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CHILDHOOD LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT-RELATED
PATERNAL ABSENCE: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
BY
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CHILDHOOD LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SHORT-TERM EMPLOYMENT-RELATED PATERNAL ABSENCE: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Dedication

I dedicate my thesis project to my dad, the one who raised me. Your forgiving guidance has

inspired my passion for better supporting children, youth, and their families. Your preservation

of attending to our familial needs, while working away from home, greatly influences my

passion to be a loving mother, a genuine counsellor, and an innovative researcher. Thank you.

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This thesis is a reflection of the support I have received from many individuals. I would like to sincerely extend my appreciation to those who have been of aid throughout this journey.

Foremost, I would like to express my gratitude towards my family, who have encouraged me to complete my thesis. My beloved husband, Wade, you have been a constant source of support and encouragement in my academic endeavours. It is with your undeniable spousal and parental support that I am celebrating my successes today. Coordinately, I also treasure my daughter's presence. Your unconditional love has grounded me when I remember that supporting you to thrive is what has guided the completion of my study.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Simon Nuttgens. You have provided me the opportunity to explore this new innovative terrain. With your guidance, my research will be of use to better support professionals in working with families who experience the unique familial dynamics of short-term employment-related paternal absence.

I am greatly indebted to those who participated in my study. Your wealth of knowledge has provided a better understanding of the unique population I have sought to explore. Thank you for sharing your experiences.

Last, but not least, my appreciation extends to my fellow colleagues, who have unconditionally and willingly helped me navigate this pursuit.

Abstract

For many Canadian families, having a parent work away from home for extended periods of time has become an accepted way of life. This employment arrangement is especially prominent within Canada's resources extraction industry. However, despite employment-related parental absence being experienced by thousands of Canadian families, little research exists that examines the effects on the children involved. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to understand the experiences of young adults who grew up in families where their father worked away from home on a short-term rotational basis. The childhood experience of four young adults was characterized by: Experiencing Paternal Absence, Adjusting to Paternal Absence, Temporal Adjustment, and Perceiving the Experience of Others. The results suggest that employment-related paternal absence families are able to harness the advantages of this life-style, while adjusting to and coping with the disadvantages. Counsellors are positioned to support the adaptive capacities of these families.

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Chapter I – Introduction

There is a growing trend toward employment-related geographic mobility in Canada (Haan, Walsh, & Neis, 2014) resulting in paternal absence that impacts the children's development, the paternal relationship, and family functioning. In 2016, 403,000 Canadians were employed in the natural resource mineral industry (Government of Canada, 2018) and 136,000 Canadians were employed in Alberta's energy sector (Alberta Energy, 2018). Both of these industries often involve a rotational shift system, or long-distance commuting, where fathers repeatedly travel away from home to their place of work, for short-term durations (e.g., 7 or 14 days on, 7 or 14 days off). An understanding of short-term employment-related paternal absence (E-RPA) is limited, given the literature's primary focus on prolonged absence. While a considerable body of research has examined parental experiences of paternal absence, researchers have directed little attention to the children's experience. To date, no Canadian research exists that specifically addresses the child's experience of short-term E-RPA.

Given that qualitative methods are especially suited to researching new areas of investigation, this study drew upon interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to develop a rich, interpretive account of the childhood experience of having a father who works away from home for short-term rotations, from the perspective of the adult child. This understanding may help counsellors better support this emerging demographic. As Cabrera, Cook, McFadden, and Bradley (2011) found, children and adolescents raised in an environment consisting of E-RPA have the potential to develop a strong relationship with their absent father if certain mitigating factors, such as the felt experience of closeness, is present. By identifying adult children's perceptions of the qualities that are common to these strong relationships, counsellors can enhance their understanding of the connection between child and father. An increased

understanding of these childhood relational experiences can also help counsellors recognize, appropriately support, and address the developmental needs of children and adolescents being raised within this type of familial dynamic.

For these reasons, within this study, I aimed to elicit adult participants' understanding of how short-term E-RPA influenced their childhood experiences. The choice to use adult participants, rather than children, was purposeful. The in-depth information gathered from this population provided a rich reflection of the phenomenon and of how paternal absence circumstances have shaped their experiences. The time-lapse allowed for an understanding of their experience, without concern of present immersion clouding participants' understanding of the target phenomenon experience. With the potential possibility, this exploration revealed how historical accounts evolved over time and exposed the influence of paternal absence on the participants' current views on employment, child-rearing, and held familial values.

It is important to note that my experience of having a father who worked away from home during my childhood for one-week rotations inspired this phenomenological exploration. Specifically, this lifestyle influenced my decision to become a counsellor, where I desire to help families receive the supports that my family did not experience. I am aware that experiences inescapably shape my perceptions. Thus, it was important that I maintained a reflexive stance throughout all components of this research. This reflexive position aligned with bracketing, a vital aspect of IPA. While it was difficult to neutralize my pre-existing assumptions and biases entirely, I attended to them through the process of continual reflection (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

With these considerations, this IPA study has enhanced current understandings of this dynamic phenomenon and this emerging demographic. The research question guiding this

inquiry was: *What is the childhood experience of being raised in a family when the father works away from home on short-term rotations?*

Purposes of the Research

The purpose of this research was to develop an in-depth understanding of 1) the adult perspectives of their experience of growing up in an environment where their father worked away from home for short periods of time; 2) the reciprocal nature of context and relational experiences and how these factors may have influenced children's development, paternal connection, and familial dynamics and decision-making strategies; and, 3) coping and protective factors for counsellors working with families who experience short-term E-RPA, within the context of familial dynamics and family functioning, to contribute to the field of counselling.

Defining Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence

Given the diverse literature on the reasons for paternal absence, there is no universally accepted definition of E-RPA. Some have used terms such as short-term paternal absence, prolonged paternal absence, and long-term paternal absence, to distinguish the duration of when a father is away from home. Short-term paternal absence refers to the father's employment related to resource-based employers, where rotations require only one to two-week absences (Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008). Prolonged, or lengthier employment rotational leaves involve rotational absences of three weeks or longer (Thomas & Bailey, 2006; Thomas & Bailey, 2009). These employed positions may include seafaring or military lifestyles. Long-term paternal absence often reflects circumstances unrelated to employment. This form of absence is often the result of divorce or legal separation, incarceration, and non-residence circumstances.

Different types of employment-related mobility can lead to conflicting definitions of paternal absence. For example, mobility may involve fly-in/fly-out commuting or long-distance

commuting. Newhook et al. (2011) defined employment-related mobility as "situations where workers regularly and repeatedly cross municipal, provincial or national boundaries to get to and from their place of employment" (pp. 121-122). This geographical distance involves employee separation from their family. To arrive at this place of employment, this sometimes involves fly-in/fly-out commuting, where employees are temporarily flown to their employed location for a specific amount of time and flown home for their rotational days off. These fly-in/fly-out arrangements are sometimes referred to as long-distance commuting, since these environments often do not house permanent communities but only temporarily house the employed individuals (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005; Meredith, Rush, & Robinson, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, *short-term E-RPA* referred to long-distance commuting where fathers travelled away from home to their place of work on a rotational basis for durations of one to two-weeks. Specific to the direction of this study, the employment factor referred to a father who worked in natural resource-related employment within the boundaries of Saskatchewan, and who was required to be periodically absent for employment circumstances. Clarifying this definition provided an accurate visual of the specific target population that was under investigation.

Chapter II – Literature Review

My thesis research, an inquiry into short-term E-RPA involved gathering the childhood experience of being raised in this family dynamic from adults. In this chapter, I will review literature on the different types of paternal absence along with father involvement and how these variables influence children's development and the father-child relationship. I will begin with an examination of the implications of paternal absence on child development, followed by the relationship between the type of employment factors and father involvement, and how closeness develops within the paternal relationship. I will then present how paternal absence influences family dynamics and family functioning while highlighting the coping strategies and protective mechanisms these families utilize. I will end with a discussion of the limitations found in the existing literature and propose alternative ways of coming to a greater understanding of the short-term E-RPA phenomenon.

Implications of Paternal Absence on Child Development

Paternal absence, regardless of reason, impacts child development and behaviour (Card et al., 2011; Parkes, Carnell, & Farmer, 2005). Interestingly, research indicates that there are few negative effects for children whose father is absent due to military deployment, suggesting minimal maladjustment associated with these lengthy absences (Card et al., 2011). In Card et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis of 16 deployment studies they found that children who experienced military-related parental absence demonstrated minimal maladjustment, and the presence of internalizing and externalizing behaviours were no greater than children from non-military families. There was a small negative correlation between children who had deployed parents and academic achievement for children, while essentially no correlation for adolescents.

Researchers have also explored paternal absence involving offshore employment. Parkes et al. (2005) conducted a mixed methods narrative study that involved 39 interviews and 245 surveys of offshore oil workers' spouses. Contrary to expectations, parents perceived this lifestyle to have a positive effect on their children's development, as participants spoke about how rotational work may provide opportunities for gaining independence and learning to adjust. However, spouses with younger children tended to be more concerned about the impact of the father's absence, especially regarding the development of the paternal relationship. Regardless of the reason for paternal absence, the quality and quantity of paternal involvement plays a unique role in child development. In Allen and Daly's (2007) review of the effects of father involvement, they found consistent evidence that the quality of the father-child relationship is more important than the actual amount of time spent together. This finding is crucial to understanding the effects of E-RPA and whether the benefits of the paternal relationship outweigh the consequences of the rotational lifestyle and family dynamic. Similarly, Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, and Oglesby (2011) found that children's age impacted the level of father involvement during paternal absence and upon reunification. As the age of the child increased, fathers expressed more understanding of their children's emotional and physical reactions when the father deployed.

