflict and uncertainty for fathers, within which they may seek attunement with and is, thus, worthy of study. Finally, it is appropriate to acknowledge both standpoint theory and intersectionality include similar core concepts of social constructionism (Crenshaw, 1989; E. Griffin, 2009). Ultimately, though both theories are significant and applaudable

in their own right, INT was deemed the best fit for this study for its emphasis on mindfulness.

It is important to address that INT is still in its formative years and has historically been used to research acculturation and bicultural individual's experiences in immigrating to a new country, rather than the smaller scale and more fluid identity groups chosen for this study (e.g. Collie et al., 2010; Toomey et al., 2013). Between the lack of quantity and diversity of research employing INT and specifically mindful identity negotiation, there is call amongst scholars for the theoretical framework to be more tightly conceptualized and for models to be developed (2010; 2013). Nonetheless, it is arguably INT's status as a fledgling theory that opens it up to exploratory research such as the following study. Furthermore, scholars have critiqued the historical use of identity theory to study FI as failing to understand the "what, why, and how of fatherhood" (Pasley et al., 2014). Pasley et al states "we believe that few studies have examined what seems to matter most for children; the quality of father involvement" (2014, p. 315). With all of this in mind, I sought to employ INT as a broad theoretical framework to consider the communication practices of identity negotiation that fathers engage in, which ultimately influences the kind of FI within which they participate. As this is an untried form of FI research to date, I designed the method of the study based on existing popular qualitative research approaches including investigating the central memorable messages participants recalled regarding father identity.

Memorable Messages

One approach communication scholars utilize to explore how identity and behavioral decisions form is to examine the memorable messages individuals receive regarding the select topic of interest. This is a particularly popular approach amongst family and interpersonal communication scholars (e.g. Heisler & Ellis, 2008; Kellas, 2010; Medved et al., 2006; Morman & Floyd, 2006; Odenweller et al., 2018). Memorable messages are the “verbal messages which may be remembered for extremely long periods of time and which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives” (Knapp et al., 1981, p. 27). The concept of analyzing memorable messages to understand how men define FI is not novel to this study.

Communication scholars Kory Floyd and Mark Morman (2006) notably conducted two large-scale studies with adult men regarding the memorable messages fathers receive about being a “good father.” Indeed, the inclusion of an open-ended writing prompt for men to discuss the memorable messages they have received that have influenced their identity as fathers in my study was akin to Morman and Floyd’s (2006) methodological approach. Similar to Pasley and colleagues’ (2014) call to focus on father’s motivation, contextual factors, and change in identity over time, Morman and Floyd concluded their study by calling for future research to address the factors that predict good fatherhood and whether and/or how fathering changes over time. By using memorable messages as a jumping off point in interviewing participants and by including men in all ages and stages of fatherhood, the following study attempted to use the core concepts of INT to heed these calls for research by exploring father’s process of identity

negotiation across their experience as fathers. The following sections overview the existing literature on the three identity pairings proposed for research.

Father Involvement and Professional Identity

In discussing father's participation in the second shift of childcare and household labor, it is logical to examine the balance of these duties with the first shift (A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In other words, professional identity is likely to have a great deal of influence on father involvement and consequently engenders researchers' attention. This is of particular interest when both spouses in the family hold wage earning jobs and thus must both engage in substantive negotiation of the first and second shift. An important step studies have taken to understand this process of negotiation is to dismantle gendered narratives of parent involvement and replace them with a comprehensive understanding of the existing barriers that create tensions between professional identity and father involvement (Blithe, 2015; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Milkie et al., 2009).

An unfortunate result of sitcom's attempts to subvert the standard 50s father trope of the sensible and sage father is the popularization of tropes like the bumbling father and distant dad, which may have attributed to misconceived narratives about men's capacity to be involved fathers. (*Bumbling Dad*, n.d.; *When You Coming Home, Dad?*, n.d.). Rather than disinterest or incompetence, research suggests disparity of FI is more likely the result of long-standing systemic and systematic parameters set on fatherhood in the United States. Systemically, deeply ingrained policies and procedures in the workplace regarding family life typically favor women and discourage men from leaving work to care for their children. Communication scholar, Sarah Blithe labels this phenomenon, the

glass handcuffs (2015). Systematically, fatherhood has long been defined as protector and provider (Nystrom & Ohrling, 2004). Yet, as the has world evolved and more families have become dual earner households, societal definitions appear to have merely reframed themselves rather than make instrumental changes.

In a 2009 study, scholars discovered a trending ideological reconceptualization of fatherhood and masculinity in which modern men's primary role was to engage in problem solving within their webs of work and family responsibilities (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009). While the study's pool of only 18 fathers is limiting in diversity of perspective, it provides three valuable insights into the modern professional identity of fathers. First, it suggests the disparity of father involvement does not stem from an unwillingness of fathers to be a part of their children's lives. Second, while this may be true, pressure still exists to negotiate or "problem solve" professional and familial identities. Lastly, the authors discover this renegotiation of "family first" ideology results in limited increased FI primarily through 'fun' activities such as family outings or children's sporting events rather than more taxing, mundane household labor (2009, p. 565). Thus, as Duckworth and Buzzanell indicate, and a more recent study on father involvement supports, father's perception of involvement may not accurately represent reality or the perceptions of other members of the family (2009; Dyer et al., 2014).

Fathers' disconnect between perception and reality is additionally supported in a more recent version of Hochschild's study. Scholars found wage-earning mothers still put in an additional two weeks a year into the second shift (Milkie et al., 2009). This statistic invokes a half glass full and/or half glass empty response. On the one hand, since the publication of Hochschild's original study, U.S. culture has managed to shred two weeks

off the labor divide. On the other, there is a twenty-five-year span between the original study and the 2009 study. In that period, the United States has witnessed cultural shifts from the passing of the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to an increase of women into the career workforce (Nandi et al., 2018; Toossi, 2002). Even amidst the Covid-19 pandemic that led countless Americans to do work and school from home, evidence suggests that family dynamics have seen little change during this period. Indeed, when asked who did more at home, 59% of women said they engaged in more household labor and 74% said they do more to “manage their children’s schedules and activities” (NW et al., n.d.). This begs the question, if there is more willingness amongst fathers to participate in the second shift and a nationwide call for greater gender equality, why has the divide of labor only slightly improved in the span of twenty-five years?

Several possible explanations for the disconnect between FI willingness and enactment exist. One possibility lies in the desire of couples to keep the peace by defaulting to traditional gender roles in their negotiations of household labor. Indeed, scholars have found couples engage in relational maintenance behavior by using humor or claiming gender-related inability to perform (Denker, 2013; Gottman & Silver, 2000; A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Such humor downplays, controls, or avoids conversations about work-life balance conflict. Examples found in Hochschild’s study include employing “gender inability” to procure help from one’s spouse with tasks like opening jars or doing taxes. It is the kind of “I need a big smart/strong man” approach that maintains socially constructed narratives of femininity and masculinity. While these tactics might stave off relational tension in the moment, they do little to resolve residual conflict by engaging in actual renegotiation of balance in the second shift.

A second possible reason for disparity of father involvement in dual earner households is the consequences men face at work when they do engage in FI. Some of these consequences are institutionalized. Historically, work-family policies have ‘othered’ fathers in their role of childcare and household labor (Locke & Yarwood, 2017). In other words, workplace policies often prove unaccommodating for the egalitarian father. Furthermore, a separate study indicates fathers who deviate from traditional gender roles in FI experience greater negative career consequences and lower organizational commitment than those who do not (Zhang & Kmec, 2018). In short, workplace policies supporting FI are few and far between and organizational discourse often gatekeeps taking advantage of the opportunities that do exist.

Based on the preceding findings, I would propose the stronger ties a father has to his professional identity the more difficult he will find it to participate in second shift responsibilities. Regardless of his willingness to be involved, dialectical tensions in the workplace will keep a father shackled to his work, as noted in the theory of the glass handcuffs (Blithe, 2015). These tensions are especially problematic when one takes into consideration both American men and women continue to increasingly place career success as central to their lives. Moreover, by the year 2011, it was found the 66% of women ages 18-34 rated career as “one of the most important things” or “very important” to their lives compared to only 59% of men in the same age range (Patten & Parker, 2012). This all suggests socially constructed modern male professional identities have not caught up with the needs or desires of modern family identities. In short, the evidence presented thus far, supports my assertion that the discourse fathers engage within their work and with their spouses regarding their professional identity influences their

identities as fathers in dual earner households. While researchers have made progress in understanding the types of influence professional identity has on FI, the next step is to better comprehend how fathers rectify the tensions between these two identity groups. Thus, one of the objectives of my study was to inquire about dual earning fathers' experiences with negotiating tensions in their lives pertaining to the first and second shift.

Father Involvement and Regional Identity

Regional identity is a popular topic of interest when examining father involvement (See Ho & Lam, 2018; Maselko et al., 2019; Roubinov et al., 2016). Whereas professional identity studies have often examined the correlation between degree of FI and work-related communication, regional identity studies tend to focus on predicting the type of FI. This section specifically looks at existing research examining the correlation of Southern United States-origin fathers and authoritarian parenting styles. I then address the ambiguity of Southernness and why the study was ultimately adapted to aim its attention to Texan-Southerners specifically.

Perhaps the most prolific article to date on parenting styles in the South is a 2018 study that collected data from a moderately diverse pool of 4,900 young adults attending Southern United States universities. Results provided evidence of the variance of region x parent gender interaction and a stronger preference amongst Southern mothers and fathers for authoritarian style parenting (McKinney et al., 2018, p. 3746). To understand why this correlation raises concerns, one must be familiarized with authoritarian parenting.

A recent and expansive 2017 meta-analysis on parenting style—that collected research from 1,435 studies—found authoritarian parenting (amongst other styles such as

permissive and neglectful) was associated with higher probability of externalizing problems over time (Pinquart, 2017). As scholars, Thomas Achenbach and Craig Edelbrock first described and Pinquart reiterates, externalizing problem behaviors are defined as, “undercontrolled behaviors that manifest as aggression, disruptiveness, defiance, hyperactivity, and impulsivity” (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1978; 2017, p. 873). This externalization may present itself in a number of concerning behaviors including, but certainly not limited to, delinquency, stunted competence, increased health risks, and substance abuse (Baumrind, 1991; Ishoy, 2017; Jackson et al., 1998). Based on these findings, pursuing MIA of Southern fathers takes on a particular weight. However, the use of only one study to support this argument must be addressed.

A limitation of the existing literature on Southern regional parenting is its near non-existence. As such, the McKinney study should be viewed as support for future research rather than indisputable evidence (2018). Nonetheless, the study did produce data indicating sub-cultures, including race and parental education to be insignificant covariates (2018, p. 3745). This finding suggests there is validity in studying regional identity as an indicator of FI as the ideology and behavior associated with the group identity appears to be deeply ingrained and to stretch across the subgroups within it.

Furthermore, the South specifically presents a unique body to study for its historical violence and fierce loyalty to its history and culture. Larry Griffin, puts this into perspective in his essay, *The American South and the Self* (2006);

Each region of the United States has a particular identity hewn from history and culture. Yet none is as distinctive as the American South, and none has... afforded such metaphorical significance in its collective memory and mythological self-understandings” (p.7)

Evidenced above, Southern identity's influence on father involvement may prove widespread and highly potent. If the results in the McKinney article are accurate, exploring what values found within Southern identities lead to the socially constructed preference for authoritarian parenting styles should be considered by scholars studying FI. However, within the conversation of regional identity is the ambiguity of qualifying what is geographically and ideologically the South (Cramer, 2013; *The South / Definition, States, & History*, n.d.). As noted in the introduction chapter, Texan identity presented itself as unique influencer of father identity which can neither be qualified as Southern nor non-Southern and consequently demanded its own analytical attention.

As of Spring 2021 when this study was conducted, there were no existing studies (to my knowledge) regarding the relationship between fathering, or even parenting, and Texan identity. Nonetheless, there is widespread literature on the unique nature of Texan identity (Lawrence, 2012; Oxley, 2015; Shrikant, 2019; Wagoner & Hogg, 2016).

In particular relevance to this study, one PhD student in the field of linguistics dedicated her entire dissertation to the perceptual notions of "southernness" amongst Texans (Oxley, 2015). Oxley explains Texas's complicated relationship with the South and its shared regional identification as both Southern and Western (the Southwest) has "ramifications for Southern Identity" in the state (2015, p. 1) Indeed, Texans have historically struggled to label themselves. An early study found when Texans were asked to select their regional affiliation, answers included 71% South, 13% West, 13% Midwest, and 4% East (Shortridge, 1987). Based on what is known of the South's influence on authoritarian parenting style and Texas's sheer size as the second most populous state in the United State, academic interest should be paid to parenting style in

the state (*Population Clock*, n.d.). Thus, in the following study, participants were encouraged to consider both the Southern and non-Southern aspects of their Texan identity. While the preceding research may justify the study of Texan-Southern identity as an influencer of FI, it would be both morally and academically erroneous to not acknowledge the historical white washing of Texan identity.