When considering residence and family structure, research indicates that father involvement holds greater weight for adolescents, suggesting the importance of quality paternal involvement (Carlson, 2006). This finding should not discount residence, given that living arragements with paternal presence may encourage greater opportunity for paternal involvement (Carlson, 2006). Even when fathers were absent, their involvement reduced adolescents' externalizing and internalizing behaviours. The quality of father involvement was related to

adolescent behavior in all familial structures. Results demonstrated that if involvement is high, "the benefit of each unit of father involvement is two or three times as great when the father lives with the adolescent as when he lives elsewhere" (Carlson, 2006, p. 149). Father involvement also correlates with academic success. Jeynes (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 66 studies to explore the relationship between father involvement and children's academic achievement. Jeynes found a positive correlation between father involvement and academic outcomes for youth when involvement aimed to help youth achieve greater academic outcomes. Yet, father involvement impacted children's behavioural outcomes even more than their academic achievement. The author suggested that this influence may have emerged due to the assumption that it is the father who often intervenes when youth behavioural concerns are present, or that children are better able to regulate their academic outcomes in comparison to their behaviour.

Father Involvement and Type of Employment Factors

With the consideration of E-RPA, evidence suggests that the quality of the relationship between the child and the absent father holds an important role in a child's life (Linnenberg, 2012; MacBeth, Kaczmarek, & Sibel, 2012; Shen and Dicker, 2008). Linnenberg (2012), in a qualitative study, compared 62 fathers who had jobs that required traditional working hours (typically nine to five), had shift work hours (including evenings and weekends) or were unemployed. Linnenberg found that work schedule impacted the extent of father involvement with their children. Specifically, fathers who worked traditional hours were less involved with their children compared to fathers who worked shiftwork or were unemployed. Shen and Dicker (2008) explored the impact of shiftwork by interviewing 24 shift workers. They found that shift workers appreciated condensing their work hours into fewer days that allowed them to have a greater amount of quality time spent with their families. In a phenomenological study MacBeth,

Kaczmarek, and Sibel (2012) explored the impact of fly-in/fly-out employment on the

relationships between adolescent boys and their fathers. They found that these adolescents spoke

about the advantage of having more opportunity for greater interactions with their fathers, given

the extended periods of time spent together when the father returned home. Adolescent

participants described a positive paternal relationship and did not feel disadvantaged by having

their father work away from home. Although the results of Linnenberg (2012), MacBeth et al.

(2012), and Shen and Dicker's (2008) studies were not specific to fathers who are absent for

longer periods of time, there is evidence to suggest that the quality of the relationship between

the child and the absent father provides greater value than the quantity of time spent together.

Although E-RPA influences the amount of time fathers spend on the paternal

relationship, the quality of time they spend with their children appears to outweigh these

concerns. Thomas and Bailey (2006) interviewed 33 seafarers and their spouses. They found that

for seafarers, their role as a father was significant to them, provided that this type of work, in

comparison to a traditional job, allowed for more quality time spent on the paternal relationship.

Willerton et al. (2011) found that work-related paternal absence may increase the amount of

quality time that fathers spend with their children. Willerton et al. interviewed 71 fathers through

focus groups to discern the effects of military deployment on father involvement. They noted

that for military fathers, it was important that they were highly involved with their children when

they were able to be; the effort to spend quality time with their children was essential.

Children may also hold similar beliefs about E-RPA and father involvement, but there are

few studies conducted from the child or adolescent's perspective. Although perhaps dated, in

their ethnographic study, Mauthner, MacLean, and McKee (2000) looked at E-RPA and father

involvement from the perspectives of 33 children. Mauthner et al. found that "children did not

necessarily think that if fathers worked offshore they had less time to spend with their family" (p. 151). Most children reported that they were able to spend more quality time with their fathers, although, children whose fathers regularly worked away from home were better able to adapt to this lifestyle than those who experienced it only occasionally (Mauthner et al., 2000). Contrary to expectations, a few children preferred their fathers to work away from home over traditional employment.

A phenomenological study by MacBeth et al. (2012) explored the impact of fly-in/fly-out employment on the relationships between adolescent boys and their fathers. A major theme in this study was that these adolescents spoke about the advantage of having more opportunity for greater interactions with their fathers, given the extended periods of time when the father returned home. Another major theme identified was related to family relationships and the paternal relationship between father and son. The adolescents described the paternal relationship as being positive and did not feel disadvantaged by having their father work away from home.

Through an extensive review of the Australian literature on paternal absence and childhood adjustment, Meredith et al. (2014) contended that few studies have explored the effects for children when growing up with fly-in/fly-out living arrangements, thus producing inconsistent results and making it difficult to assert definitive conclusions for this population. There currently is no similar research within the Canadian context.

The Development of Closeness Within the Paternal Relationship

The closeness developed between a child and an absent father is positively influenced by the quality of their relationship, rather than paternal presence or absence per se (Cabrera et al., 2011). In Cabrera et al.'s (2011) longitudinal study that included 508 low-income children and their families, they found a correlation between father residence in early childhood and closeness

in middle childhood. Regardless of a father's residence, those children in middle childhood who developed close relationships with their fathers demonstrated less behavioural concerns and greater interpersonal relations with their peers. Even though a father's residence plays an important part in children's lives, there may be greater value in the quality of the paternal relationship, rather than paternal residence itself (Cabrera et al., 2011).

There may be mitigating factors in how family members experience connection within the paternal relationship. To address the gap in the current literature regarding the impact of paternal absence from a child's perspective, Nixon et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study to consider the development of closeness between 27 children and adolescents and their non-resident fathers. Nixon et al. found that connectedness between child and absent father was enhanced or compromised depending on whether children perceived their fathers to be committed to the paternal relationship, the nature of the communication within this relationship, and whether familiarity existed. Mauthener et al. (2005) found that the perception of support holds weight for children. These authors found that, for children, it was more important to know that their parents were available for support when they were in need, than having their constant physical presence. Researchers have also suggested that the development of closeness within familial relationships is related to family cohesion. Zvonkovic, Solomon, Humble, and Manoogian (2005) explored the lived experiences of family members when the father worked away from home, due to fishing and trucking employment. These authors found that regardless of paternal presence, families experienced feelings of closeness, since the "key factor is the family having a strong and cohesive identity" (p. 419).

The Impact of Family Dynamics

Research suggests that E-RPA influences family dynamics, including parental roles, decision making, and household responsibilities. Parkes et al. (2005) found that parents expressed a preference for the mother to be the primary decision-maker, as this promoted family cohesion, irrespective of whether the father was at work or at home. Mauthner et al. (2000) found that children wanted to be involved in decision-making, although they recognized the difference between appropriate child and parent related roles in regards to final decisions being made.

Research suggests that E-RPA lifestyle shifts the way families assign household roles and responsibilities. Father roles and societal perceptions of gendered roles may influence family dynamics (Linnenberg, 2012; Thomas & Bailey, 2006). In their exploratory study, Thomas and Bailey (2006) examined the impact of employment patterns related to seafaring on familial relations and dynamics. They found that dividing labour roles during transitional periods was critical for traditionally gendered families to function. For seafarers, the roles of father and husband were crucially important, yet seafarers often perceived that these roles were displaced and their masculine identity threatened, given the dual roles their wives often undertook (Thomas & Bailey, 2006). Yet Linnenberg (2012) found that fathers took on paternal care as a fathering responsibility, without discrediting their gendered identity. InterGroup Consultants Ltd. (2005), who interviewed mining families as a way of understanding community vitality and improving the quality of life for these families, found that among mining families, a significant part of the E-RPA involved adopting dual parental roles, as a way to manage household responsibilities.

Father involvement undoubtedly influences family dynamics and is becoming a widely held social expectation. Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, and Oglesby's (2011) study of military

fathers identified the fathers' desire to remain consistent in the routines the mothers developed, suggesting that father involvement promotes a congruent co-parenting approach. Machin (2015) emphasized that there may be a gap between fathers' desire to be involved and their actual level of involvement. Machin conducted a mixed methods study by examining the experiences of 15 fathers regarding their paternal involvement. The results of this study indicated that fathers believed in the value of paternal involvement. The belief centered on the importance of co-parenting responsibilities and contribution of their input for their children's developmental needs. Fathers expressed concerns, however, regarding the difficulty in balancing their employment and family responsibilities, especially their paternal involvement and how it impacted their well-being and family functioning (Machin, 2015). The weighing of parenting responsibilities also involves discipline. One study suggested that E-RPA may alter the dynamics of how fathers choose to discipline their children, both during absences and upon reunification. Willerton et al. (2011) interviewed 71 military fathers' regarding their involvement and the impact it had on children's functioning and development. Willterton et al. found that these fathers often refrained from disciplining their children, though did remain consistent in the routines their wives developed.

The Impact of Family Functioning

Dependent on the work-home cycle associated with rotational employment, the impact of E-RPA has both positive and negative influences on family functioning. Parkes et al. (2005) examined spouses' perspectives and concerns regarding offshore oil workers in the United Kingdom and how this influenced family functioning. Results indicated that the work and home schedule for these fathers impacts spouses, children, and disrupts family functioning (Parkes et al., 2005). Research on E-RPA commonly finds that the transitional work-home cycle leads

families to experience two distinct lives that unavoidably impact relationship patterns and family functioning (Parkes et al., 2005; Thomas & Bailey, 2009). Wray (2012) highlighted these living cycles as alternating from one to two parent familial dynamics, depending on E-RPA work cycles.

Research tends to indicate that the benefits of E-RPA may outweigh the assumed drawbacks. Parkes et al. (2005) found that some spouses considered paternal absence to have advantages for family functioning, as fathers had a greater amount of time to spend with their children when at home. As families become accustomed to this lifestyle, they may encounter greater benefits (Wray, 2012). Wray (2012) explored the perspective of three migrant workers in Canada and the effects of this type of work on family life. Wray found that although families who had experienced E-RPA long-time had concerns regarding the intensified effects on their children's well-being, they encountered fewer stress experiences. However, when compared to families who have younger children, they experienced the greatest negative consequences. These families had concerns regarding the intensified effects of paternal absence on their children's well-being. In contrast, Meredith, Rush, and Robinson's (2014) extensive review of E-RPA found that families who experience fly-in/fly-out circumstances commonly reported healthy family functioning.

Transitional periods of approaching absences and reunification uniquely affect family functioning for families who experience E-RPA. Families encounter a transitional period upon fathers returning home (Parkes et al., 2005; Thomas & Bailey, 2006; Willerton et al., 2011). For many families, this time is often mixed with both excitement and needed adjustment (Thomas & Bailey, 2006), as families shift between single and co-parenting dynamics (Meredith et al., 2014). Spouses develop coping strategies to prepare for these transitions periods (Parkes et al.,

2005). Parkes et al. (2005) found that these strategies involved understanding when and how to discuss important concerns or problems appropriately, and how to avoid creating arguments. Some of these tactics involved refraining from immediately discussing concerns upon a partner's return, deliberately avoiding arguments, controlling one's level of irritation, or purposefully raising important topics when tensions seemed the least.

Research examined the impact of E-RPA transitional periods on children, such as when fathers leave and come back home. Findings suggests that transitional periods can be an especially difficult time for children (Zvonkovic et al., 2005). Parkes et al. (2005) found that mothers took steps to protect their children from becoming distressed at their father's departure while providing a stable and consistent environment. There is conflicting research suggesting that the impact of E-RPA on child well-being and family functioning rests on the individual perceptions of family members (Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008). For example, Kaczmarek and Sibbel compared the effects of E-RPA on children's well-being by including 30 military, 30 fly-in/fly-out mining families, and 30 community-based families in their study. They found no significant difference between all three types of families regarding children's well-being, thus suggesting no negative effect from paternal absence. Despite possible societal expectations or assumptions of the negative consequences of E-RPA, these families experienced healthy family functioning (Parkes et al., 2005). Dittman, Henriquez, and Roxburgh (2016) also found no differences between fly-in/fly-out and community families regarding the parental relationship, family functioning, and the behavioural and emotional difficulties that children encounter.

However, Kaczmarek and Sibbel (2008) found conflicting results between the standardized inventory measures of child well-being (e.g., children's reports that included the Children's Depression Inventory; Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale; Family

Assessment Device; Family Information Sheet) and mothers' perceptions of family functioning. They found that mothers reported greater family distress than the children reported on the test measures. Even with these discrepancies, the measurement scores fell within with the range of healthy family functioning. Military and fly-in/fly-out families demonstrated communication patterns similar to those of community-based families, suggesting comparable family functioning dynamics (Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008). These communication patterns involve maintaining clarity and openness within familial verbal exchanges.

Coping Strategies

Research by Zvonkovic et al. (2005) indicates that coping strategies help maintain healthy family functioning and connection for E-RPA families. Zvonkovic et al. found that family functioning involved wives managing household responsibilities, to provide opportunity for children and their fathers to connect during their limited time together. Another coping strategy that benefited these families involved seeking external social support. Zvonkovic et al. found that wives sought support and resources from extended family and peers as a way of coping during paternal absence periods. Further, Haugene Ljoså and Lau's (2009) survey of 1698 on/offshore oil and gas employees in Norway found that maintaining connections within their social network was a positive coping strategy for these employees. The benefits of employment involving work rotations may allow for greater time to be spent engaging with friends and family (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005). Equivocally, this lifestyle held a disadvantage, given that this lifestyle also required time spent apart from families (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005).

Families who have experienced long-term E-RPA seem to learn to adapt to their living circumstances over time (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005; Mauthner et al., 2000; Parkes et al.,

2005). Parkes et al. (2005) found that families who implemented coping mechanisms, such as understanding when and how to discuss concerns, showed improvement the longer families dealt with these living circumstances. Research results highlight that children may hold a similar perception. Mauthner et al. (2000) found that children became accustomed to their fathers working away, although when absence was only occasional, children expressed difficulty. Wray (2012) noted that these families have unique ways of learning to cope with their problems, although they may struggle to establish these strategies.

Protective Mechanisms

Protective mechanisms can be implemented to help to maintain connections for families who experience paternal absence. Researchers suggest that the advantage for employees of the rotational schedule allowed for these families to spend more consecutive days together at home (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005). Spending a full week away at work raises concerns of missing important milestones and major life events (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005). There is evidence however, that these families adapted their schedule to allow important celebrations to occur when fathers returned home (Willerton et al., 2011; Zvonkovic et al., 2005). Willterton et al. (2011) found that fathers believed that acknowledging and planning these important events preserved the connection they had with their children. In Mauthner et al.'s (2000) study, children generally accepted their fathers' absence for important events, although a few children reported sometimes feeling upset that their fathers were not present during important milestones.

Although availability may prove to be difficult, research suggests that the use of technology during paternal absence helps maintain familial connection (Parkes et al., 2005; Zvonkovic et al., 2005). Thomas and Bailey (2009) noted that effective communication helped families stay connected. Staying connected may be the biggest hurdle for these families during

periods of absence, especially among families who have difficulty accessing affordable means for communication (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005; MacBeth et al., 2012; Wray, 2012).

Research suggests that the benefits outweigh the risks when involving children in discussions regarding employment and home dynamics (Mauthner et al., 2000; Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). In gathering children's perspectives through qualitative studies, it was commonly found that children were better able to understand the circumstances surrounding their parents' employment when parent-child conversations on this topic occurred (Mauthner et al., 2000; Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). Even when children were purposefully left out of employment-related conversations, they still attempted to understand their unique family's work and home dynamics (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). These conversations helped children cope with paternal absence. There may, however, be gender differences in how knowledgeable and interested children are in their father's work. Mauthner et al. (2000) found that among eight to 12-year-old girls and boys, the boys were much more interested in their fathers' work. The authors suggested that this finding could be explained by gender differences related to employment interests.

Critique of Paternal Absence Research

Critique of paternal absence research focuses on methodological concerns such as small sample size, meta-analysis restrictions, self-report bias, and limited cultural diversity within differing types of E-RPA. In addition to these concerns, researchers should consider evaluating the following three overarching concerns when critically comparing the results of paternal absence studies.

While a general picture is emerging of the impact of E-RPA on children, this body of research is, for the most part, limited to studies that rely on the parent's perspective.

First, there are few studies that represent the children's perspective, and when this factor

has been considered, as found by Mauthner et al. (2000), the findings may be a reflection of

differing cultural, contextual, and relational considerations than that of the experience of children

from North America. Additionally, with studies that reflect an adolescent's perspective of E-

RPA, as found in MacBeth et al.'s (2012) study, the findings did not account for or specify the

duration of a father's rotational work (e.g., range of one week away up to three months away

rotations), thus making it difficult to determine whether the length of employment influenced the

results. The presented evidence of the impact of E-RPA for children demonstrates

inconsistencies and a lack of available knowledge. Little knowledge is available that considers

the unique experiences of fly-in/fly-out circumstances for short-term rotational leaves, especially

within the Canadian context. These existing studies may be limited by the concern of

interviewing children, who may be inclined to respond in ways to avoid upsetting their parents.

An IPA researcher needs to address this dynamic, to avoid external persuasion.

Second, most of the existing literature acknowledges the perspective of the employees,

their spouses, or the family as a unit. A qualitative study by InterGroup Consultations Ltd.

(2005) explored the perspectives of mining employees, their spouses, and children, regarding the

work rotation system located in Saskatchewan. The results of these interviews, however,

reflected a combined perception, thus restricting access to the children's direct perceptions of the

effects of having a father who worked away from home. Even when considering international

literature, existing studies rarely include children's perspectives, or adults reflecting on their

childhood experiences of being raised in a context where their fathers worked away from home.

In some cases, there is evidence to suggest that parental perceptions may not match child

perceptions, particularly when compared with quantitative measures of child experiences

(Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008). Only a few studies recognized that children and adolescents view E-RPA different from their parents.