In terms of race, Texas is a largely white state (78.7%) with the second largest demographic being “Hispanic and Latino” (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2019). Yet, despite its large white population, Texan culture is widely influenced by different races, nationalities, and cultural groups due to its location as an “access state” into the United States for immigrants (Bankston, 2007; Oxley, 2015). Immigrants make up one-sixth of the state’s total population and contribute greatly to the state’s cultural identity and economy (*Immigrants in Texas*, 2015). Moreover, historical Tejano identity in the region painted the backdrop for this contemporary view. Mexican and Mexican-American identity formations, pre-dating Texas annexation into the U.S., continue to influence regional identity today (Buitron, 2004). Despite this, regional identity in Texas is often oriented in ways that discount diversity in the state (Shrikant, 2019). To avoid falling prey to similar heterogenic claims in my own research on FI, a critical disclaimer must be made. The following study makes no claims of representing all Texan fathers’ identities and is limited to the participants who contributed to this study.

The sample pool of this study included ten interviews with Texas-Southern, evangelical fathers from dual earner households. Every participant was white, evangelical, cis-gendered, and heterosexual. With this clarified, the intent of this study is focused on explaining how this particular group of men engage in MIA as it relates to FI.

As a qualitative study, the goal cannot be to reflect all FI across demographic groups, as I am bound to extrapolate on the data collected. As participants for the study were found through large college town churches and my own church network as a white evangelical Christian, the sample of the study consists of an entirely white demographic pool. Though I made efforts to solicit other participants, the final results must ultimately be focused on a more specific identity of cis-gendered, heterosexual, white, Texan-Southern evangelical, dual earner fathers.

Studies indicate that 41% of white Texans identify as evangelical Christians (NW et al., 2014). Thus, while the findings may offer significance to evangelical Christian, Texan-Southern, and dual earner fathers, the study itself is not intended to make sweeping generalizations about fathers in Texas. Rather, it is an exploratory study that sought to better understand the process of identity negotiation in fatherhood. In short, while this study interviews Texans and grapples with Texan-Southern identity, it is ultimately about the communication practice of identity negotiation in a particular set of identities related to fatherhood, not Texan culture at large.

In this section, I have presented evidence suggesting degree of regional identification has an impact on type of parenting style amongst Southern fathers. I have also presented academic conversations that address the issue of Texan identity's relationship to the South. While the existing literature supports the assertion that regional identity plays a role in FI, it provides little explanation as to how. Consequently, there is academic merit in studying the memorable messages Texan-Southern men receive that influence their parenting styles and how they negotiate their identity over time. Furthermore, it is important to understand whether these messages merely have surface

level sway or reflect deep seeded values and beliefs that are key parts of Texan-Southern fathers' identities.

As Southern itself is a fluid term with disputable geographic boundaries, states that are considered more-or-less-Southern may differ in regional influence. In line with this theory, the following study evolved and narrowed its focus from Southern identity to a specific state within the region, as unique differences were identified. Specifically, it did so by exploring the influence of Southern regional identity on FI within a region of the United States which teeters the line of Southern identification, Texas. By narrowing the scope of regional identity to a single state known for a big personality, the intention was to better understand if and how communication pertaining to regional identity influences FI and, if so, how fathers negotiate these messages.

Father Involvement and Religious Identity

Religion throws an interesting curveball into the conversation of relationship between identity and FI. Unlike other discussed identifications, research studying religious affiliation as a predictor of both degree and type of FI has revealed consistent and positive findings in the past 25 years. In a 1998 study by Bradford Wilcox, the director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, it was found that parents identifying as conservative protestants are more likely to engage in positive parental emotion work, including physical affection and praise (W. Bradford Wilcox, 1998). However, it is important to note, Wilcox discovered personal identification with core religious ideology of the protestant church to be the most important indicator rather than mere church attendance (W. Bradford Wilcox, 1998, p. 806). In other words, his study suggests those who identify their faith as a personal relationship with God defined

by spirituality and alignment with biblical ideology, rather than merely the ritualistic act of attending church services, are those most influenced in their parenting styles. This aligns with a more recent 2019 study by sociologists, Jeremy Uecker and Paul Froese, whose research supports the argument, “religious individualism, even among religious individuals and within religiously conservative traditions, makes people more accepting of contemporary cultural trends in morality” (2019, p. 283).

Four years later and then, again, six years later, Wilcox examined conservative protestant fathers specifically and found similar results of increased quantity and quality of egalitarian FI (W. Bradford Wilcox, 2002; William Bradford Wilcox, 2004). Similar findings appear in other scholars’ work including reports of higher quality relationships (King, 2003) and, interestingly, a positive correlation between father’s religious participation and enhanced family outcomes of paternity leave (Petts, 2018). The cause of religious identification’s effect on FI has been exhaustively contemplated but scholar, Valerie King, is one of the few to provide empirical data in support of her theory.

King’s article, “The Influence of Religion on Father’s Relationships with Their Children” provides two invaluable insights regarding religious identity and FI. First, she explores why there is a positive correlation between FI and degree of identification within religious ideology. King hypothesizes that religious fathers are engulfed into a culture and community that values family relationships and a commitment to serving others and, as a result, are more likely to be involved with their children (2003, p. 384). The findings of her study support this theory, yet they also unveil a seemingly paradoxical presence of both traditional and egalitarian values. That is, religious fathers are more likely to agree men should participate in second shift duties including

housework and childcare but they are also more likely to espouse the negative impact of mothers in the workforce on children (2003, p. 390). This finding reveals the flaw of the traditionalism scale used in Wilcox's article, which combined views of mothers in the workforce and sharing of household tasks into one measurable item (W. Bradford Wilcox, 2002). Similar suggestions of strained social support on wives with careers materialize in an article on mother's in Christian academia (Thorstad et al., 2006). Nonetheless, King and Thorstad's studies, along with Ueker and Froese's article on religious individualism all indicate, the long-standing association of Christianity with conservatism is diminished amongst group members who live by a more relationship-oriented interpretation of their faiths.

The evidence I have presented in this section supports my assertion that religious identity does influence father involvement. However, it also brings to light the need for two further clarifications. First, the term "religious" is vague and sweeping. While this is the term used in most of the studies I have noted above, it fails to acknowledge the nuance that exists between various religions and even within Christian denominations. Furthermore, as most of the studies discussed examined conservative protestant fathers specifically, the idiom, "religious," makes unfit assumptions that Christianity is representative of *all* religions.

In response to the need for greater precision of language in the conversation of religious identity's influence on FI, the following study narrows and sharpens its scope to those who identify with the term evangelical Christian. This particular trans-denominational movement within Christianity was chosen for its wide presence in the South as well its more welcome embrace of spiritual individualism and its association

with Colonial America (*Adults in the South - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics* / *Pew Research Center*, n.d.; Kidd, 2007). As the definition of evangelical Christian is itself hotly contested, the study chose to further qualify this term by asking participants if they aligned with three core beliefs commonly associated with evangelicalism as a movement. These beliefs, which each participant aligned with, included recognition of receiving salvation through the “born-again” experience, the authority of the Bible as God’s word, and the calling of followers to spread the message of Christianity (*Glossary* / *Operation World*, n.d.).

The second needed clarification lies in the fluid and intertwined nature of religious identity groups with other social and personal identities. As the chapter has established thus far, fathers are influenced by their subjectification to various identity groups. However, barring King’s study, very little research on the relationship between religious identity and FI has sought to delve into how and why influence occurs. In fact, this is true of all the identities discussed thus far. Within this question of how, is also the question of which identity groups are perceived as more central to men as they form and define their roles as fathers. Here-in lies the value of applying Identity Negotiation Theory to the study of FI. By exploring how men negotiate and form their identities as fathers, researchers may be able to better understand what hinders or helps FI. Thus, as the following section will describe, this study attempted to explore the process of identity negotiation amongst a group of men as they made sense of their roles as fathers.

Discussion of Literature Review and Research Questions

In this chapter, I have sought to provide a representative body of literature on father involvement as it pertains to Texan-Southern Evangelical fathers in dual earner

households. The interest in studying the perpetuating disparity of father involvement is two-fold. First, studies have shown that increased father involvement results in elevated trajectories of life and marital satisfaction for both spouses in marriage (Agache et al., 2014a; Gager & Yabiku, 2010). Second, different *types* of paternal involvement (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, etc.) can have significant and lasting effects on child development. However, it must be clarified that studies have found *degree* of FI to be an insignificant predictor of child problem behavior (Flouri et al., 2016). I make this distinction to negate any claims that non-heterogenous parentings such as single mothers or queer couplings are problematic in the rearing of happy and healthy children. Indeed, I would propose involved fatherhood should be examined for the specific purpose of bringing to light the problematic nature of absentminded deference to traditional gender roles in marriage. Thus, the first research question posed is as follows,

R1. What tensions do Texan-Southern Evangelical fathers from dual earner households negotiate between

- a. Father x Dual earner identity pairings*
- b. Father x Texan-Southern identity pairings*
- c. Father x Evangelical Christian identity pairings*

Based on the existing research discussed in this chapter, each identity, (a) professional, (b) regional, and (c) religious, influences FI. According to INT, this happens through the “exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages between the two or more communicators,” which maintain, threaten, or uplift an individual’s social- and self-identity (Ting-Toomey, 2015a). While there can be expected overarching themes of messages regarding FI across all three identity pairings, interest lies where messages conflict and create tensions.

Therefore, the second research question is formed to delve into these messages of contradiction.

R2. Based on the findings from R1, what tensions are negotiated across the three identity pairings?

The second research question of the study was formed to attend to the intertwined nature of identity negotiation. The phrasing of the question as tensions being negotiated across identity pairings refers to when tensions cannot be delineated between two sources of identity but rather are negotiated using messages from multiple identity groups.

Examples of tensions that are negotiated across identity might include referring back to Christian precepts, which espouse that a father should be warm and affectionate towards his children, as well as regional messages of authoritarian parenting. In short, the commonality of these three coinciding identities in America along with the conflictual ways they interact provides a unique opportunity to address how the interplay of identities influence FI. Thus, the third research question seeks to understand the tactics men engage in to make sense of their role as fathers through identity negotiation.

R3. In what ways do fathers engage in the competent identity negotiation process to make sense of their own FI?

This third and final question is the most action-oriented of those posed in the study. Whereas the other queries seek to identify a mere portion of the complexity of human identity and better understand it, the third research question is formed around Ting-Toomey's concept of MIA. In other words, the question would seek to identify aspects of the participant's sense-making process and then interpret the effectiveness of the tactics employed. Ting-Toomey suggests effective identity negotiation competence outcomes

include feelings of being understood, being respected, and being affirmatively valued (2015a). However, these outcomes merely reflect positive results for fathers and not necessarily their children or spouse.

To understand success of negotiation tactics on FI requires looking at existing research that has qualified good FI. Thanks to the expansive collection of quantitative research, which has identified the effect of FI on marital and child-rearing success, this study could expand the definition of “effective” to include the actual FI choices fathers make through the competent identity negotiation process (e.g., Agache et al., 2014a; Jackson et al., 1998; Maselko et al., 2019; Xu & Burleson, 2004). In short, there is opportunity not only to understand how fathers make sense of their own FI for the sake of their well-being but also for the well-being of their family members. In the following chapter, I introduce the methods used to explore the guiding research questions of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Sampling and Participants

To the explore the research questions posed in this study, participants needed to meet the restrictive criteria of Texan-Southern, Evangelical, Dual earner, and Father. Consequently, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to reach participants. The sampling and study procedures were reviewed and approved by the Baylor University Institutional Review Board prior to the start of the study. Sampling tactics primarily included reaching out to churches in Texas through their website contact pages and by emailing church leaders (i.e. ministers and dad's group leaders) to reach prospective participants within their congregations. Church website pages like *About Us* and *Our Beliefs* were screened to confirm the church group's alignment with the three value-oriented criteria formed to qualify the term Evangelical in this study. As originally noted in chapter two, this included belief in the "born-again" experience of receiving salvation, the Bible as God's word, and the evangelical call to spread Christ's message (*Glossary / Operation World*, n.d.). Alternative sampling included word of mouth tactics, such as promoting the study on my social media account and reaching out to participants recommended by colleagues and friends.

During the spring of 2021, when this study was conducted, two barricades to reaching prospective participants demanded circumvention. First, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, church websites were unreliable for reaching current ministers due to unacknowledged changes in leadership as well as many church groups being

temporarily disbanded as a precautionary safety measure in response to state and nationwide mandated and/or advised social distancing procedures regarding prevention of the spread of Covid-19 (CDC, 2020). The second barrier to participant recruitment was the unforeseen yet calamitous winter storms that left countless Texans without power or water for an extended time during February of 2021 (Bogel-Burroughs et al., 2021). In relevance to the study, four prospective participants as well as the primary investigator were without power and/or internet for multiple days during the storm and consequently had to delay or cancel their participation in the study's virtual interview. Despite these setbacks, 10 total participants partook in the study and qualitative saturation was reached for several compelling findings.

All participants were current Texas residents, in heterosexual, cisgendered marriages, and white. Additionally, all participants had received at least some college education: some college but no degree (1), bachelor's degree (4), graduate degree (5). The majority of participants (80%) were currently employed full-time, with only one participant working part-time and one who was retired. Participants ranged in ages from in their twenties to 60 years or older and were relatively evenly represented in this study: 21-39 (10%), 30-39 (30%), 40-49 (20%), 50-59 (10%), and 60+ (30%). Lastly, participants skewed high on combined household income with the lowest falling in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 range and the highest total household earning reaching upwards of \$200,000.

Upon expressing interest in the study, each participant received the consent form, which detailed the purpose, activities, potential risks and benefits, as well as the confidentiality procedures of the study (See Appendix B). They were directed to respond

via email to express their verbal consent to participating in the study. As an added precaution, the consent and confidentiality of participants was re-addressed in written form in the writing portion of the study and verbally at the start of the interview.