Third, research on the effects of E-RPA on children and families has also been hampered by unclear and inconsistent definitions of father absence. Generally, paternal absence has been used variably to describe absences due to divorce, death, employment, incarceration, and neglect (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006). It is difficult to draw a conclusive understanding of father absence, given the variation in defining this concept. The types of lifestyle or employment-related circumstances or durational considerations further influence this inconclusive understanding of father absence. The vast majority of the literature focuses on non-residence status or longer leave absences (e.g., Meredith et al., 2014; Nixon, Greene, & Hogan, 2012; Thomas & Bailey, 2006), with little research on short-term circumstances.

Research that presents evidence of maladjustment for children and adolescents, and has not controlled for short-term employment circumstances, should be viewed with caution. It is well known that father involvement plays an important role in childhood experiences, and that paternal presence may mitigate developmental and academic concerns. Research indicates that the effects of father involvement in early childhood encourages the closeness developed in the father-child relationship (Cabrera et al., 2011). This acknowledgment represents a general perception of father involvement, most often with lengthier absence circumstances. This perception does not reflect an accurate account of how short-term E-RPA circumstances affect the child-father relationship, or how this lifestyle ultimately reflects childhood development. Research supports that regardless of the reason for paternal absence, the quality and quantity of involvement within the paternal relationship plays a unique role in the children's development, indicating that the quality of time spent together outweighs the amount needed (Allen & Daly,

2007). Little is known about what constitutes the quality found in these relationships, particularly

for those who experience short-term E-RPA. I conducted my thesis research to address this

knowledge gap through an examination of adult perceptions of childhood experiences of E-RPA.

The research question for this study thus asked: *What is the childhood experience of being raised*

in a family when the father works away from home on short-term rotations?

<div align="center">**Chapter III – Methodology**</div>

As a qualitative methodology intended for psychological research, the use of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) has grown significantly since its inception (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is theoretically rooted in three philosophical areas: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). I will discuss each of these in turn, and then provide a rationale for using IPA for my thesis research.

Phenomenology

The philosophical approach of phenomenology focuses on how individuals come to subjectively understand the meaning of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Interpretive phenomenological analysis draws on inductive processes to discern individual accounts of personal experience, rather than search for causal explanations (Smith et al., 2009).

Two phenomenological approaches influence IPA research: descriptive phenomenology, proposed by Edmund Husserl (Smith et al., 2009); and interpretative phenomenology, developed by Martin Heidegger (Reiners, 2012). Husserl argued that a phenomenological approach involves the essence of a phenomenon which invokes the conscious understanding of the experience (Reiners, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) suggest that phenomenological understanding through the lens of IPA research involves exploring the subjective experience of everyday experiences, as supported by Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. Heidegger proposed that understanding occurs within an interpretative stance of being, where reflection is influenced by an individual's prior experiences (Reiners, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Although Husserl supports bracketing one's assumptions, Heidegger and IPA researchers recognize that bracketing cannot be fully achieved (Smith et al., 2009). IPA researchers recognize that individuals are in constant relation to another, thus influencing the

interpretation of meaning-making developed during inquiry between researcher and participant (Smith et al., 2009).

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the second theoreitcal approach that underpins an IPA inquiry, given that it acknowledges the importance of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). This theoretical approach proposes that interpretation reflects both the participant's perspective, as well as the researcher's understanding of the explored phenomenological meaning (Smith et al., 2009). Smith and Osborn (2007) emphasized that a researcher cannot directly understand a participant's personal world, provided that a researcher's own experience and held perceptions inhibit complete understanding. These philosophical realities influence the process of interpretative inquiry. In fact, the IPA researcher is "engaged in a double hermeneutic" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). As "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 53). From this perspective, the IPA researcher's sense-making is second order, since their understanding reflects a co-constructed account of the explored phenomenon (Larkin, Watts, & Cliffton, 2006). The second order account of the initial phenomenon description is then positioned "in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical context" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). Emphasis on the interpretative inquiry with contextual consideration propels the IPA researcher beyond simply engaging in descriptive gathering to consider, as well, an inclusive understanding of both participant and researcher (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013).

Idiography

The third theoretical underpinning of IPA is idiography (Smith et al., 2009). An idiographic approach recognizes the need to consider the particular aspects of individual

experience (Smith et al., 2009). An IPA researcher's commitment to the particular operates at both a detailed and analysis level (Smith et al., 2009). Individual perceptions constitute a unique perspective of the explored phenomenon, thus becoming the focus of the study (Smith et al., 2009). To decrease the possibiliy of over-generalizations during data analysis, an IPA researcher first considers each case uniquely. Then, a researcher can carefully examine the similarities and differences found across cases, to produce meaningful patterns of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). An idiographic approach, which considers the particular and detailed analysis, complements the IPA study through exploring the particular experiences of individuals within particular contexts.

Rationale for Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as Method

An IPA approach is best suited for researchers who aim to explore how indiviudals perceive and understand their experiences and how this phenomonological experience influences their lifeworld (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This methodology was instrumental to my growing understanding of how the particular phenomenological experience of short-term E-RPA had influenced individuals. The contextual considerations of IPA were ideally suited to explore this unique phenomenon of paternal absence, in light of the systemic overlap that encompassed the father-child and employment dynamic.

Given that qualitative methods are especially suited to researching new areas of investigation, drawing upon IPA methods contributed to the development of a rich, interpretive account of the childhood experience of having a father who works away from home for short-term rotations. This method was especially useful when exploring individuals' major life transitions, where these circumstances encompassed a significant period of their life (Smith et al., 2009). Given that the goal of this research was to explore the significant meaning that E-RPA

held for individuals, the IPA methodology provided opportunity for reflective engagement as

these individuals shared the meaning of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Chapter IV – Methods

In this chapter, I discuss data collection processes, including participant recruitment, the interview process, and data transcription and management. I also explain the data analysis processes utilized and the collaborative interpretations of my supervisor and me, as guided by Smith et al.'s (2009) six-step process. In addition, I discuss steps taken to enhance the rigour of my research. This section will conclude with a summarizing discussion of my proposed research intentions.

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment

Given that IPA researchers seek to explore insight related to a particular experience, purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants (Smith et al., 2009). Three recruitment strategies were used to gather my sample: (a) engaging a gatekeeper in the natural resource communities; (b) using my contact connections through family employment within the natural resource industry; and (c) employing a snowballing effect, based on referrals (Smith et al. 2009). In IPA research, participants are selected based on the significant value that the research question holds to them, as a way providing meaningful insight into their particular experience (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Through purposeful sampling, a homogeneous sample was selected to preserve a meaningful connection between the research question and participant selection (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Several factors influenced the extent of homogeneity dependent on my role as the researcher, regarding my commitment to maintain a detailed analysis and the operating constraints of the sample size (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) and Smith et al. (2009) contend that a sample size of three to six participants is appropriate for a

master's level study, to account for meaningful data analysis and case comparisons without becoming overwhelming for the novice researcher. With IPA research, the quality of participant extraction and analysis engagement, coupled with the researcher's desire to seek to understand a participant's perspective of the experience, outweighed the need for a large participant sample (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005).

For this study, participant recruitment targeted Saskatchewan residents between the ages of 18 to 25. Participants, both male and female, who were raised in a family where the father worked away from home for one to two-week rotations were invited to enrol in the study (see Appendix B). Young adults, rather than older adults, were targeted to enhance the veracity of childhood memories. During participant recruitment, I sought consultation with my supervisor with each participant request to ensure appropriate participant selection. The decision not to use a participant occurred in instances involving participant sibling requests, having a participant not experience E-RPA until late adolescence rather than early childhood, and a request from a participant whose mother, not father, worked away from home.

Interview Process

In keeping with most IPA research, this study used audio-recorded semi-structured interviews to generate rich, detailed accounts of participants' experiences. This interview approach provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their phenomenological experience in dialogue format (Smith et al., 2009). Due to IPA's requirement for verbatim transcription, audio-recording aided to provide a transparent audit trail, evidently capturing participants verbal responses (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and were conducted in person by me, the primary researcher, at a location individually selected by each participant.

An open-ended 12 question interview guide was used to gather an more in-depth understanding of participants' accounts of the short-term E-RPA phenomenon (see Appendix C) and allow a flexible approach to interview questioning. Predetermined questions, helped guide the interviews, without being prescriptive and allowed me to guide the interview in response to the conversation that emerged (Smith, 2004). While IPA interviewing does require verbatim use of the interview questions, it was important for me to be mindful of my assumptions and leading tendencies, including the verification of themes during the interview. Following each interview, I provided the original transcription to my supervisor to ensure that I was asking effective questions. I received verbal and written feedback from my supervisor during this consultation process.

Written notes taken during and after the interviews facilitated thematic discovery and further exploration. These notes offered an accurate account of participant reactions and non-verbal language, which might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Rather than presume to understand, I explored the meaning behind participants' explanations to understand the significant meaning of the explored phenomenon, ultimately facilitating a more detailed phenomenological account of participant interaction (Smith et al., 2009).

Data Transcription and Management

A transcriptionist was used to transcribe all interviews and was apprised of Smith et al.'s (2009) suggestions for transcribing these interviews, which included a semantic record of the shared experiences provided by participants. Utterances and stutters were removed when presenting participants direction quotations, however, long pauses or laughter were bracketed and noted within the original transcription. Transcriptions were typed in a Word document table, labelled by columns that included the transcription text, the speaker, exploratory comments, and

emergent themes. Interview digital recordings were appropriately stored on a password protected computer, and the hardcopy recorder was locked in a filing cabinet in my home office when not in use.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis adhered to the six-step process that encourages researchers to approach IPA analysis innovatively, however, for a novice researcher, the structuring of these general principles provided a useful framework (Smith et al., 2009). Smith and Osborn (2007) acknowledge that IPA is not a prescriptive methodology. Rather, the analytic process reflects a personal and interpretative process for the researcher at each step. Analysis began with indivdual cases and then moved to analysis across cases. The six-step analysis process involved: (1) reading and re-reading transcripts; (2) initial noting; (3) developing emerging themes; (4) searching for connections across emerging themes; (5) moving onto the next case; and (6) identifying patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2009).

The first step involved becoming immersed in the data through a careful reading and re-reading of each transcript (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). This engagement was an important step in the analysis process. With each successive transcription reading, I was able to actively engage in an interpretive relationship with the data, ultimately obtaining the meaning of participant responses (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This initial step can be overwhelming with the amount of ideas and connections that arise (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, I endeavoured to bracket my assumptions by recording initial observations in a notebook, to allow the focus to remain on the raw data.

The next step of data analysis, initial noting, involved Smith et al.'s (2009) suggestion for a line-by-line notation of descriptive, linguistic, and interpretive content). Smith et al.

acknowledged that this step requires a detailed analysis and is time consuming. The initial noting

phase of analysis required a thorough examination of the sematic content and language used

through a line-by-line engagement with the transcript (Smith et al., 2009). As I became more

familiar with the transcript, identification of how the participant talked, thought about, and

understood the explored phenomenon emerged. These exploratory notes produced detailed,

descriptive, and comprehensive comments of the data, and explicitly reflected participants

meaning. This detailed notation facilitated analysis of language use, contextual considerations,

and patterns of meaning for each participant interview (Smith et al., 2009). Supervisory

consultation and approval for all four interviews ensured that my initial noting was appropriately

indepth, for my descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments.

The next phase of data analysis involved developing emerging themes through an

exploration of interrelationships, patterns, and connections found within the initial noting (Smith

et al., 2009). Thematic identification required me to explore interrelationships, patterns, and

connections found within the initial noting. According to Smith et al. (2009) this stage of

analysis emphasizes the interpretative element of IPA research as the researcher strives to

capture the participant's expressed meaning and the psychological essence of their lived

experience through a recursive interpretive process. At this thematic phase, the analysis

collaboratively reflected the participant's expressed meaning and psychological essence of their

lived experience, as well as my interpretation of these experiences. Careful and close monitoring

of thematic identification was sought through supervision consultation, particularly in ensuring

that each case was individually analyzed for each participant transcription.

After identifying initial emerging themes, connections across the themes were established

by reorganizing, charting, and mapping how the themes fit together (Smith et al., 2009). This

step involved arranging themes into a cluster ordering by developing superordinate themes (Smith & Osborn, 2007). A thematic organization may involve several coordinating arrangements. As such, I was then able to identify and cluster patterns found between superordinate themes (abstraction), combine related themes (subsumption), examine thematic differences (polarization), organize temporal moments (contextualization), and consider thematic frequency (numeration) (Smith et al., 2009). This analysis step was especially time-consuming and required constant feedback and collaboration between my supervisor and I, as we labeled and defined the emerging themes, refined their definition and meanings, and developed superordinate and supporting themes.

Once thematic analysis was complete for one participant's transcript, data analysis proceeded similarly across the other transcripts. In support of IPA's idiographic nature, I analyzed each case individually. Smith et al. (2009) note that, as the researcher, I needed to engage in bracketing, to refrain from inflicting my perceptions on subsequent case analyses. By rigourously following these analysis guidelines, I was able to find new emergent themes with each case.

The final step in IPA analysis involved identifying patterns by cross-case contrasting (Smith et al., 2009). This phase altered my initial thematic derivation of individual case analysis and required by relabelling emergent themes. The resulting analysis identified participants' unique meanings, while also demonstrating connections between superordinate themes. During the interview process I informed participants their personal data could not be removed from the research at this stage given the complex and overlapping thematic analysis operations associated with this analytic step. At this time, participants were provided opportunity to confirm whether any information they shared was to be omitted. All participants confirmed that the information

shared could be used for this study; however, one participant clarified and requested that any

potential identifying characteristics be removed to ensure strict confidentiality and anonymity

were being upheld.

A critical section of IPA research involved the final presentation of this study's

substantive results (Smith et al., 2009). The write-up reflected a comprehensive analytic

interpretation of derived phenomenon meaning, supported by participant direct quotes (Smith &

Osborn, 2007). IPA is well suited to graphic representation, where researchers can often display

the results of the interpreted generic and participant-specific themes, as supported by excerpt

evidence (Smith et al., 2009). The display of my results in this thesis was organized by a

combination of Smith et al.'s (2009) proposed suggestions and my supervisor's and committee

member's preferences, to ensure a clear and concise representation of the substantive results.

Validity in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Research

When assessing validity in qualitative research, one must consider whether the research

question reflects an appropriate method and whether data analysis is both trustworthy and

reliable. Yardley (2000) identifies four overarching principles that can be used to enhance the

validity of IPA research. According to Yardley, high quality qualitative research is characterized

by being sensitive to context, demonstrating commitment and rigour, reflecting transparency and

coherence, and considering impact and importance.

Sensitivity to context required attention to the contextual aspects of the study from the

outset, including the methodological decision to choose IPA and the engagement in relevant

literature. This IPA study required purposeful sampling, since exploration involved a particular

population with a specific phenomenological focus, thus reflecting contextual consideration of

the explored phenomenon. During data collection, I remained sensitive to the needs of

participant engagement (Yardley, 2000), and during interviews, I strove at all times to empathically understand the participant from his or her experiential context (Smith et al., 2009).

To promote commitment and rigour, attentiveness and thoroughness was emphasized throughout the study (Yardley, 2000). Specifically, I demonstrated commitment by remaining attentive to each participant, during the interview process (Smith et al., 2009). Further, rigour reflected thoroughness in conducting interviews and attending to the systematic process of data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). I remained sensitively engaged with the data by meaningfully incorporating participant direct quotes in the interpretative analysis, thus providing a voice to participants (Smith et al., 2009).

Transparency and coherence were accounted for with careful attention to the research process (Yardley, 2000). These steps include a careful description of participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures and carefully engaged in several drafting phases (Smith et al., 2009). To meet the standard of this principle, a research journal was used to provide an audit trail of my research notes and decision-making strategies (Glesne, 2016; Meyrick, 2006) (see Appendix D).

The significance of this study's exploration reflects the absence of Canadian research that specifically addresses the child's experience of short-term E-RPA. By drawing upon IPA methodology, there was opportunity to develop a rich, interpretive account of the childhood experience of having a father who works away from home for short-term rotations. This IPA study has enhanced current understandings of this dynamic phenomenon and this emerging demographic.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencement, I received ethical approval from the Athabasca Ethics Research board (see Appendix E). Smith et al. (2009) also acknowledged that ethical research requires continual monitoring throughout the duration of the study. These authors identified four critical components of an IPA study which include the avoidance of harm, informed consent, allowing participants the right to withdraw at any point, and maintaining appropriate data management. These critical aspects are further supported by the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists that ethical researchers follow (Canadian Psychological Association, 2017).

The notion of avoidance of harm is evident from the outset of this study. During recruitment, participants were made aware of the potential for sensitive topics to arise during data collection. To minimize these potential concerns or harm, participants were informed of the topic and type of questions that I would ask (Smith et al., 2009). When engaging in the informed consent process (see Appendix F), participants were briefed on their ethical rights as participants and had the opportunity to clarify any concerns that arose. Oral consent was revisited at the beginning of the interview, or when sensitive topics (e.g., participant reactions related to childhood experiences, or concern for a family member's employed position or reputation) surfaced during data collection (Smith et al., 2009). To help ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper and identifying information was omitted.

Given that data analysis involved cross-case contrasting, participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw up to the point of data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). To maintain appropriate data management paper data and records were kept in a locked file cabinet and digital audio recordings on my password-protected computer in my home office. All data will be

destroyed five years following the completion of the research. In the event of a publication or

presentation resulting from the research, I will not share personal information that could identify

the participant. Participants were asked to provide a pseudonym to protect their anonymity and to

uphold confidentiality.

Summarizing Discussion

The purpose of the proposed IPA study was to provide an increased understanding of the

short-term E-RPA experience and how young adults raised in a family where the father worked

away from home make sense of this experience. The initial proposal provided a sound rationale

for why this research was conducted. As Smith et al. (2009) advise, relevant literature was

reviewed, critiqued, and synthesized to support my use of IPA to capture the experiences of

short-term E-RPA. With the understanding that IPA research involves gathering the collective

understanding of participant descriptions and my interpretations of the explored phenomenon,

this study brought forth new insight to the field of psychology, and ultimately, better supported

this emerging demographic.

Chapter V – Results

Four young adults participated in this study (2 females and 2 males) aged between 18 and 25 years; they were raised in Saskatchewan families where the father worked away from home for one to two-week rotations (e.g., 7 on 7 off, or 14 on 14 off). One of the male participants in this study currently resided at home, while the other male and two females' participants no longer resided with their parents. Following the interview, each participant was asked to choose their own pseudonym for which I would use to refer to them as throughout my thesis document. The participants ultimately chose to referred to as Brittnay, David, James, and Katherine.