Confidentiality measures are detailed in the paragraph below.

At the end of the interview portion of the study, participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality as the data was collected, transcribed, and categorized. I kept a master excel sheet on my private hard drive with participants' names, contact information, and assigned pseudonym. All other software and materials used for data analysis labeled participants by their assigned pseudonym only. This included the participant's response to the demographic survey through the cloud-based software Survey Monkey, the files uploaded to the interview transcription service, Sonix, hardcopy field notes taken during interviews, the memos and data analysis process (which was drafted on the password-protect note-taking software Notion), and the Box file used to share drafts and other related texts with members of the thesis committee., all research artifacts will be held securely at a minimum of three years, in-line with IRB guidelines. This entailed scanning the hardcopies of field notes, downloading all notes taken during data analysis on Notion, and lastly moving all existing files onto a flash drive, to be stored securely.

Procedures

The study employed a qualitative method of engaging with emerging data known as iterative analysis to explore men's experiences engaging in identity negotiation of their father identity and the ways this influences their FI (Tracy, 2019). Data collected for analysis came from three sources, which included an open-ended writing prompt,

interview, and thematic content analysis. Once participants signed-up for an interview date and time on my Calendly (a time management software tool to schedule events), they were sent the Zoom (a cloud-based video interface) invitation link along with an attached word document with the writing prompt. Participants were instructed to review and respond to the prompt prior to the start of the interview. The questions posed were as follows:

In our lifetimes, there tend to be a few significant verbal messages we receive which stick with us long after they were said. These memorable messages influence our behavior and help us define and defend who we are (Knapp et al., 1981). Take the next ten minutes to tell me about a few of the memorable messages you have received in your lifetime which most influenced your identity as a father. Who were they from? Why do believe they stayed with you and so deeply affected the person you are today?

The writing prompt and questions regarding memorable messages were inspired by Floyd and Morman's (2006) study on father and son perceptions of good fathering, which used a grounded theory approach to analyze participants responses. Memorable messages were brought into the study as a way to explore the first core assumption of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), "The core dynamics of people's group membership identities and personal identities are formed via symbolic communication with others" (2015a, p. 4). The justification for utilizing a free-writing session prior to the interview portion of the study was that it would allow participants to self-report experiences that may not have been revealed in a structured interview. This proved to be a beneficial tool for corroborating the data. For instance, in one interview a participant referenced a memorable message from his father about the necessity of a clear, "vision of the good life" as imperative to successful FI but never elaborated on the source of this vision. However, in his writing prompt, the participant clearly explains, "I think all of the things

he [his father] did flowed from a very strong vision of what a God-glorifying life looks like.” Furthermore, using a writing prompt mentally readied participants for the deep reflection they were asked to engage in during the interview regarding the symbolic communication they had engaged in throughout their lives that influenced their identity as fathers.

The interview guide was constructed based on the ten core assumptions of Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) (See Appendix C). After overviewing the informed consent, the purpose, and the key terms of the study, participants were asked to share and elaborate on the memorable messages they wrote about in the writing prompt. They were then asked how parental control and warmth fit into their approach as a father. This was based on the scale of perceived parenting style that is used to categorize four styles of parenting, which are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and negligent (see Figure 3.1) (Baumrind, 1991; Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). Each parenting style falls along a scale of low-to-high parental warmth/responsiveness and low-to-high parental control/demands (2014, p. 316). Rather than having participants attempt to categorize themselves, they were asked to share about their own approach and reasoning behind parental control and parental warmth. These questions were formed to attend to the connection between the type and quality of FI and fathers’ experiences in identity negotiation.

	<i>High Control</i>	<i>Low Control</i>
<i>High Responsiveness/Warmth</i>	Authoritative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm and consistent control • Monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct • Give priority to child's needs and abilities • Implying a ge-appropriate maturity demands • Encourage children to be independent • Attentive • Forgiving • Encouraging autonomy • Offering democratic climate 	Permissive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent expression of warmth and affection • Low enforcement of rules and authority • High acceptance • Taking the role of friend rather than parent • Allow the child to make their own decision • Minimal punishment
<i>Low Responsiveness/Warmth</i>	Authoritarian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm in control practices • Expecting strict, unquestioned obedience to parental authority • Not ready to accept individuality of child • Disobedience is dealt by forceful and punitive discipline • Relative neglect of child's needs • Little communication between parent and child • Highly directive behaviors 	Negligent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inattentive behavior • Neglecting the child • Little interaction with child

Figure 3.1 Parental behaviors characterizing the four parenting styles (2014, p. 316)

After participants reflected on the important messages they had received about fatherhood and their general parenting approach, the interview moved into questions about their experiences with tensions, identity negotiation, and achieving mindful identity attunement (MIA). According to the second assumption of INT, individuals in all cultures are motivated to seek “identity security, inclusion, predictability, connection, and consistency on both group-based and person-based identity levels” (2015a, p. 4). However, as Ting-Toomey elaborates, these needs must be balanced across all of one's personal and cultural identity groups and thus requires identity negotiation to find balance, or attunement. From here, assumptions 3-7 delve into the factors that tend to spur identity tensions amongst different identity groups (2015a). These assumptions were

used to craft the interview questions addressing the tensions fathers negotiated in their identity pairings (R1). Additionally, fathers shared experiences where there was a tension in one identity pairing that required negotiating across another identity group (R2).

The final stage of the interview entailed asking fathers what successful identity negotiation looked like for them in terms of their FI. This was the culmination of asking fathers about the memorable messages they had received about fatherhood, their parenting styles, the identity tensions they had experienced, and their attempts to negotiate these tensions. The final two assumptions of INT attend to the process of MIA and outcomes of satisfactory identity negotiation. Ting-Toomey explains that the “competent identity-negotiation process emphasizes the importance of integrating the necessary intercultural identity-based knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction skills to communicate appropriately, effectively, and adaptively with culturally dissimilar others” (2015a, p. 6). The outcomes of the process include feelings of being understood, respected, and valued by others. Moreover, beyond the personal outcomes of identity negotiation, or lack thereof, the study also asked fathers to share the ways this process impacted their FI efforts within their families (R3).

Along with the data collected from participants, I conducted thematic content analysis of the texts referred by participants during the writing and interview portion of the study. Texts included content on faithfulfathering.org, a non-profit organization mentioned by participants, that seeks to engage fathers in, “raising a Godly generation” as well as passages of scripture from the Bible and Christian literature used by participants to explain, defended, and/or support their father identities (*Home - Faithful*

Fathering, n.d.; Zondervan Publishing House (Grand Rapids, 2011). For participants in the study, these texts were largely related to the identity as evangelical Christians.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process entailed transcribing interviews and other relevant content to engage in the iterative analysis process. Halfway through the data collection process, I began transcribing the interview data using the transcription software Sonix. Interviews lasted an average of 82.9 minutes, or roughly an hour and twenty-three minutes, resulting in 829 total minutes (approximately 14 hours). This amounted to 299 pages of raw data once transcribed. During transcription, I immersed myself in the breadth of the data by re-listening to and reading the transcripts of the interviews while taking memo notes in Notion about the emerging themes, my reflections, and hunches. Questions that guided this process included, “What is happening here?” and “What is a story here?” (Tracy, 2019). Answering these questions entailed self-reflection, etic readings of findings in existing research, and conversations with colleagues about the emergent findings in my own study. Just as Tracy (2019) prescribes, the data immersion phase transitioned naturally into the process of primary cycle coding as I continued to conduct interviews and analyze the data.

Primary cycle-coding focused on identifying the who, what, and where questions of the study. I used the line-by-line coding approach to begin to assign meaning to participants responses and identify similarities and differences between their answers (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Codes that emerged from this section of analysis included gerunds that highlighted the action as well as in vivo codes, which used the terms of the participant (Tracy, 2019). To avoid over generalizing the data early on, codes were

created as true to the original line of data as possible, which resulted in 455 codes for review and comparison. I then used this extensive list to form and fine-tune the codes for my codebook. In the first draft of the codebook I identified 55 codes by considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria, typical and atypical examples from the data, and, if applicable, examples that were close to the code but didn't meet the criteria (Tracy, 2019, p. 191). Recalling the advice of Tracy that having more than 25 codes can be difficult to manage, I returned to my research questions and Ting-Toomey's 10 core assumptions of INT to further synthesize the data (Ting-Toomey, 2015b; 2019).

Using a feature in Notion that allows the user to create tags to sort and filter data in a table, I continued to collapse the data and expunge codes that, while compelling, were deemed irrelevant to the research questions and purpose of the study. I also began to contemplate content from the website Faithfulfathering.org and Bible verses mentioned by participants to compare their themes with those emerging from my coding process. By critically analyzing the codes to synthesize and categorize the data into themes, I composed the finalized codebook of the study, which was comprised of 18 thematic codes (See Appendix D).

Findings Trustworthiness

As qualitative research is subjective by nature, the following study took several measures to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study. Thus, in the final section of chapter three, I will elaborate on the study's audit trail, the use of triangulation, negative case analysis, and peer-debriefing as means to establish the trustworthiness of this study. The audit trail is a valuable tool in qualitative research for establish rigor and credibility (Wolf, 2003). In this study, the audit trail consisted of physical-copy field notes,

participant's writing prompt responses, the interview transcriptions, and the data analysis process captured in the note-taking software, Notion.

During interviews, I jotted down my initial thoughts and responses to participants responses on large sticky notes and kept them on the walls of my private residence to consult throughout data analysis. I kept interview transcription data and written responses from participants in files under the individual's pseudonym so, when applicable, I could easily access both to compare their responses and get the clearest understanding possible. I additionally, kept memos of my data immersion process in Notion, which included my thoughts about the emerging finding and pictures of notes from the white board I had used to brainstorm and plot out the emerging themes of the study.

Data triangulation and peer-debriefing were also used to establish the trustworthiness of the study. As triangulation has been called, "one of the most powerful techniques for strengthening credibility", it was beneficial to engage in both method and source triangulation (J. Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 514). Method triangulation entailed using written response, interviews, and content analysis all as methods for collecting data. This also allowed for source triangulation during data analysis. I used line-by-line coding of interviews to initially organize the data and then consulted the participants written responses and sources of content mentioned during their interviews to corroborate the codes of the study. Additionally, for the last three weeks of the data analysis process I spent nearly every day in the library with a fellow colleague. We would regularly debrief one another on the emerging findings of our respective studies to asses for misidentification or theme suppression within our analyses (1997).

The final tactic used in establishing the credibility of this study was to engage in negative case analysis. This process of inductive reasoning entailed looking for the “close but no” moments in the data (Tracy, 2019). In other words, it was a process of examining data that codes could not fully explain or even countered. Modifying the guiding research questions to reflect Texan-Southern identity rather than mere Southern identity was the most notable reshaping made from negative case analysis. The culmination of this process was four compelling findings that attended to the research questions of my thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

This study sought to explore fathers' experiences in negotiating their social and personal identities to make sense of their father involvement (FI). Specifically, it examined a group of fathers' efforts to negotiate identity tensions experienced in their regional, religious, professional, and father identities. To do so, I interviewed and collected written responses from 10 fathers who all identified as Texan-Southerners, evangelical Christians, and members of dual earning households. Additionally, I engaged in content analysis of texts referenced by participants in the interview portion of the study. Participants were asked to describe memorable messages they had received about fatherhood, their own parenting styles, the influence of each aforementioned identity group on their composite identity, tensions experienced between these identity groups, and the identity negotiation processes they engaged in. The purpose of this study was to explore the use of identity negotiation theory (INT) as a practical way to study and understand influencers on men's identities as fathers, and ultimately their FI.

Iterative data analysis resulted in four overarching findings that answered the research questions posed in this study. However, to understand fathers' process of identity negotiation, it is appropriate to work backwards from the final research question. The third research question of the study asked about the ways fathers engage in competent identity negotiation to make sense of their own FI. As the first finding will

detail, participants engaged in three tactics of identity negotiation (see table 4.1). This included:

- Identity prioritizing: prioritizing the beliefs associated with one's more central identities
- Tension avoiding: avoiding culturally dissimilar environments, individuals, groups, or interactions that may cause identity tensions for self or family
- Mindful identity attunement (MIA): practicing mindfulness through self-and other-reflection, social awareness, communication, and engaging with instructional texts to attune to personal and family needs

The next three findings of the study report the tensions fathers experienced between the identity pairings analyzed in this study and how they employed the three different identity negotiation tactics to address these tensions.

Findings two through four responded to the first and second research questions posed in this study. Research question one inquired about the tensions fathers experience between their identity pairings. In other words, it asked about fathers' process of negotiating tensions that arose when the beliefs, values, and/or behaviors of one identity group conflicted with their identity as fathers. The second research question took interest in the tensions that were negotiated across fathers' identity pairings. The term across was used to describe situations where fathers would use messages and values from one identity group to negotiate tensions between a seemingly unrelated identity pairing. As this chapter will show, this happened often and stemmed from the negotiation tactic of identity prioritization.

Table 4.1 Identity Negotiation Tactic Examples

Tactics	Identity Tension Example	Discourse Example
Identity Prioritizing	Father wants to support child's success by providing opportunities but also wants to raise child in an evangelical Christian environment.	"...wondering if you're shorting your child because they weren't going to get in the select team or the upper echelon of dance of something like that...yeah, we just didn't do it. So, if there was a tension we would try to, you know, Christian first."
Tension Avoiding	Father refrains from culturally dissimilar conversations with son to avoid tensions between Texan Southern and Father identity. .	"I mean, my son moved to probably the opposite of Texas. He was living there in Portland, Oregon, and. He, he has adopted maybe more of the Portland, Oregon mindset than the Texas mindset. So that has created conflict, and so I just kind of just, you know, we just don't talk about it pretty much." -Paul
Mindful Identity Attunement (MIA)	Father engages in mindfulness through heightened awareness, self-reflection, and communication with spouse to make sense of tension pertaining to FI.	"Some of it would be conversations with my wife, but a lot of it would be, personal reflection; constantly being on your brain and maybe hearing a conversation in public about somebody and their child and you go, oh my gosh. I'm having the same situation with being overbearing. I should let loose."

Father Identity Negotiation Tactics

Identity Prioritizing

In prior research examining fatherhood and identity, the concept of salience has been proposed to explain the way identities are prioritized (Pasley et al., 2014). The term salience was used to refer to, "the likelihood of identities and their related behaviors being enacted across different situations" (2014, p. 299). For example, a father might privilege his religious identity in a church men's group given the broader context. In a similar thread, scholars have also used the overlapping term centrality as a way to describe a person's conscious and self-reflective process of preferencing identities

(Stryker, 1987). As I used a more subjective method of self-reporting in my study, I will defer to the term centrality. Here, I mean to emphasize the way tensions are negotiated by individuals and privilege how they describe that negotiation. The findings from the following study aligned with previous identity research in finding fathers prioritized certain identities over another. Additionally, the theme of fathers using identity prioritizing tactics to negotiate tensions between their identity groups emerged.

Participants tended to prioritize their father and evangelical Christian identities when negotiating identity tensions. One father, Ben, described a period early in his fatherhood when he experienced tensions between his identity as a father and as a member of a dual earning household. The tensions related to his traditional gender role ideology (A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Ben struggled with his beliefs that fathers should be the sole earners of their household and the reality of his dual earning status. His response was to engage in identity prioritizing. Ben shared, “There’s been a severe tension. But being a Christian has worked me through that more than anything.” For Ben, his identity as a Christian was central to his ability to manage this tension. Such centrality is further supported by Ben’s self-reported prioritizing of his evangelical Christian identity first, father identity second, dual earning identity third, and Texan-Southern identity last.

As seen above, the tactic of identity prioritization entailed fathers leaning on their more central identities to negotiate tensions between their identity groups, regardless of whether the tension directly related to the prioritized identity. In perhaps a more direct example, another father, Fred, reflected on his decision to stop talking politics in the home. He explained that he wanted his daughters to form their own political beliefs but

went on to reveal that his decision entailed asking himself what was more important, “Getting worked up over what’s on the news or political things, or is it more important that I, you know, that my Christian identity is more important?” When asked, Fred also ranked his identities in the order of evangelical Christian, father, dual earner, and Texan-Southern. Again, this further supports the notion of identity prioritizing as a tactic to negotiate identity tensions.

Not all participants shared Ben and Fred’s exact ordering of identity prioritization. In the interview portion of the study, I asked participants to rank their religious, professional, regional, and father identities and received a response that speaks to the, at times lengthy, yet invaluable use of qualitative research in allowing participants to respond more freely. What should have been a cut-and-dry set of responses to a clear question resulted in participants combining identities, adding in unmentioned identity groups, and one participant even discussing the purposelessness of labelling people rather than responding (see table 4.2).

As table 4.2 displays, the most common addition to the list was spouse identity. Additionally, some fathers struggled to distinguish between their identity as evangelical Christians and other identities. As one father described, “My identity as a Christian-father, -husband, -co-worker has to be at the top. I mean, it just has to be, because everything spins off of that.” This reflection of Christian identity influencing other identities and shaping behaviors suggests that participant’s identity as evangelical Christians may not have been merely central (valuing importance of) but also salient (shapes how an individual thinks of himself as a father) (Pasley et al., 2014). However, the only definitive finding from asking fathers to rank the identities of interest in this

study was that the evangelical Christian identity was at the top. This is reflected in the way they engaged in identity prioritizing across different identity tensions and thus supports my finding of the identity prioritizing tactic.

Table 4.2 Responses to ranking professional, regional, religious and father identities

Participants (Pseudonym)	Identity Ranking
Ben, Fred, Hudson, Mark, and Seth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religious 2. Father 3. Professional 4. Regional
Clint	“Trying to. call out or classify identities is something that I reject...my only identity that I hope to have is Jesus Christ. And so, everything else is really insignificant.”
Jeremy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religious and Father 2. Region 3. Professional
Jerry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religious (encompassing) 2. Spouse 3. Father 4. Professional 5. Regional
Paul and Shepherd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religious 2. Father 3. Spouse 4. Professional 5. Regional

Tension Avoidance

According to INT, individuals tend to desire security, inclusion, predictability, connection, and consistency within their personal and social identity groups (Ting-Toomey, 2015a). Furthermore, engaging with culturally similar environments, others, and interactions tends to lead to experiencing these desired emotional states (2015a). These theoretical claims may provide explanation for participants use of tension avoidance tactics. In the study, fathers described times when they avoided groups, activities, and interactions that created tensions between their identity groups.

Examples of participants engaging in tension avoidance usually entailed fathers intentionally excluding themselves and/or their family from activities, groups, and/or environments that might have caused tensions between their evangelical Christian identity and their father identity. Clint talked about making hard decisions about how much interaction he and his family had with “neighborhood social relationships” versus “church relationships.” Another father, Mark, spoke of choosing not to go out with other fathers from his neighborhood to bars or restaurants with “scantly clad women.” Jerry summarized the decision not to engage in certain activities or allow his children to do so by declaring, “This is not what God wants, the language or the sex or the atmosphere.” In short, participants engaged in identity negotiation by avoiding the need to negotiate tensions in the first place.

Though less common, participants applied tension avoidance to identity pairings other than their evangelical Christian x father identity. One of the most notable examples was one participant’s story about dealing with his son moving away to another state:

I mean, my son moved to probably the opposite of Texas. He was living there in Portland, Oregon, and he has adopted maybe more of the Portland, Oregon mindset than the Texas mindset. So that has created conflict, and so I just kind of just, you know, we just don't talk about it, pretty much.

This tactic of avoiding certain interactions may not only be the result of avoiding tension but also a conscious effort to allow children to form their own beliefs and identities. This is indicated in Paul’s later reflection that testing parent’s beliefs is natural and healthy, “We have to test it and see if that really fits in with it. Was it just handed down to me from my parents or is it something I really believe?” This is further supported by another father who expressed tensions between his Texan and father identity when his child departed from wearing the Texan trappings, Western wear, “But then in the end, you

can't worry too much about it because you want your child to be an individual." These findings suggest that avoiding tension-filled interactions with children may have been a way for fathers not overly impose their own identity. Whatever the reasoning, the evidence presented in this section supports the finding that participants engaged in tension avoidance as an identity negotiation tactic.

Mindful Identity Attunement

As was originally described in chapter two's literature review, INT research is ultimately concerned with individuals process of mindful identity attunement (MIA). MIA includes the intentional practice of developing "culture-sensitive knowledge and interpersonal responsiveness concerning cultural membership and personal identity issues in self and other" (2015a, p. 7).

Applying this concept to identity negotiation in fatherhood, the study discovered participants engaged in mindfulness through self-reflection of identity and behavior, communicating with others, engaging with instructional texts, attuning to family needs, and reflecting on both good and bad examples of father involvement. Seth, a relative newcomer to fatherhood, captured this process:

But to be authentically emotional is to examine, what the underlying fears, anxieties, [and] insecurities, that I have about what decisions we're making. And can I trust my wife with those and vice versa. And when that happens, that's when real communication takes place.

Here, Seth shows how he processes self-reflection and spousal communication as essential to decision making and becoming even more human. More generally, participants use of MIA as a tactic as well as the self-reported outcomes of their efforts deserve further elaboration.

For participants, the practice of self-reflection was closely associated with prayer. Some referred to this process as more of a conversation, like Jerry who explained, “I’m going to talk to God and well, we’re going to have some good discussions and I want to find out why some things are happening.” Others recalled self-reflection in the more traditional sense of thinking about their behavior and motivations such as Seth who shared, “I try to on a weekly basis, kind of reflect on the week.” However, his style of introspection was also tied back to prayer. Seth went on to share, “And then there’s pain in letting go of them [pain and insecurity] and giving them to God.” Whatever the means to the end, the process of self-reflection by participants was used to refine their process of FI.

Communicating tensions to others was a theme throughout all participants’ efforts to negotiate their fatherly identity. Participants described conversations with their spouse and with other men as methods for making sense of tensions and formulating their FI approach moving forward. One example was Mark’s practice of taking walks with his wife to talk and “discuss strategies.” Fred, on the other hand recalled talking with men in his church dads group, “It’s a good group because it’s actually a bunch of, you know, grown men look at each other and say, hey, we don’t know how to deal with some of these things, and we all can help each other.” In short, communicating with others provided a way for participants to become more mindful about the father identity and, subsequently their FI.

Engaging with instructional texts entailed participants consuming information about what ‘good’ FI should be. This included everything from reviewing notes from a college class to taking part in a father mentoring program put on by the nonprofit

organization, Faithful Fathering. An indirect way fathers encountered instructional texts was by reaching out to spiritual mentors in times of tension. For instance, Seth recalled a period of uncertainty when he felt his parenting style was creating discipline issues for his son. He decided to seek out an authoritative source of wisdom and met with his pastor who shared the instructional information that helped Seth create a blueprint for their parenting moving forward. In his writing prompt, Seth elaborated on this text:

Think of your child's life in three stages: 0-6 years old, 6-12 years old, and 12-18 years old. By the end of the third stage, the end product is an autonomous, whole being. In the first stage, you are to walk a step in front of your child. In the second stage, you are to walk alongside your child. In the third stage, you are to walk a step behind your child.

Here, Seth reflects on becoming a stronger father by processing parenting advice that helps him connect to his children. In summary, engaging with instructional texts gave participants the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their father identity and FI.

The final two processes fathers engaged in to practice MIA of their father identity were to attune to their family's needs and reflect on good and bad examples of FI.

Attuning to family's needs entailed participants being aware of what their children and spouse needed and adapting their fatherly identity to match these needs. For instance, Jeremy described taking on the role of disciplinarian in his home after recognizing that his children needed structure and his wife favored a lower control parenting approach. He recounted, "I've kind of taken on that role more because I feel like I've had more observational models to follow in doing that." In this instance, Jeremy's familiarity with disciplinary models and negotiations with a co-parent shape his understanding of FI.

In line with this comment, participants also reflected on good and bad examples of FI they had witnessed in their life to consciously construct their father identity.

Hudson summarized this process well when he stated, “I have a lot of excellent takeaways from my father and I also have some things that I would do differently, and I guess I’ve sat down and thought about those and. And then that’s how I try to raise [my son].” Use of examples enabled this participant to calibrate his fathering and to shape his FI in relationship to assessment.

Whatever approach to mindfulness participants engaged in while negotiating their father identity, they described the outcome as largely positive. Participants described the outcome of MIA as improved communication and relationships with their spouse and children as well as having the knowledge to teach other fathers. Jerry put the importance of these outcomes into perspective when he expressed:

“I believe the outcome is, well, it has to be what I’m living right now. A calm life right now, even with all the junk that we’ve been going through the last year [referring to 2020-2021] and especially the last week, week and a half [referring to Winter Storm Uri].”

Jerry described a sense of peace in the storm, because of how he had improved relationships within the family. Shepherd depicted the same outcomes when he noted, “When we [he and his spouse] say I love you today, boy, we know what it means to be loving each other and to work together... and our encouragement to other couples is we’re living proof you can work through it.” Beyond general claims of a better life, participants included outcomes of MIA such as improved child behavior, gaining respect from peers and spouse, and better family communication. The remainder of the chapter breaks down the identity negotiation tactics used in and across the three identity pairings of interest in this study.

Identity Negotiation Tactics in Dual Earner x Father Identity Pairings

Dual Earner x Father Identity Tensions

In the introduction of this thesis, I recounted the story of *The Second Shift*, a book written by sociologist Arlie Hochschild detailing her ethnographic study that originally discovered the wide gap between men and women's contribution to housework and childcare (2012). In the study, Hochschild observed three types of gender role ideology that influenced husband and wife's division of labor: traditional, transitional, and egalitarian. Gender role ideology refers to an individual's beliefs about how work and family roles should differ according to sex (A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2016). Gender role ideology can be reflected but also refined in qualitative assessments of FI.

All the participants in this study reflected taking on transitional gender role beliefs, meaning their perceptions of the desired division between the first and second shift lied somewhere between traditional and egalitarian. However, many also reported coming into marriages with more traditional beliefs that changed over time. The same was true for many participant's spouses. Thus, tensions reported between participants' father identity and identity as a member of a dual earner household stemmed largely from periods when they or their spouse's gender role ideology did not align with the demands of their family unit.

Participants expounded upon the gender role ideologies at play in their family as being derived from their own childhood family dynamics and available opportunities. Here, gender choices were seemingly instrumental to the context. For instance, Jeremy divulged:

That's definitely something that we've navigated over the course of our marriage, even before we had kids, because my wife comes from a family that was very traditional and very like the dad works and the mom stays at home with the kids...and my wife also has ambitions like she had a desire to be a stay-at-home mom because of like the model and everything. But that's just never been something that was financially viable for us.