Four superordinate themes characterized the childhood experiences of the young adult participants' accounts of growing up with a father who worked away from home on a short-term rotation: *Experiencing Paternal Absence*, *Adjusting to Paternal Absence*, *Temporal Adjustment*, and *Perceiving the Experience of Others* (see Table 1). The nature of the participants' relationships with their father while growing up influenced the themes and subthemes. Katherine and Brittnay described positive relationships with their father, whereas David and James described difficult, conflictual relationships with their fathers. This contrasting data contributed to a nuanced understanding of the participants' experience that was enriched by some of the themes and subthemes being contingent upon the quality of the relationship during childhood; the context of more warmth/closeness or less warmth/closeness in the father-child relationship influenced the findings.

Table 1: Superordinate and Supporting Themes

Experiencing Paternal Absence	Adjusting to Paternal Absence	Temporal Adjustment	Perceiving the Experience of Others
Missing Important Events	Adaptive Acquiescence	Postponement	Sacrificial Duty
Resetting	Familial Support	Familial Preparation for Transitions	Empathic Understanding of the Other
Sense of Missing	Using Technology to Communicate	Flexible Scheduling	
Retrospective Appreciation		Making Up Time	

Experiencing Paternal Absence

Experiencing Paternal Absence encompassed sub-themes that revealed the participants' individual affective, cognitive, and relational experiences of paternal absence: *Missing Important Events*, *Resetting*, *Sense of Missing*, and *Retrospective Appreciation*.

Missing important events.

It is inevitable when one's father works away from home he will miss important events such as birthdays, graduations, and family gatherings. Not surprisingly, such absences elicited feelings of sadness for affected family members as described by the participants. Brittnay recalled a Christmas without her father:

[Brittnay] There was one time when, let's see, I think I was six, maybe six, and then yeah, my dad couldn't come home. So, it was just my mom, my grandma and then my brothers with me. But my mom was just really sad. Like she was crying. And my dad was unhappy that he couldn't be here. He had to work. So, it was a pretty hard Christmas that

time. Yeah, it was sad. It was sad. I mean, I'm a little girl, right? I want both my parents

at Christmas.

Katherine reflected on her father's absence during extracurricular activities, emphasizing

the desire for him to be present during these times. Katherine also noted her father missing

important events, however, rather than emphasizing sadness, she expressed a sense of regret that

something important to her was being missed by her father. She had regrets for her mother and

for herself; for her mother, she regretted that she had to work alone to manage the special event,

and for herself, Katherine regretted that her father missed the special experience with her.

> [Katherine] If he ever had to miss out on anything that I really wish he could have been
>
> there for, it was probably my horse events, like, shows and stuff. And, partially because
>
> my mom had to do a lot of work, like hauling horses and you have to get hay together,
>
> and you have to pack up all the equipment…and you have to drive all this way. You have
>
> to take care of your kids, doing all this stuff, right? …It was a lot for her to do, and I wish
>
> he could have been there to see me win and stuff. But he made it for 50 percent of it.

Katherine's final statement about her father making it to half of her horse events

illustrates how the young adults in this study strove to frame or re-frame positive elements of

their father's absence.

Resetting.

Resetting captures participants' experience of using the time apart as a built-in way to

alleviate pressure and tension between family members and provide opportunity to regroup

before coming together again. Resetting was described by two of the four participants in this

research who characterized their relationships with their fathers as stressful. Both of these

participants depicted their fathers as angry, stern, and impatient. This relational dynamic

contributed to what David referred to as a "reset," which was described as an opportunity to alleviate the pressure that gradually built up when his father was at home.

> [David] When he started working at the mine, when he'd get home he'd be super happy. It's just like, oh yeah, back for my family. And then it would be like a progression downwards with his mood. And then he goes to work and it like resets kind of thing. So that was like a big change, where rather than him almost always seeming angry, now it like was a progression every two weeks kind of thing.

David alluded to a cyclical pattern whereby he, his father, and the rest of the family were initially happy with the homecoming. It would seem, however, that this initial happiness was supplanted by a gradual building pressure to a point where his departure served as a sort of release valve, decreasing the tension and allowing a degree of calm that re-initiated the experience of once again looking forward to his return.

> [David] By the two weeks that he's home, we'd all just kind of, including my mom, get sick of him because he started to get frustrated— "Oh, there's so much work to do and I have to go back to work," and "I got nothing accomplished here." So, it always got to be like, oh, good riddance, he's going back to work…The same as pretty much the whole family. It's like oh yeah, cool, Dad's home. And then, by the end, just like, oh, he's just like in everyone's business. And when is he going back to work? Kind of thing.

James, in his interview, similarly indicated that his father being away served a protective function against the family discord.

> [James] We had some…relationship struggles. Yeah, we weren't a particularly functional family all the time, and I think having him half time during that period was really beneficial to us because just personality clashes and things like that. I think they'd have

more effect if they were all the time, whereas half time, it's more manageable because,

you know, oh okay, he's going to go back to work at that day, we just have to make it to

Tuesday.

James further indicated that rotational work may have prevented the escalation of family

discord, which, with traditional employment, might otherwise have continued to build with

potentially dire consequences.

> [James] The fact that my family's still together. [laughs] Yeah, I think that added element
> of having him only half time, especially when we were all having the personality clashes,
> was probably the best thing that could have happened. It gave us kind of alleviation from
> the general antagonism throughout our entire family dynamic.

As these participants conveyed, the resetting process provided their family members an

opportunity to gain physical and emotional space from one another, thus fostering appreciation

and perspective through this period of separation.

Sense of missing.

Sense of missing captures the longing felt by participants when their father was away at

work. In contrast to James and David, the other two participants (Brittnay and Katherine)

described nurturing and warm/close relationships with their fathers. Both Brittnay and Katherine

expressed missing their father during his absence. Brittnay expressed the depth of missing her

father when he was away at work, as she indicated how long the week felt. Brittnay recounted

her attempt to cope with his absence:

> [Brittnay] Long, long days. Long days. But then you're at school all day, so you're doing
> half the things to make the time go by.

> [Brittnay] I know my brothers missed my dad. Like I did too.

Katherine similarly emphasized how much she missed her father. She shared the types of thoughts and feelings she had as a child:

[Katherine] I really miss Dad. I wish I could be doing his thing with us. Or we don't get to go fishing because Dad's not here. Or you get lonesome for him. But it passes, and then he's there in a couple days. Because usually, when you're really lonesome for him it would happen in the middle of the week, and he'd be home. That's why the one-week thing was pretty good. I think that if he was gone for two weeks, that probably would have been a lot harder, to grow up. That's a long period for a small child.

Katherine affirmed that her need for her father was more evident during the middle portion of his time away. Katherine concluded that if her father would have been gone for a greater period of time, that this length of absence may have been more difficult to bear as a young child.

Retrospective appreciation.

Although there were difficult aspects to growing up with a father who worked away from home on a rotating basis, the young adults in this study spoke about how when they reflected back on their childhood experiences with a father who worked away from home, they could appreciate how their fathers' work away from home benefited their families, both in terms of financial stability and strengthened relationships.

Regarding financial stability, this retrospective appreciation was related to their recollection that their family life generally improved when dad started working away from home.

[David] It's pretty cyclical where he was working in town, and not having a lot of money. And then at the mine where he was away a lot, we had a lot of money at home. …Then I felt that the shiftwork was generally beneficial to the house just because he made a lot more money.

David also appreciated in hindsight how his father's work away was a lifestyle decision; David described gaining awareness of his father's efforts to support his family financially by working away from home.

> [David] It kind of seems like a really old school way to think of things, where I'm providing for them, and they aren't going to appreciate it now because I didn't appreciate it when my dad would be away, that he's working hard for us. But you know, in hindsight, you're doing the work to support your family and stuff. So, I can rationalize that better for myself in my future, based on my dad working.

Regarding strengthened relationships within their family, participants described improvement in the paternal relationship as they recalled how they were able to connect with their fathers when they were home and not working.

> [David] Happiness went up with him working shiftwork, just because then we'd have high points when he gets home, and then that goes down. But overall, I'd say the average was higher…generally, everyone was a lot happier.

David compared the difference between his early and late childhood and how both he and his father came to appreciate how rotational work improved family functioning.

> [David] I think now he can appreciate family more because he's also generally happier now than he was before he started working up north. So, I generally view it as beneficial for everyone that he spent time working up north.

Katherine spoke about the value that rotational work offered during her childhood. Reflecting on her experience of paternal absence led Katherine to appreciate advantages associated with this employment schedule. For example, she empathized with those children

whose fathers worked traditional hours and were not available to their children in the same way her father was.

> [Katherine] I really appreciated having my dad on a shift like that. To me, I almost think it was more of a positive thing because all of my friends, they never get to see their dad. Or their dad would come home and when I'd go visit my friends, their dad would come home just at supper time, and he'd be tired, and he'd be grouchy, and they'd just want to sit down and relax and, they want to be lazy. Which, now that I had a job, I understand that.

Katherine's reflection on the benefits of rotational work led to contemplate how difficult it must be for parents who work traditional employment schedules and may find it difficult to spend the amount of quality parent-child time associated with rotational work schedules.