Jeremy was not the only father to describe financial necessity as a reason for their dual earning identity. Fred and Shepherd painted similar stories of begrudgingly adopting the identity because of their family's financial status. As Shepherd lamented, "When my wife was working, it was out of absolute necessity because we were broke." Here, financial constraints shape how fathers understand their role and the need for dual incomes.

Beyond economic demands, other fathers described the dual earner identity as the result of both spouses desiring job opportunities. Both spouses desiring employment was also seen as a contextual factor that shifted FI through MIA. Seth struggled with tensions between his dual earner and father identity resulting from the fear that his son was not receiving the hands-on care he needed. He explained the source of this fear, "This comes from my own pre-conceptual understanding of a raising because my mom stayed home, my parents were much more complementarian." Complementarian is a theological term that, in Christianity, argues, while men and women are equal, there should be distinction between their roles, with men as the head of the household (*The Danvers Statement*, 1988; Warner Colaner & Warner, 2005). For Seth, tensions manifested between his support for his wife's 'passion career' and his pre-conceived understanding of his identity as a father. Similarly, Ben remembered coming into the marriage with traditional notions of a single earner family where, "women stay at home and men bring home the bacon" originating from his childhood. However, this was challenged when he realized he

wanted his two daughters to have the choice between staying at home or working and that he needed to extend the same offer to his wife.

For the rest of the participants in the study, tensions arose from less dramatic demands to change their entire outlook on fatherhood and, rather, from smaller tensions that popped up from the ambiguity of their transitional marital role ideology. Hudson recalled tensions early on as he came to terms with his dual earner identity entailing shared finances. In this instance, it was mundane issues that seemed to prompt negotiation of identity.

The mundane-ness of household labor similarly sparked identity negotiation often through humor. For instance, Mark and Paul acknowledged the tensions that arose from deferring to inside-outside labor division, a technique commonly used by couples to gender their household labor divide (See Hochschild & Machung, 2012, p. 44). Mark chuckled as he shared his wife's words, "I'm calling the plumber to move the washer and dryer to the garage." This harkens back to one of the explanations provided in the review of literature for the lack of FI in the United States. Namely, studies have shown couples engage in relational maintenance behaviors, such as humor, to stave off tensions in work-family balance (Denker, 2013; A. R. Hochschild & Machung, 2012). In contrast, counter to the second proposed explanation of FI disparity resulting from the glass handcuffs phenomenon, finding of this study included a notable lack of tensions between participant's professional and family life.

For participants, it was not that tensions were absent between the demands of their work environment and of their family life, but rather, participants minimized tensions by putting a clear priority on their family life. Paul—who comparatively reported the greatest

tensions between his work and family life—recalled his wife delivering the ultimatum for him to stop travelling so much or to look for a new job. Paul not only did so, but he received positive support from his employers and was able to shift his schedule to be at home more. In another example, Clint recalled “gladly” making sacrifices at work to accommodate his family demands. Fred shared a similar point of view, explaining “I try to make sure I’m home for my kids. I don’t stay at work super late.” Furthermore, as might be recalled from Table 4.1, no father ranked their professional identity over their father identity. All of this suggests that participants in the study used identity prioritization to curtail tensions between their professional and family identities. Identity prioritization and other tactics used by participants to negotiate the father and dual earner identities are discussed in greater detail below.

Dual Earner x Father Identity Tension Negotiation

Participants utilized identity prioritization and MIA tactics in response to tensions between their dual earner and father identities. They employed two approaches to utilize both tactics. One approach was to negotiate tensions in their identity pairing by prioritizing their father identity and communicating with their spouse and co-workers to engage in MIA. A perfect example of this was Paul’s story, mentioned in the previous section, when his spouse communicated that he needed to cut back on his work travel and he relayed this need to his employers so he could adapt his FI and become more present. Another example came from Jerry who recalled a period after his wife began to work when the whole family had to communicate and redefine their household responsibilities. Ultimately, participants were most interested in communicating to adapt to the needs of their family. Beyond participants prioritizing their father identity and engaging in MIA

tactics directly connected to their father and dual earner identity, a theme emerged of participants negotiating across their evangelical Christian identity.

The second approach participants took to negotiate tensions in their dual earner and father identity was to prioritize their evangelical Christian identity and engage in MIA by praying, seeking out evangelical Christian resources, and talking to fellow Christian men. In the case of identity prioritization, fathers would lean on their evangelical Christian identity to make sense of tensions. For instance, Seth described his wife's overworking as an idol and encouraged her to take on a "Christian vision," asking, "how is Christ the source of our professional and all our other identities?" Here, Seth tries to shape his wife's behavior, but also is asking a question of what they both privilege. MIA tactics were also used, such as when Shepherd looked to scripture to make sense of his gender role ideology beliefs that were causing tensions in his marriage. He referenced a specific verse, Ephesians 5:21 *Instructions for Christian Households*, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (*Bible Gateway Passage*, n.d.-g). Shepherd determined he had used the subsequent verse, Ephesians 5:22 "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do the lord" out of context and decided to make a change in his approach to his division of household labor and childcare.

For participants, identity prioritizing and MIA tactics used in both approaches led to self-reported egalitarian behaviors amongst participants. This was particularly true in the share of household labor and parenting. Participants described the impact of engaging in negotiation as creating a more equal divide of labor and mutual respect amongst husband and wife. As Mark put it, "I think it's been a blessing because we've been able to share the load together and not one parent is overburdened and resentful." Therefore,

the findings in this section align with previous research in that it suggests evangelical fathers engage in egalitarian FI tactics (W. Bradford Wilcox, 2002). These participants also suggested that they tried to work alongside their spouses or in support of their spouses.

Whereas outcomes of identity negotiation between and across participant's identities was largely positive for household labor and childcare, there was less change in participant's perceptions of their wives in the workplace. Though only four participants recalled tensions regarding their preference to being a single earner home, it is worth noting that only one reported any kind of change in their general support for the wife's career. As previously mentioned, Ben noted that becoming a father to two girls made him more supportive of his wife's choice to work. In general, there was a lack of mention amongst participants of support for their spouse's work. They tended to focus more heavily on supporting the wives in childcare and household labor. Consequently, this study's finding also align with data regarding the lack of social support amongst evangelicals for mothers in the workforce (King, 2003; Thorstad et al., 2006). In short, by neglecting to address their partner's working needs—and in one instance calling “overworking an idol—participants may not be showing their partners' support for workforce participation.

Identity Negotiation Tactics in Texan-Southern x Father Identity Pairings

Texan-Southern x Father Identity Tensions

When considering that all but one participant ranked regional identity as least important, it may not come as a surprise that few participants recalled any strong tensions between their Texan-Southern and father identities. When asked, most participants stated

they had not experienced tensions between the two identities. Others identified tensions related to their Southern-Texan environment rather than their Southern-Texan identity. For example, one father described his conscious effort to combat racism in his fathering in response to the environment of bigotry in the South. While interesting, these efforts did not directly pertain to tensions between his personal identity as a Texan and as a father. There was only one notable tension brought up by participants that resulted between their Texan-Southern and father identities. The tension entailed uncertainty of how to navigate children's process of forming their own identities independent from the beliefs and qualities of their father's Texan-Southern identity.

There were two clear examples of participants engaging in negotiation of their Texan and father identities in response to their children's identity formation. As both examples have already been brought up in the identity negotiation tactics section of this chapter, I will briefly summarize each father's experience here before elaborating on the context of the tension they experienced and how the participants negotiated them. The first example was Paul, who recalled experiencing tensions when his son moved away to Portland and took on more of a "Portland, Oregon mindset." The need to negotiate tensions arose when he and his son began to have arguments related to certain beliefs Paul had that were linked to his Southern-Texan identity, namely gun rights.

To put Paul's beliefs about gun rights in context, earlier in the interview when Paul had been asked about what being Texan meant to him, he stated, "I guess the identity that we would have in our household would be, you know, we did have guns, and, you know, we did go hunting." Later, Paul explained that gun ownership related so closely to his Texan identity because it represented a sense of independence and an

ability to provide for oneself and defend one's family and neighbors. Thus, the tension between Paul's identity as a Southern-Texan and as a father may have stemmed from what INT would call connection (Ting-Toomey, 2015a). As the theory proposes, persons desire "interpersonal connection via meaningful close relationships" and lose this sense of connection when relationship separations are experienced. Thus, Paul appeared to be experiencing tensions between his identity as a father and his identity as Texan-Southerner when the beliefs tied to his regional identity resulted in loss of connection with his son, and consequently disharmonized his father identity.

Ben experienced a similar tension between his regional and father identity but for different reasons. After moving away to another state for a year and being taunted for his Western apparel, Ben recalled developing a deeper attachment to the way he dressed as being part of his Texan identity. Consequently, he later experienced tensions between his desire for his children to mimic his Texan identity and his belief as a father that children should be allowed to form their own identity. Ben went on to explain that this caused insecurity in his father identity, "You want to be your kid's hero and kids dress like their hero. So, I guess in the sense that they're not mimicking your apparel, you feel like maybe, that you're not their hero." This reflects another motivation described by INT, the desire to experience identity security (2015a). In short, either Ben was faced with feeling insecurity in his identity as a father or as a Texan-Southerner.

Texan-Southern x Father Identity Tension Negotiation Tactics

As only two fathers reported experiencing tensions between their Texan-Southern and father identities and no research has been conducted to date on Texan fathers, the study was not able to provide a robust answer to Research Question 1b. Nonetheless,

asking participants about their experiences in negotiation tensions between their Southern-Texan and father identities did result in the noteworthy finding that regional identity was prioritized considerably lower than participant's other identities. Indeed, when asked to rank their regional identity in comparison to their father, professional, and religious identities, one participant audibly laughed and exclaimed, "Way low. Way down there." Further supporting this finding, another participant put it plainly, "I can tell you, if it was [a tension], I would choose being a Christian and a father over where I'm from." Thus, the low prioritization of regional identity may provide some explanation to the lack of tensions between participants' Texan-Southern identity and their father identity.

Participants who did experience tensions between their Texan-Southern and father identities used tension avoidance, identity prioritization, and MIA tactics to engage in negotiation. Paul described avoiding interactions with his son that would lead to tensions. He went on to explain that he prioritized his view as a father that children should test their parent's belief systems so it can become their own. Ben relayed a similar story of identity prioritization but also described employing MIA tactics:

Some of it would be with conversations with my wife, but a lot of it would be personal reflection, constantly being on your brain and maybe hearing a conversation in public about somebody and their child and you go, oh my gosh, I'm having the same situation with being overbearing, I should let loose. I guess you would say working on myself. But I can't say that because I pray about it, too, saying that I worked through it myself is false. God gives me my answer. After mentioning prayer, Ben began to expound upon the central role of

evangelical Christianity in his life, how it intertwined with his identity as father, and, thus, how he resolved the tension between his Texan-Southern and father identities by engaging with his faith. He summarized this by stating, "I pray to my God a lot for

helping in fatherhood and the scripture tells me he is my father. So, who better to ask?”

In short, participants significantly prioritized their father and evangelical Christian identities over their identities as Texan-Southerners and thus used beliefs from their more central identity groups to negotiate tensions.

Identity Negotiation Tactics in Evangelical Christian and Father Identity Pairings

Evangelical Christian x Father Identity Tensions

As has been noted throughout the chapter thus far, participants highly prioritized their evangelical Christian and father identities. Not only this, but there was an emerging theme of describing these two identities as intertwined. This deep connection led to participants describing the existence of a reciprocal influence between the two identities, as well as a seemingly paradoxical belief that the two were too enmeshed to separate. Consequently, some participants described a feeling of uncertainty regarding which identity should be prioritized. Emanating from this tension, fathers additionally expressed uncertainty regarding the form of parental control and warmth they should engage in as evangelical Christians. To put the two tensions into perspective, I engaged in content analysis of the texts and resources described as being central to participants’ father identity.

Participants provided numerous examples of sociocultural influences on their identity as “Christian fathers” including memorable messages from family and mentors, Bible verses, texts they had consumed while a part of a Christian father organization, and lastly, a sprinkling of quotes from books about fatherhood (See Appendix E). The one commonality across these texts was their connections to participants evangelical

Christian identities. The majority of participants in this study described their evangelical Christian identity as central to their father identity. Ben described the influence as being “From top to bottom” and the Bible as providing a “blueprint of how to be a good parent.” Clint further specified the influence, explaining that his evangelical Christian identity provided the “example of love which encompasses everything.” Other words used to describe participants understanding of the relationship between their evangelical Christian identity and their father identity included “core,” “central,” “who I am,” and “synonymous.” Additionally, prior studies have indicated that Protestantism is a significant predictor of parenting attitudes and practices (W. Bradford Wilcox, 1998). Accumulatively, there was substantial evidence that fathers who identify as evangelical Christians are likely to be influenced by their religious values. However, when participants recalled tensions between their father and evangelical Christian identities, this tight connection led to uncertainty.

The first thematic tension experienced by participants dealt with struggling to differentiate between one’s evangelical Christian and father identities and the roles within them. In the context of this study, I have used the term role to refer to the socially expected behaviors derived from one’s association with their personal or social identity group(s). Many of the participants had at some point in the stint of their fathering role been missionaries or officially involved in the work of their church (i.e., ministers and Sunday school teachers). Additionally, others had grown up in families involved in missionary or church work. As a result of participants’ involvement in formal labor associated with the evangelical Christian identity, many fathers experienced tensions regarding which identity group ought to be prioritized in a given situation.