> [Katherine] I can only imagine for people that only get to see their dad, after five o'clock, and they're tired from working all day, you know because I've been there. When you're tired. And you know, like maybe you want to spend time with your kids, and you want to do all that, but you're tired…So, there was lots of free time in that one week he was home, is what I'm getting at.

> David also spoke about his retrospective appreciation in the time spent with his father when he was at home, even if that time involved taking care of needed tasks. Perhaps David sensed his father's need to manage the household tasks when he was home, prioritizing his time spent in this manner. After reflecting back on his experience, it was evident that David had come to appreciate the time spent with his father, even if it was not the preferred activity they engaged in together.

[David] In retrospect it was nice to spend time with him and help him with stuff. But it was always work that you're doing.

Adjusting to Paternal Absence

The second main theme, *Adjusting to Paternal Absence* characterized the participants' strategies to adapt to the experience of paternal absence, including *Adaptive Acquiescence*, *Familial Support*, and *Using Technology to Communicate.*

Adaptive acquiescence.

Adaptive acquiescence reflects the process of coming to accept and adapt to the experience of paternal absence. All four participants held a common understanding and sense of acceptance towards adapting to their father's absence from home. Katherine and Brittnay, whose fathers worked away from home from the time they were young, expressed their understanding of rotational work and their need to move on with their daily lives during the week their father was away. This sense of acceptance developed over time as the participants learned to manage their time when their father was absent.

[Katherine] I was never ever mad at him for being away. It was just something you grew to accept, right? He was just away. That's just how it is. And because when you really accept something, it doesn't make you falter…When Dad's gone you just, keep going. And I mean, there's other things to fill your time with too.

Brittnay further emphasized that coming to accept the circumstances of rotational work involved learning how to manage a rotational lifestyle and move forward over time.

[Brittnay] After a while we knew why he was gone, right? So, we got used to it. It sucked, it wasn't fun. But we had to keep living our lives.

James and David, whose fathers began working away from home during their middle childhood, also demonstrated adaptive acquiescence concerning their father working away from home. They both spoke about their acceptance of their altered circumstances, with little resistance to these changes.

[David] I don't think we would have changed our schedule too much…It just kind of seems like oh yeah Dad's going to work today, and that's what happens.

[James] I don't even remember it feeling like it was a big deal. It was just what was happening at the time.

Familial support.

Familial support includes the use of extended family support during times of paternal absence, or the sought support from immediate family members to cope during a father's absence. As a way of coping during the times when their fathers were away, each of the four participants spoke about the use of familial support. Perhaps taking turns in the role of caretaker provided opportunity for family members to feel supported, particularly when experiencing moments of loneliness, as Katherine expressed below.

[Katherine] Me and my brother were really close. And we were, well, all, every single one of us was close with one another. So, there's lots of times my brother took care of me and you know, if my mom, my mom would get lonely for my dad too. So, we'd take care of her.

Some participants emphasized the role their mother held in helping them to cope with paternal absence, perhaps doing what it took to make things work in the paternal absence environment. Katherine expressed the feeling of constant support received from her mother throughout her childhood, emphasizing her mother's devoted and reliable role, and her mother's

attempt to keep her children busy as a way of protecting them from feeling lonesome for their father.

> [Katherine] My mom was the constant. You know, she was always there.

> [Katherine] I think lots of it had to do with my mom, for us to deal with it, she'd keep us busy. She would definitely, like I know we're talking about my dad, but my mom is obviously a huge part of it. And she kept us busy, and you know, life just kept happening, whether or not my dad was there.

Ultimately, though, as Katherine explains, feeling supported and loved makes for an easier process of becoming accustomed to the experience of a rotational employment lifestyle.

> [Katherine] It's pretty easy to deal with that kind of stuff when you know you're loved and you know that you're getting all the attention you can really ask for.

> For Brittnay and Katherine, their families sought and utilized support from extended family to enhance family functioning, as a way of compensating for the experience of paternal absence. Their grandparents' proximity benefited these families.

> [Katherine] We had a lot of support from family. My grandparents lived close by, and then, from what I remember, they helped my mom and dad a lot with things.

> [Brittnay] My grandma was always there to help. So, my mom was never alone.

Brittnay also spoke about using familial support as a form of distraction to help with coping with paternal absence. Brittnay and her family felt as though they could rely on one another's presence, as a way of coping with feelings of loneliness.

> [Brittnay] We would just try to do things, I guess, to keep our mind off of it. But I mean, we always knew he was going to come back. It's not like he wasn't ever going to come

back, right? So yeah, I mean, and we had our mom, we had our grandma. So, we were

never really alone, we had each other.

Family support was extended to the children. However, they, too, were supportive in their

own way. David emphasized his role in helping his parents with daily household tasks and

responsibilities, as a way of work sharing or helping when his father was away, that served to

help him and his family cope with the paternal absence lifestyle.

[David] We made a schedule for dishes and that kind of stuff and sweeping and all the

chores. And we just knew that those things had to be done, so I would say the family

functioned better, maybe because we were generally growing up and getting older. But

we also knew that those things had to be done, whether he was home or not. And we

knew that my mom needed help to get stuff done, so we'd help out with it.

As the participants expressed, family support was sought and used when needed. These families

adjusted how they could support one another in managing during periods of a father's absence.

Using technology to communicate.

Participants in this research used technology to communicate and remain relationally

connected during paternal absence. Those with a warm/close father-child relationship (Katherine

and Brittnay) seemed more connected with their father when he was away; emphasizing their

father's desire to remain informed on what was going on in their lives during the time away.

Brittnay spoke about the frequency her father would call home, emphasizing his desire to

connect with his family while he was away.

[Brittnay] Probably all the time. Because he always wanted to talk to us, see how we

were doing as we grew up.

Katherine, reflected on times when she desperately needed her father when he was away for work, both during her early childhood and into her adolescent years. Katherine noted her father's inability to be physically present during these times of need, however, she reiterated that he attempted to remain available on the phone, sacrificing sleep to support his daughter when she was in need.

> [Katherine] There was times when I was really sad, and I talked to him, and he'd listen. Like, those times when I was a teenager and I just needed my dad. Or even not a teenager, I'd just talk to him. If, you know, he couldn't be there, and I just needed to talk to him, and I'd talk to him on the phone. I remember there was a time I probably talked to him for five hours, and he should have went to bed because he had to work. But you know, he stayed on the phone with me.

Participants with a less warm father-child relationship (James and David) indicated that communication with their father while he was away was more happenstance than planned.

> [David] He called home pretty often, I think, for like FaceTime or something like that…I think he would just talk to my mom most of the time…Maybe once he'd, if he was like taking an extra week up there or something, we'd talk to him. But I don't remember talking to him on the phone while he was at work often.

James expressed that communicating with his father was constrained, as the purpose of his father's calls was to speak to his mother.

> [James] I'd talk to him every once in a while. But the calls weren't usually meant for me, or anything. It was just my parents were talking, and yeah, it was not a usual thing that I was a part of.

Connecting with one's father when he was away was pertinent for some participants as a way of intentionally maintaining connection, while superfluous for other participants and reflected more happenstance circumstances, for those who were not emotionally warm/close to their fathers.

Temporal Adjustment

Temporal Adjustment characterizes the various ways that time was adjusted to accommodate or adapt to aspects related to paternal absence. The sub-themes include *Postponement*, *Familial Preparation for Transitions*, *Flexible Scheduling*, and *Making Up Time*.

Postponement.

Postponement involves a sense of needing to wait until one's father returned before engaging in conversations or activities. For Katherine, if she was experiencing a problem, she sometimes withheld reaching out to her father at work, instead waiting until he returned home to seek support.

> [Katherine] I would talk to him long before I talked to my mom. Sorry, sometimes there would be problems, I couldn't feel like I could tell my mom, so I'd wait 'til my dad got home and I'd talk to him about it.

In contrast, David did not express the same urgency when wanting to speak to his father. However, he, too, postponed conversations until his father returned home.

> [David] I don't really remember what would be urgent. And even then, it would usually wait until like he would call home…It would just be like while we do something else, well oh I need to ask Dad this. But I can wait. I guess like planning a little bit better, rather than, oh I have to ask Dad this now, I'd better go and ask him.

> Participants, who did not always have the ability to see their father, chose to postpone speaking to their fathers regarding certain topics until he arrived home. It seems as though

participants carefully compartmentalized what they would share to determine when a topic was worth discussing on the phone when dad was away, or when they would withhold and wait until he returned home before engaging in further discussion.

Family preparation for transitions.

Family preparation for transitional periods for both the children and spouses, included the timing of paternal leave and arrival, as the emotional experience of these transitions became routine in nature. Common to fathers working in natural resource industries, the rotational intervals for participants in this research ranged from one to two-weeks. Depending on the more warmth/less warmth dynamic in the father-child relationship, the time spent preparing for transitions to and from work, impacted whether this was a positive or negative experience for children. In addition to these transitional periods of arrivals and departures, participants spoke about how the timing and progression of the week influenced their mood.

For those who spoke about having a warm/close relationship with their father (Brittnay and Katherine), feelings of excitement and coming together as a family seemed to capture these participants' experience of their father returning home.