For some participants, tensions were the result of more unconscious behaviors of prioritizing the work of their evangelical Christian role over their father role. Shepherd worked with teenagers in his church and recalled his wife informing him that he was “so busy helping other people,” that it was making his children feel less important than everybody else. For other participants, the tension resulted in more conscious inner turmoil. Jeremy particularly struggled with how he should negotiate his evangelical Christian and father identity after being raised in a missionary household. He elucidated, “He [his father] and my mom, both definitely-really-consciously are aware of the fact that, in a lot of ways, they kind of prioritized the ministry and, like, their calling from God above, like, us as kids.” While Jeremy felt clear on his decision to not use the same approach with his own children, he struggled to rectify what felt like was a paradoxical set of beliefs that both his Evangelical Christian identity and his childrearing role as a father should come first. In summary, the first tension between participant’s evangelical Christian identity and father identity resulted from a lack of certainty of how to prioritize the roles associated with the two identities.

The second theme of tensions that emerged between participants’ evangelical Christian and father identities resulted from uncertainty pertaining to parenting approach. In line with previous findings that indicated Protestant fathers are more likely to adopt egalitarian approaches to parenting, every participant in this study leaned towards authoritative parenting styles. This was evidenced in self-reported FI behaviors such as providing structure, support, and stability for children to form their own independent identities as well as father’s emphasis on being present in their children’s lives. Yet, several participants recalled experiencing insecurity about the messages they had

received regarding parenting, from sources and group members in their evangelical Christian identity groups.

Participants recalled tensions between their own parenting approach and the more authoritarian approach they associated with their evangelical Christian identity. For instance, Seth recalled his desire to forsake his father's use of a more authoritarian approach in fathering. This created uncertainty in how to approach evangelical Christian parenting in his own life. Seth questioned, "How do I steer my son away from sin? how do I help him see what is good, but do so in a way...that reflects the grace of God?" Furthermore, several of the participants, when asked about their parental control, expressed doubt that they had done enough to exert control over their children. As the next section will explain, these tensions were not easily resolved.

Evangelical x Father Identity Tension Negotiation

Unlike the other identity pairings examined in this study, tensions experienced between participants' evangelical Christian and father identities were not negotiated across other identity groups. Based on the discussed findings thus far, this makes sense for two reasons. First, participants only ever prioritized their evangelical Christian or father identity over another identity group. Second, all participants ranked their religious and father identities as the most important identities in their lives. Thus, it is unsurprising that participants negotiated tensions solely between their evangelical Christian and Father identity. Their approach to do so included tension avoidance, identity prioritizing, and MIA.

It has already been addressed under the tension avoidance section of this chapter that participants avoided tensions by steering clear of moral dilemma-inducing

environments, interactions, and groups. As a refresher, an example of this would be Paul's choice to not put children in select sports so they wouldn't miss church on Sundays. As this tactic was used most in the evangelical Christian and father identity pairing, it was worthwhile to consider what underlying messages might have cultivated tension avoidance. Thinking back to Jerry's comment, "This is not what God wants, the language or the sex or the atmosphere," participants tended to describe their reason for tension avoidance as aligning with God's wishes. Throughout the study, participants referred to living by God's word. Furthermore, in the interview portion of the study, each participant affirmed their belief that the Bible is God's word. A common belief of evangelicals includes the Bible as the word of God, thus, it was applicable to analyze the Bible for scripture regarding tension avoidance tactics.

Several verses supported father's tactics of avoiding groups and environments that would lead to identity tensions. For instance, 1 Corinthians 15:33 states, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character" (*Bible Gateway Passage*, n.d.-a). Similarly, Proverbs 13:20 offers the proverb, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm" (*Bible Gateway Passage*, n.d.-l). These verses, and others like them, provided moral justification for participants' decision to avoid groups and environment that would go against their evangelical Christian beliefs. Furthermore, they provide greater understanding of why participants may have used tension avoidance tactics more often to negotiate their father and evangelical Christian identity.

Hand-in-hand with tension avoidance, participants reported prioritizing their evangelical Christian identity when tensions did arise. For instance, Mark also took issue with the demands of select sports but felt insecurity about "shorting" his children's

success. Ultimately though, Mark made the call by engaging in identity prioritizing, “if there was tension, we would try to, you know, Christian first.” However, identity prioritizing became more muddled when participants struggled to differentiate between their roles and their identities. Paul was able to make this call after receiving the advice from a fellow pastor, “There are hundreds of men who could lead this church, but there’s only one person who can be my kid’s dad.” For other, greater efforts to engage in mindfulness were needed.

The final tactic participants used to negotiate the tensions between their evangelical Christian and father identities was MIA. Earlier, I acquainted the reader with a tension experienced by the participant, Seth, who struggled to negotiate his own parenting approach as an evangelical Christian father with that of his father’s more authoritarian approach. Seth explained that this tension came to a head when he left his young son with his father for a weekend away and came back to the report that his son had behaved ‘horribly’. In a moment of vulnerability, Seth broke down to his wife on the ride and asked, “are we doing this right?” This moment marked a turning point when he began to engage in proactive mindfulness by seeking out authoritative sources, having conversations with his spouse, and meeting with his pastor. Fortunately, Seth reported that all his efforts resulted in he and his wife implementing a new blueprint for their parenting approach that led to greater peace in their household and their son being, “much happier.” Whereas Seth’s story provides an inspiring tale of sudden transformative change, most fathers reported using MIA tactics across the span of their role as fathers to make small adjustments.

The outcomes described by participants who engaged in MIA tactics to negotiate the evangelical Christian and father identities were mostly modest adjustments to their parenting styles. Ben became more physically affectionate after he recognized that he needed to re-establish a sense of security for his stepdaughter when his birth-daughter was born. After Mark listened to a testimony that focused on the idea that, “A faithful father is physically present, emotionally engaged, and leads spiritually by example” he realized he still had room to grow (*For Dads - Faithful Fathering*, n.d.). Behavior changes included things like being willing to sacrifice his own interests (i.e., football) to spend more time and engage in greater intimacy with his children. Whatever the tension, participants who engaged in MIA tactics to negotiate tensions between the evangelical Christian and father identities reported positive outcomes for themselves, their marriages, and their children.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed four compelling findings regarding father’s processes for engaging in identity negotiation to navigate their FI. The first finding was the theme of fathers using tension avoiding, identity prioritizing, and MIA tactics to negotiate their professional, regional, religious, and father identities. The second finding detailed the tensions participants experienced between their dual earner and father identities as well the tactics they used to negotiate these tensions in and across the identity pairing. Tensions experienced resulted from participants or their spouses holding a concept of gender role ideology that did not meet the needs of their dual earner family. In the third finding, participants reported fewer instances of tensions between their Texan-Southern and father identities. The one notable exception was tensions experienced when children

departed from the father's Texan identity. Lastly, the final finding reported the tensions fathers experienced between their evangelical Christian and father identity. These included uncertainty regarding identity versus role prioritization as well as uncertainty about parenting style (particularly the question of how much parental control evangelical Christian fathers should engage in).

In all three identity pairings, tension avoidance, identity prioritizing, and MIA tactics were used to negotiate tensions. Furthermore, while participants negotiated across their different identities to resolve tensions between their (a) father x dual earner identity pairing and (b) father x Texan-Southern identity pairing, the same cannot be said for tensions between participants' (c) father x evangelical Christian identity pairing. Findings suggest that, because fathers highly prioritized their father and evangelical Christian identities and saw them as intertwined, they did not use values from their professional or regional identity groups to resolve tensions in their father x evangelical Christian identity pairing. The following chapter discusses the implications of these findings as well the study limitations and opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Vitalized by the continued disparity of father involvement (FI) in the United States, the following study explored how a group of ten evangelical Christian men from dual earning households in Texas negotiated tensions between their identity as fathers and their regional, religious, and professional identities. The first research question (R1) asked what tensions these participants negotiated between their (a) father x dual earner, (b) father x Texan-Southern, and (c) father x evangelical Christian identity pairings. Participants reported experiencing tensions pertaining to their gender role ideology between father and dual earner identities, issues of supporting children's independence and identity formation between their father and Texan-Southern identities, and lastly, tensions regarding uncertainty about role prioritizing and parenting style between father and evangelical Christian identities.

The second question of the study (R2) was interested in the intertwined nature of identity negotiation and wanted to know what tensions fathers negotiated across their three identity pairings. The study findings suggest that participants' most highly prioritized identity (religious) was used to negotiate tensions across all identity pairings, but that less prioritized identities (regional and professional) were only used to negotiate the tensions between their specific identity pairing. In other words, the other identities did not seem central to the negotiation process for identity pairings.

Finally, the third research question (R3) asked about the ways fathers engage in competent identity negotiation to make sense of their FI. Findings suggest participants

used three tactics to do so: tension avoidance, identity prioritizing, and mindful identity attunement (MIA). Such tactics were used by fathers to prioritize and make sense of tensions in identity pairings. The findings from these three guiding research questions provide both scholarly and practical implications, which are discussed below.

Implications

Findings from this study support and/or build upon previous research that has examined the influence of individuals' professional, regional, and religious identities on father identity. Additionally, as this study is the first of its kind to implement identity negotiation theory (INT) in the study of father involvement (FI), there are scholarly implications regarding the future of father identity research. Moreover, participants' meaningful engagement with their evangelical Christian identities was used to negotiate the way they enacted household labor, childcare, and spousal support. This use of Christian identity negotiation provides valuable insight to organizations that seek to encourage FI amongst Christian men. In particular, this study shows that FI can be stronger through Christian identity, when it is prioritized as such.

There are a few notable implications from this study's findings regarding participant's experience negotiating their professional and father identities. First, the study aligned with previous research in that gender role ideology was reported as influencing how fathers enact their FI (Denker, 2013; A. Hochschild & Machung, 1990). However, by framing the study in the context of negotiation, it was discovered that the participants' gender role ideologies were not static and most reported shifting from a more traditional view to a transitional view of gender role ideology that prioritized equal share of household labor and being present in their children's lives. Thus, scholars should

take interest in how gender role ideology may change over time as tensions arise in the negotiation of professional and parental identities. For example, longitudinal studies may shed light on the ways couples negotiate their parental identity over the course of their role as parents.

For participants, being present entailed engaging through primarily fun activities—such as taking children on outings— as well as making work sacrifices to be physically present, which aligned with finding Duckworth and Buzzanel’s (2009) study that found fathers favor “family-first” discourse and understood FI as a web of responsibilities that requires negotiation. It is worth noting that the findings from this study do not directly negate previous research that have found systemic barriers to FI in the United States (Blithe, 2015) Rather, participants reported willingness to accept the consequences in their work life to be more present with their children. This came from a place of prioritizing their father and evangelical Christian identities over their professional identity. Furthermore, content analysis found that a Christian father mentoring program participants had taken part in directly redressed the notion of FI as financial provider and instead advocated being present, emotionally engaged, and spiritually leading children by example (*For Dads - Faithful Fathering*, n.d.). The implication of these findings suggests a further departure from the traditional notion of father as provider open the door to studies that address to possible shift in gender role ideology.

While many participants espoused the value of supporting their spouse through shared childcare and household labor, there was insufficient mention of participants supporting their spouse’s career. Indeed, four fathers expressed preference for single

earning homes and either directly state or implied their desire for their wife to stay home. This finding aligns with both King's (2003) and Thorstad's (2006) studies regarding the lack of work-related support for evangelical Christian wives. Moreover, one participant recalled a message he had heard in a traditional Southern Baptist church that implied, "A women who is working is not living her best life." Practical implications for these findings might include churches and other Christian organizations engaging in proactive efforts to promote the support for women's work, or to at least not overdetermine what roles are available for partners of Christian men. There is a clear need in evangelical Christian churches to rectify messages regarding gender roles in the workforce that lead to a lack of support for the 71 % of families in the United States that include a working mother.

There are two notable implications found in participants' negotiation of their Southern-Texan and father identities. First, participants' differentiation of their regional identity from the South further supports previous research that has found regional identity fluidity across different states, and particularly in Texas (Cramer, 2013; Oxley, 2015; Shortridge, 1987). This is further upheld by participants lack of association with authoritarian parenting, which has been recently found to be strongly preferred in the South (McKinney et al., 2018). Consequently, communication scholars studying the influence of regional identity should note the ambiguity of regional cultural boundaries. This study is further demonstration that the uneven impacts of regionalism on identity must be studied in greater detail and with considerable nuance.

The second implication found in participants' negotiation of their Texan-Southern and father identities is that participants in this study reported a notably low-prioritization

of their regional identity and few tensions between this identity pairing. As was acknowledged in the literature review, the participants of this study were white, evangelical, cis-gendered, and heterosexual. While the findings of this study should not be used to make generalized claims about Texan fathers, they do present a remarkable implication regarding the more transitional attitudes of a group of individuals in a state that is typically regarded as conservative. One explanation for the lack of tensions experienced between participant's Texan-Southern and father identities could be that participants prioritized their evangelical Christian identities higher and thus were more influenced by the messages about parenting associated with their religious identity. This explanation is further supported by Uecker and Froese's (2019) findings that religious individualism, even within conservative religious traditions, leads to greater acceptance of contemporary cultural trends relating to morality.

The final identity pairing examined in this study included participants' evangelical Christian and father identities. The findings of this study support previous research that evangelical Christian fathers are more likely to engage in positive emotion work, prioritize being present, and engage in support of household labor and childcare (King, 2003; W. Bradford Wilcox, 2002). Additionally, as has already been mentioned in this section, findings also support previous research regarding the disparity of spousal work life support (2003). More broadly, this suggests that the second shift, first theorized by Hochschild, still impacts FI and relationship status to a significant degree. However, by examining the specific tensions participants negotiated between their evangelical Christian identity and father identity, there were two findings that provide new implications for future research.

The first unique finding from this study was that fathers experienced tensions in uncertainty about prioritizing their evangelical Christian identity or their father identity. This appeared to stem from participants intertwining their Christian work roles with their religious identity as a whole. From a scholarly perspective, this finding supports prior calls to clearly define and distinguish terms such as identity, role, and status in research. From a practical perspective, Christian leaders interested in advocating for FI should consider the possibility of tensions experienced by fathers between their role as parents and their role as Christians.

The second unique finding regarding tensions negotiated between participant's evangelical Christian and father identities is that, despite the consistent preference for authoritative parenting amongst participants in this study, fathers still felt pressure from members of their evangelical Christian social identity to favor authoritarian parental control. This finding compliments Froese and Uecker's (2019) earlier mentioned finding that individuals favor contemporary moral ideals even when in conservative Christian traditions. Communication scholars and theologians alike should take interest in who or what is communicating this pressure to fathers, and how other memorable messages might shape this tension.

The final implications of this study contemplate the use of INT in the study of father involvement. To refresh, Stella Ting-Toomey's developing theory was created originally to research the acculturation of immigrants and still requires a great deal of tighter conceptualization (Collie et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey, 2015a; Toomey et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the theory's focus of identity negotiation and mindfulness, made it ideal to address some of the limitations identified in prior identity and father involvement

research (Pasley et al., 2014). Using the core concepts of this theory to guide the development of the research questions of this study, proved fruitful in identifying the tensions participants experienced and negotiated to make sense of their FI. Furthermore, the study provides potential future direction in codifying INT by identifying not only mindful identity attunement (MIA) but also tension avoidance and identity prioritizing as tactics for identity negotiation. Lastly, the findings of this study indicate the need to expand and adapt the outcomes of satisfactory identity negotiation for father identity research. In INT, outcomes include feelings of being understood, valued, and respected (2015a, p. 6). While participants reported being more respected, the outcomes they focused more heavily on reflected marital and family life satisfaction as well as successful child rearing. In summary, while the findings of this study support the use of INT in study of father involvement, the theory will need to be considerably developed and modified for the area of father and family communication research.

Limitations and Future Research

There were a few limitations in this study that have not yet been addressed. First, by using qualitative data collection through writing prompts and interviews, the self-reported accounts of the study's participants are limited. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was not to report how much FI fathers engaged in but rather to explore the interplay of identities that may help or hind father's enactment of spousal support, childcare, and household labor. Nonetheless, participants wide reports of engaging in egalitarian FI practices as well as their mentions of receiving evangelical Christian teachings that call fathers to be more present in their children's lives and reinterpret their understanding of

father as provider, calls for research that investigates the validity of these claims. One way to achieve this could be to collect the response of all members of the family unit to corroborate fathers' claims of egalitarian FI (A. Hochschild & Machung, 1990; NW et al., n.d.).

The second limitation of this study is the considerable heterogeneity of the data pool of this study. As has been noted throughout this thesis, this was a small exploratory study that reflected the FI of these participants, and should not be regarded as generalizable in any capacity. While the findings of this study provide implications for the use of INT in the study of FI, future research could benefit from implement a similar approach to a larger and more diverse data pool. For instance, adapting INT to be used in quantitative study about fathers process of identity prioritizing could prove fruitful. Despite these limitations, the implication of the findings of this study provides valuable insight for scholars and those interested in encouraging greater FI. In short, my thesis provides a jumping off point for the use of INT in study of FI, a number of compelling findings about the ways fathers negotiate tensions to make sense of their FI, and insight into the tensions hindering FI that require greater attention from scholars and fathers alike.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Materials

Sample Recruitment Email to Church Representative

Good [Time of Day] [Name],

I am a master's candidate student in the communication department at Baylor University and am reaching out today to ask for your help connecting with father members of your church community who might be interested in partaking in a study I am conducting for my thesis.

I am studying the ways men negotiate their various personal and cultural identities to make sense of their identity as fathers. Specifically, I am seeking fathers who are members of dual earning households and identify as evangelical Christians and Southerners.

The study includes a short writing session and interview and would take roughly an hour and a half to complete. I hope to contribute to a larger body of research that seeks to further the well-being of fathers and their families by understanding societal communication and the ways it may encourage and/or hinder father involvement. The study questions are intended not only to better understand father's experiences but also to allow participants to engage in deep reflection about their identity and spur mindfulness.

I am excited to explore this important area of research and would appreciate your assistance connecting with interested fathers in your congregation. For instance, I noticed y'all have a [specific group] within your church, I'd love the opportunity to reach out to

the group via email [or join one of their virtual bible studies] to explain a bit more about the study. Thank you for sharing your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Church Board Outreach Message

Hello!

I am a master's candidate student at Baylor University studying the ways men negotiate their various personal and cultural identities to make sense of their identity as fathers. I am seeking fathers who are members of dual earning households and identify as evangelical Christians and Southerners for the study. I would appreciate the help of [organization] in reaching participants.

The study includes a short writing session and interview and would take roughly an hour and a half to complete. I hope to contribute to a larger body of research that seeks to further the well-being of fathers and their families by understanding societal communication and the ways it may encourage and/or hinder father involvement.

I am excited to explore this important area of research and would appreciate your assistance connecting with interested fathers in your church men's group. I am happy to provide more information about the study for those interested. Thank you for sharing your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Personal Outreach Via Email

Good [time of day] [name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study about how men negotiate tensions in their roles as fathers. In this email, I have attached a copy of the study consent

form which reviews the purpose, activities, risks and benefits, as well as the confidentiality of the study.

Please review the consent form and decide if you would like to proceed with participating in the study. If so, please email me back to confirm your interest and we can set a date and time for the virtual interview. I will also send you a survey link to fill out the study demographic form as well as a couple of questions for you to consider and respond to prior to the start of the interview.

My best,

Michaela Wuthrich

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: “The Role of Identity Negotiation in Father Involvement”

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michaela Wuthrich

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to explore the ways men negotiate their various personal and cultural identities to make sense of their role as fathers. We are asking you to take part in this study because, as an evangelical-Christian father from a dual earner household in the South, you have a unique experience and insight to offer regarding the ways your cultural groups influence your identity as a father.

Study activities: This is a two part-study which will take roughly an hour to complete. If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Fill out a demographic form which includes questions about your age, education, employment, income, race, marital status, and the U.S. territory you live in
- After submitting the consent form and demographic form, correspond with the Primary Investigator via email to set a date and time to participate in the study.
- During the allotted study time, partake in a ten-minute free-writing session directly before a one-on-one interview with the primary investigator.

- Directly after the writing session, be interviewed on the video conference software Zoom in the form of an open discussion about your experiences and identity as a father. (The interviewer will not ask you to turn on your camera)
- Be audio-recorded, so the primary investigator can directly transcribe the conversation for data analysis.

Risks and Benefits: Risks of participating in this study include:

- You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions in the demographic form. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.
- You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions during the interview portion. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.
- The questions being asked throughout the study may be sensitive and personal in nature. It is possible that answering some questions may cause some stress. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview. Furthermore, the entire study is voluntary. You are free to refrain from answering any question or discussing any topic for any reason.

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include:

- You may experience emotional and mental health benefits from engaging in deep self-reflection throughout the study.
- Others may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

Confidentiality: A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared

with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in the online demographic form on the software Survey Monkey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, which could include illegal interception of the data by another party. If you are concerned about your data security, contact the researcher to schedule a time to complete a printed survey with the same questions.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by assigning you a pseudonym at the end of the interview portion of the study to categorize and reference data collected from your participation. The principal investigator will redact any clearly identifiable personal information from the collected writing and interview transcript before uploading the electronic data onto a shared file in the password protected cloud service Box with their faculty advisor. Beside the electronic files, the PI will use hardcopy papers to visually categorize and interpret the emerging data. They will take pictures and/or scan the hardcopy data, upload the files to the shared Box folder, and shred the hardcopies at the end of the study. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

By law, researchers must release certain information to the appropriate authorities if they have reasonable cause to believe any of the following:

- Abuse or neglect of a child
- Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult
- Risk of harming yourself or others
- Alleged incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking, committed by or against a person enrolled at or employed by Baylor University at the time of the incident

Questions or concerns about this research study

You can call or email us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers and email are listed below:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Michaela Wuthrich

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Hours of Availability: 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM,

M-F

FACULTY ADVISOR:

Leslie Hahner, Ph.D.

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Hours of Availability: By Email

Appointment

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at [REDACTED].

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. Information already collected about you cannot be deleted.

By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

Section One: Opening Statements

Overview Informed Consent

- This interview will be audio-record and transcribed for data analysis.
- The questions being asked throughout the study may be sensitive and personal in nature. So, if there is any point in the interview when you feel emotional, stressed, or uncomfortable with any of the questions or topics discussed please feel free tell me if you want to take a break or stop the interview. And as a reminder, you are allowed to refrain from answering any question for any reason.
- While several measures have been put into place to protect your confidentiality, there are risks similar to a person's everyday use of the internet. While taking part in this study, there is a risk your personal information could be shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not intended to see or know about your information.
- By law, researchers must release certain information to the appropriate authorities if they have reasonable cause to believe any of the following:
 - Abuse or neglect of a child
 - Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult
 - Risk of harming yourself or others

- Alleged incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking, committed by or against a person enrolled at or employed by Baylor University at the time of the incident

Summarize Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways you negotiate your various personal and cultural identities to make sense of your role as a father. As an evangelical-Christian father from a dual earner household in Texas, you have a unique experience and insight to offer regarding the ways your cultural groups influence your identity as a father.

Define Father Involvement

- Spousal support: providing emotional, instrumental, and informational support to your spouse
- Child-care: participation in the emotional and physical care of one's children.
- Housework: regular work done in housekeeping, such as cleaning, shopping, and cooking

Overview Interview Flow

Section Two: Contextual Questions

1. Prior to the start of this interview, I asked you to share the memorable messages you have received through the years that have influenced your identity as a father.
 - a. Tell me a bit about the messages you chose.
 - b. How have you taken the messages you have received about fatherhood and adapted it to form your own identity as a father?

2. Let's take a moment to talk about your parenting style. Studies that have attempted to categorize styles of parenting tend to focus on two factors.
 - a. The first is parental control. This refers to the kinds of demands, rules, punishments, and structure you place on your kids as they grow (Baumrind, 1971; Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014). How does parental control fit into your identity and approach as a father? (Clarify if needed)
 - b. The second dimension of parenting style focuses on supportiveness and warmth. This refers to the extent you foster your child's individuality and independence by being attuned and supportive to the child's special needs and demands (1971; 2014). How does parental warmth fit into your identity and approach as a father? (Clarify if needed).

Section Three: Antecedent Questions

1. For the sake of this study, I will define evangelical Christianity as a trans-denominational movement with Christianity. The main beliefs of evangelical Christianity include the recognition of receiving salvation through the "born-again" experience, the authority of the Bible as God's word, and the calling of followers to spread the message of Christianity (*Glossary / Operation World*, n.d.). With that said, do you identify as an evangelical Christian?
 - a. How has your identity as an evangelical Christian influenced your identity as a father?

- b. Has there ever been a time when you had to negotiate tensions between your identity as a father and as a [preferred title] in your everyday approach to father involvement?
 - i. How did you negotiate the conflict?
- 2. I like to start out by asking about your faith identity because the culture and it's group members are a little easier to define and recall. Regional identity can be harder to define. Even in this study, I began by asking fathers if they considered themselves Southern and the response I would receive was, "Well, I'm Texan". This led to the realization that Texan identity was a unique regional identity on its own and worth of studying. So, let me start out by asking, what does being Texan-Southern mean to you
 - a. How has your identity as a Texan-Southerner influenced your identity as a father?
 - b. Has there ever been a time when you have felt tensions between the messages you've received about being Texan-Southern and your personal identity as a father
 - i. How did you negotiate the conflict?
- 3. The last identity group I want to discuss with you is your role as a member of a dual earner household. This might include the messages you have received from your spouse, your co-workers, or perhaps something you have read or watched about dual earner families.
 - a. Overall, how do you think your father identity is influenced by being one of two people in your household who provide financial support?

- a. Has there ever been a time when you have felt being a member of a dual earner household has conflicted with your identity as a father?
 - i. If so, how did you negotiate the conflict?

Section Four: Process Questions

Now that we've discussed three groups you associate with and how they've influenced your identity as a father, I want to dig into the tensions you may have experienced across all three. Human beings are complicated, and we must negotiate messages we received across all of our personal and group identities. So, specifically, I'm curious about the way these tensions you've discussed might conflict with each other within the context of your identity as a father. I'm also interested in how you have negotiated these tensions to find balance with yourself and others.

1. Can you describe a time when your identity as a father changed?
 - a. What spurred this change?
 - b. Did the change conflict with your religious, regional, or professional identities?
 - c. How did you work through this period of transformation?
 - d. If you were able to successfully negotiate through this period, how did it affect how you were treated by those affected (your spouse, your children)?
2. Has there ever been a time where you felt excluded from one of the groups you associate or that you couldn't connect with other members of your social group because of your identity as a father?

- a. Guide through the three identity groups (i.e. what about with your identity as a Southerner?)
 - b. Why did you feel excluded?
 - c. Were you able to work through this period? If so, how?
 - d. If you were able to successfully negotiate through this period, how did it affect how you were treated by those affected (your spouse, your children)?
3. Can you recall a time where you felt vulnerable in your identity as a father?
- a. How did that experience connect or conflict with your religious, regional, or professional identities?
 - b. Were you able to work through this period of vulnerability and if so, how?
 - c. How did you find balance or security in that situation?
 - d. If you were able to successfully negotiate through this period, how did it affect how you were treated by those affected (your spouse, your children)?

Section Five: Wrap-Up And Conclusion

1. After all the experiences you have had in negotiating your identity as a father, what does it mean to be a successful father to you? (In terms of...)
- a. Spousal Support
 - b. Child Care
 - c. Household Labor

2. What advice would you give to other fathers to help them negotiate all the different groups and identities they have to balance in their own lives?
3. Is there anything else I should know about identity negotiation in fatherhood?
4. We discussed four parts of your identity today (Evangelical Christian, Member of dual earner household, Texan-Southerner, and father) If you had to rank these identities in importance to your life, where would each rank?

Researcher Humbling

Debrief

Create Participant Pseudonym

Demographic Survey

Close

APPENDIX D

Code Book Example

Code Description (Short)	Description	Typical Exemplars
Father Identity Negotiation as Identity Prioritizing	Participants described identity negotiation tactic of prioritizing beliefs associated with more central identities. The most central identities for participants and consequently the most prioritized, were their evangelical Christian and Father Identities, which many saw as intertwined.	"There's been a severe tension. But being a Christian has worked me through that more than anything. I can refer back to when I do have issues. I pray and I can go to scripture and I can find the answer every time." -Ben
Father Identity Negotiation as Tension Avoiding	Participants described identity negotiation tactic of avoiding tension. Avoidance tactics included avoiding culturally unfamiliar environments and interactions.	"I mean, my son moved to probably the opposite of Texas. He was living there in Portland, Oregon, and. He, he has adopted maybe more of the Portland, Oregon mindset than the Texas mindset. So that has created conflict, and so I just kind of just, you know, we just don't talk about it pretty much." -Paul
Father Identity Negotiation as MIA	Participants described identity negotiation tactic of Mindful Identity Attunement (MIA). For participants, this included engaging in self-reflection of identity and behavior, communicating with others, seeking out instructional texts, attuning to family needs,	"But to be authentically emotional is to examine, what are the underlying fears, anxieties, insecurities that I have about whatever decisions we're making and. And can I trust my wife with those and vice versa. And when that happens, that's when real communication takes place." -Seth

	and reflecting on good and bad examples of father involvement.	
MIA Outcomes	Participants described outcome of MIA as improved FI and knowledge to teach other fathers.	"I believe the outcome. Is well, it has to be what I'm living right now or. A calm life right now, even with all the junk that we've been going through the last year and especially the last week, week and a half [referring to Winter Storm Uri]. And looking at my family... Looking at the, the relationship I have with my wife. With the church here, where I'm a minister with the staff every day. I think all of all that what I have learned in the past and all the things that I've done." – Jerry
Texan Identity	Participants provided descriptors of Texan identity. These include conservatism, good-humored state pride, fluid nature with other regional cultures, being different than Southern, having Christian morals, independence, and being hard-working.	"I think Texas relates to the concept, and this is not like, I'm not talking about Clint Eastwood here, but it relates to the concept of the West, which is a very fiercely independent, just fiercely independent mindset. And so the South has a very deep, rich, and, I love it, cultural set of values. And I think Texas is on board with all that. But I think Texans go beyond that to just a...fierce independent confidence in how to approach life." -Clint
Texan x Father Identity Tension	Participants described tensions between identity as a Texan and identity as a father. There was only one notable tension that resulted from child departing from father's Texan identity.	"I kind of want my children to grow up with boots and wranglers, maybe not wranglers, Western clothing. And there is tension there, because I find myself having to let them make their own choice. I find tension a lot in just their clothing, because I'm a Texan." -Ben
Texan x Father Identity Negotiation	Participants engaged in different identity	"I have Texan friends who are expatriates who are very proud to

	<p>negotiation tactics to resolve tension between Texan x Father Identity Negotiation.</p> <p>Specifically, study found theme of fathers using tension avoidance, identity prioritization, and MIA tactics.</p>	<p>be like like a Yankee in New Jersey now. And that's that's their thing now. And that may be where my kids land. And I don't I don't have strong feelings about about that...This is just kind of what I am." -Jeremy</p>
Dual earner x Father Identity Tension	<p>Participants recalled tension in identity as a member of a dual earning household and father identity. The most notable tension resulted from one or both spouses having a concept of gender role ideology that did not fit with demands of dual earner family.</p>	<p>"That's definitely something that we've navigated over the course of our marriage, even before we had kids, because my wife comes from a family that was very traditional and very like the dad works and the mom stays at home with the kids and her dad...and and my wife also has ambitions like she had a desire to be a stay at home mom because of like the model and everything. But that's just never been something that was financially viable for us." - Jeremy</p>
Dual earner x Father Identity Tension Negotiation	<p>Participants engaged in different identity negotiation tactics to resolve tension between Dual earner x Father Identity Negotiation.</p> <p>Specifically, study found theme of fathers using all three identity negotiation tactics.</p>	<p>"And so, hey, how is it how is God the source of, how is Christ the source of of our professional and all our other identities? And that is not a I don't see this as a as a one way mandate from God to myself to my wife. This is this is a God ordained mandate for my wife and I to engage in together. And she disciple's me in the same way." -Seth</p>
Intertwined Evangelical Christian & Father Identity	<p>Participants described their evangelical Christian and Father identity as intertwined, meaning they are deeply connected to one another. This connection resulted in reports of reciprocal influence</p>	<p>"I would say no in the sense of that, the only way I understand fatherhood is in completely theological terms. I grew up in a Christian household and, you know, it's so embedded in me that it's almost hard to separate in another sense." -Seth</p>

	between father and evangelical Christian identity as well as inability to distinguish between the two identities.	
Evangelical Christian x Father Identity Tensions	Participants recalled tensions in evangelical Christian identity and Father Identity. Notable tensions included Identity vs role prioritization uncertainty and parenting style uncertainty.	"But in terms of like father and Christian, like, I guess my struggle is that my instinct is to say father would come... but I wouldn't, it feels weird to say Christian is second to that, too, because I don't know what the one would be without the other. And also because Christian has totally shaped. Like my interests and how I approach my interests and and kind of my thought life... I can't separate Father and Christian enough to say this one is more than the other." -Jeremy
Evangelical Christian x Father Identity Tension Negotiation	Participants described tactics used to negotiate tensions in evangelical Christian and father identities. This included employing all three identity negotiation tactics of identity prioritizing, tension avoidance, and MIA.	"OK, this is this is what maybe the textbooks will say about development. But what is God asking us to do? The beauty of marriage is that you have someone to talk about this. This is the decision I'm kind of struggling with. Can we struggle with it together and can we try and come up with an answer together? So to me, the spouse is essential to negotiating that, that tension or that contradiction, whatever you want to call it." - Seth
Successful FI as providing structure	Participants emphasized forming a structured environment for children with clear boundaries, rules, and expectations as important to successful FI.	"I have tried to provide an environment of some structure, you know, and what I mean by that is kind of a routine family routine of number one, our church family just being being ever present. It's kind of a non-negotiable type time." -Clint

Successful FI as providing stability	Participants emphasized providing stable environment for children. This environment is described as knowing parents will stay together, father will be there for them, and God loves them.	"He said your children have both a mother and a father who both loved God. They have a mother and dad who both loved them. And they have a mother and a father who both love each other. And he said, when you have. Mother and dad, we both love God, we both love each other and we both love those kids, it forms a safety net." -Shepherd
Success FI as providing support	Participants described providing support to spouse and children as important to successful FI. This includes emotional, esteem, informational, and tangible support.	"Supporting them [his children] all the time... Yeah, I think the financial, spiritual, emotional. You know your presence as well." -Paul
Successful FI as adapting	Participants reflected on need to adapt FI to meet family's needs.	"My wife and I both work full time now and we work together really well and our schedules change, you know, and we've learned to adapt to that. There's not a set like, well you're supposed to do this every time. It's not that way. We approach it as on a need, as needed basis." - Mark
Successful FI as being present	Participants emphasized being present and involved in family life as important role of successful FI.	"you have to be present physically as a father. And there's no shortcuts. There's no such thing as quality time or intensity that that's all B.S. You have to have an immense amount of time, just just pure time and be present." -Clint
Successful FI as 'passing the baton' of evangelical Christian identity	Participants described the goal of FI as passing along their evangelical Christian faith to their children. An organization mentioned by several fathers (that	"I guess for me, success as a father would be. To see my children and. If applicable, my grandchildren to be faithful to the Lord and their spouses, of course. And just, just, to pass on that legacy of faith, and nothing else

	provides parenting resources for evangelical Christian fathers) referred to this process as 'passing the baton'.	really matters to me. Obviously, I want to be to be a successful father means to be a successful husband, to to be faithful to my wife and loving to her and to remain faithful myself to God." - Mark
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APPENDIX E

Texts Mentioned By Participants

Participant Quote	Original Text Source
"And I follow the Bible, spare the rod, spoil the child. You don't get a woopin' every time, but. You get a couple of warnings and then after that, you're going to get a reinforced reminder"	Proverbs 13:24 "Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them." (<i>Proverbs 13:24 NIV - Whoever Spares the Rod Hates Their - Bible Gateway</i> , n.d.)
"I can just easily think back to Daniel or anybody else in the Bible that essentially, against all odds, against all logic, does the right thing. And so, you know, we get to draw from stories like that that are that are great here."	Book of Daniel (<i>Bible Gateway Passage</i> , n.d.-f)
"You know, and there's a lot of passages in the Bible where it talks about the father and how they are to treat their their wife and how they are to do not exasperate your children, for example."	Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (<i>Bible Gateway Passage</i> , n.d.-h)
"I've been really affected by a couple of verses, other verses, Hebrews 12, where it says Fix Your Eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Consider him who endured the cross, so that's that's something that I try to keep in focus a lot. And the other one is, be content with what you have, because God has said, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you."	Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave; never will I forsake you.' (<i>Bible Gateway Passage</i> , n.d.-j) Hebrews 12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (<i>Bible Gateway Passage</i> , n.d.-i)
"In Colossians, it says, set your minds on Jesus. Set your minds on things above, not on things below. That's very hard to do, but it's something that had to be on the forefront of my life."	Colossians 3: 1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When

	<p>Christ, who is your[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-e)</i></p>
<p>"I realized one, that I was wrong about a particular passage that I used was inefficient. And it talks about wives be submissive to your husbands. And the verse before that that introduces the husband wife relationship. I'd never looked at the verse right before that says be subject or submissive to one another in reverence for Christ."</p>	<p>Ephesians 5:21-23 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-g)</i></p>
<p>"I've got to take advantage of that time and. And in 2 Peter:1 he says, I'm going to make the most of the opportunity, I have to remind you of your faith, I'm paraphrasing here, to remind you of your faith because so that you will remember it when I'm gone... And that's that's the kind of my mission right now is, in these last few years with my kids at home, I'm not going to waste it. I don't want to waste it doing things that don't really matter."</p>	<p>2 Peter 1: 10-15 "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-d)</i></p>
<p>"The focus on. What the father does for the son, particularly, I'd say the most powerful illustration of that has to be in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke: 15, and watching the father, you know, sacrifice his possessions at the son's request and watching him leave and allowing him to leave. I see that as kind of the coaching counseling phase."</p>	<p>Luke 15:11-32 The Parable of the Lost Son <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-k)</i></p>
<p>"That's had a big influence on me in the way that I parent, in the way that I try to raise my children in love, which the love we we have from God. First John 4:19; we love because he first loved us. So that's kind of. Right where it comes from."</p>	<p>1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us. <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-b)</i></p>
<p>"Biblically, I am convicted by the reminder that if a person cannot lead their family, they can't lead the church (my paraphrase)"</p>	<p>1 Timothy 3: 4-5 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) <i>(Bible Gateway Passage, n.d.-c)</i></p>

<p>I participated in several men's groups (as well as couples' groups) in early adulthood that were filled with other young men who wanted to be good dads as much as they wanted to be successful in the marketplace. A quote from one of the books we read together still stands out after ~30 years, <i>Man in the Mirror</i> – "Why would you ruin a million-dollar kid over a \$200 coffee table?"</p>	<p>"Man in the Mirror" Part 2, Section 8 Children: <i>How to Avoid Regrets</i> "Finally, Patsy couldn't take it anymore and said, "You leave my children alone! I'll not have you ruining a million-dollar child over a \$300 table!" (Morley, 2014, p. 130)</p>
<p>"A Faithful Father is physically present, emotionally engaged, and leads Spiritually by example." – Rick Wertz, President of Faithful Fathering. This has been my mission statement in the home for the last five years after hearing Rick's testimony and presentation of his ministry to our church. It has made me a much more intentional father as I raise my kids to love the Lord.</p>	<p>The nonprofit organization Faithful Fathering offers in-person workshops, videos, studies, and blogs that offer the quote mentioned by this participant. (<i>For Dads - Faithful Fathering</i>, n.d.)</p>

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