> [Katherine] We would all come together and get all excited when he was about to come home when he came home, it was just, I don't know, so exciting…He'd get home usually about, before supper time, and we'd all just be waiting at the window for him to drive in the yard. And we'd all just run out and give him hugs and kisses and carry his bags in, see what goodies he brought us. Because you know, he always had something.
>
> [Brittnay] Three happy kids bouncing around that day. All excited, yeah. And my mom was excited too. Because she'd be like, "your dad's coming home today!" And then we'd all be excited, jumping around and stuff…I remember when we were bouncing around.

And then she was looking outside and then she's like, "your dad's here now!" And then we were all waiting at the front door.

Participants with a less warm/close father-child relationship spoke about their fathers' return from work with a sense of expectation. In the excerpt below, David captures this anticipation with a detailed description of his father.

[David] I think my mom's mood got a lot better when she knew, like right before he was coming home. But I'd be happy that my dad's coming home, and I'd get to spend more time with him obviously, that's a good thing.

James, however, explained that arrival time involved a shift in the atmosphere and the felt tension found in the home.

[James] I knew that there'd be a little bit more tension in the house because that's just the way that my dad's mentality works…Back then you would sort of immediately feel the kind of stress that was in the house.

Participants also spoke about the preparation expected for their fathers return home. For Katherine, ensuring that the household tasks were completed, contributed to increased time that she could spend with her father.

[Katherine] All the stuff he had to do, we'd just get it done as soon as he's home, so that we had time for fun and he could relax and have his days off.

For David, completing these tasks provided his father with the opportunity to relax upon arriving home.

[David] We always cleaned the house right before my dad got home…So that he doesn't like walk in the door and say, oh no, I have to do this like, so he feels comfortable, I

guess so he can just kind of like relax the first night he gets home, and not have to worry

that the house is messy.

Father's departure also shifted the mood felt by some participants. Katherine identified

departure day being associated with feeling mopey and not wanting her father to leave, while

Brittnay expressed this day with sadness and disappointment in having her father return to work

for the week.

[Brittnay] I would look sad, and my brothers would look sad. It was just disappointing, I

guess, to us, that he would have to leave.

As the week progressed, each of the four participants described a pattern in their thoughts

and feelings when their father being away from home. Brittnay emphasized the longing she and

her family felt for her father when she would think about him when he was away.

[Brittnay] I think because we'd think about it, like we'd ask my mom—"when's Dad

coming home?" She'd be like, "oh in a couple more days." Or, you know. Then the next

day, "four more days." It's just that asking, and I think for all of us it felt long.

For Katherine, she remained focused on how quickly the week of absence went by while

becoming increasingly excited as the day of his arrival approached.

[Katherine] The excitement starts to build half way through the week, where, "oh Dad's

almost home!" A week really isn't that much, so it didn't take long. It really didn't take

long before he was home again...And when he was gone, we went from mopey to "okay,

life's normal, whatever." To "hey, he's going to be home pretty soon!" To, "oh my gosh,

he's going to be home tomorrow!"

For James and David, as the week progressed there was a sense of anticipation of how

their father would interact or react, and when to best connect during the week he was home.

> [James] Whether it's a few hours later or the next day, he would find something that
>
> maybe wasn't working properly or bothered him a little bit and then he blows things out
>
> of proportion quite often.

David spoke about carefully planning which day he would speak to his father, during his week at home, by expressing that certain days would perhaps elicit a better response from his father if asked during the middle of his week home, rather than the nearing of his departure.

> [David] When he was working shift work, we'd kind of plan it. We'd want to talk to him,
>
> not the first night—we wouldn't ask him something in the first night. But days two to
>
> five, probably, would be best to ask him questions…But you wouldn't want to be asking
>
> him questions like that last three days or something.

> Transitions are an inevitable part of rotational work, as the participants described the many ways in which transitional periods affected their accustomed routines. Preparation, anticipation, and adaptability characterized the periods of their father's arrival and departure, by which these families uniquely managed their ways of reconnecting with one another.

Flexible scheduling.

Flexible scheduling involves adjusting schedules to celebrate important events, or to remain flexible in adapting the schedule one's father's needs, when he is absent. As noted earlier, important family events and milestones were sometimes missed because one's father was away. Participants, however, also described flexibly adjusting time to accommodate events that otherwise would have been missed.

> [David] It would pretty much be the same whether he was home or not. It's just
>
> Christmas would typically, they would send a letter to Santa and get him to come earlier,
>
> a couple days late, depending on when he's home. So, Christmas was flexible.

For Katherine, her family seemed to emphasize the importance of altering holidays to ensure the inclusion of her father in the celebrations. This inclusion outweighed the importance celebrating an event on the official day; rather, accommodating to have her father present became an essential, and almost mandatory part of what it meant to celebrate together.

> [Katherine] We didn't care when Christmas was. We would just change it for when Dad was home. And we'd have the same experience. We'd say, okay, the 28th is going to be Christmas. We're going to do the same thing. We'll wake up in the morning, open presents and be all crazy and excited, and then we'll have Christmas supper and everything. And it didn't make a difference on what day it happened, we'd just accommodate him. And so, he could be with us in the important times. And then there was, of course, there's birthdays, but everything sort of just became a day that can be changed.

Dates for some events could not be changed. Brittnay spoke about how flexibility came in the form of how her family scheduled these events, or how her father managed his work schedule to attend special events.

> [Brittnay] I don't recall him missing any part of my—like when I graduated, when I was small, graduated pre-school, he was there. So, I don't think my dad really missed anything big in my life, because I think he worked around that, always made sure he booked off that time for us. So, he tried his best for us when we were small. But I know, he made it.

The participants demonstrated a sincere understanding of their father's attempt to be present during important events, however, when he was unable to attend on the specific day, the

participants expressed their flexibility in altering their schedules to ensure that they accommodated for their father's ability to be present during these celebrations.

Making up time.

When a father works away from home, there are attempts to make up for lost time, at a later date. Katherine and Brittnay, who had a warm/close father-child relationship, expressed that their father attempted to make up for lost time when they returned home from work, whether through engaging in additional activities or taking holidays together as a family.

[Brittnay] He always made up for it. We'd go places when he got back, and everything.

We'd always go on trips together as a family when he could get holiday time. Brittany recounted that her father would sometimes pull her from school early, ostensibly to increase the amount of time that could be spent with his daughter.

[Brittnay] If he was home, he would take us out early sometimes. We could just go tell the teacher. Or sometimes he would just drop us off lunch sometimes and bring it to the school for us.

Katherine spoke about her father's involvement in her daily routine, emphasizing his efforts to be available during every moment that he was at home, and suggesting his need to make up for lost time when he was away at work.

[Katherine] My dad was there, for a full week we had his complete attention. He spent every minute with us. He would come have lunch with us at school, he'd take us to school, he'd pick us up, he'd take us to all of our sports, and he'd make supper. We'd have fun, we'd have our family nights and everything. Whereas, lots of other kids, you think, they only get to do that on the weekend if their dad doesn't work weekends. Or, you know, Saturdays. I got a lot of my dad's time, like full attention.

Katherine also conveyed her father's involvement and a sense of indebtedness to his children, while suggesting her father's desire to provide his full attention when he was home.

> [Katherine] He gave us all of our time, and I think that has a lot to do with it, that we were just, we were really spoiled. In a good way. Spoiled by, taking it for, like he owed it to us. Just because he was always there.

Katherine expressed that her father's involvement was a reflection of his desire to be attentive when he was home, as though this was a characteristic of his nature, and how his emphasis on being involved contributed to her positive experience of rotational work.

> [Katherine] I think my dad was probably like one of the best guys for that kind of a job. If my dad would have been less of a family man, or if we weren't close. If we didn't have all that, him being gone all the time would never have worked, I don't think. But he was really close with us. And if he was gone for his week, he always made up for it—more than made up for it…If he wouldn't have came home and played with us like he did, or didn't come home and spend time like that, and teach us all the stuff he taught us—I don't think we would have been very happy. And probably eventually you can imagine you wouldn't even care that he was gone any more. But it was always an exciting thing for him to come home. So, all I remember is being happy for my life. And, I'm almost grateful that he had that kind of job because I did get all of his attention, all day, for every day that he was home.

There was no relevant data from David and James, as they did not speak to the theme of *making up time* during their interviews.

For some fathers who work rotational work, making up for lost time influenced how they spent time with their children upon returning home. Participants spoke about their father's

attempt to ensure that they remained fully attentive and present when they were home,

emphasizing the importance of the paternal relationship that emerged during Brittnay and

Katherine's childhoods.

Perceiving the Experience of Others

The fourth superordinate theme encompasses sub-themes that involve the participants'

attempts to imagine how paternal absence may have been experienced by other families. The

themes found within this superordinate theme include *sacrificial Duty*, *ameliorating experiences*,

and *empathic understanding of the other*.

      Sacrificial duty.

Sacrificial duty reflects the notion that participants perceived that their fathers felt

responsible for making sacrifices due to his duty to provide for and support his family and their

needs. Participant understanding of their father's sacrificial duty grew as they became

accustomed to this lifestyle. Katherine and Brittnay reflected on how rotational work provided

their fathers with a stable job, where they could adequately support their family.

> [Katherine] I didn't know this when I was a kid, but now I do. You know, he had a good
>
> job, and he made enough money to support our whole family where my mom would take
>
> care of us kids, and that was a big goal of theirs. I didn't know that back then, but it was
>
> so that you know, if my mom didn't have to work she could give us everything we
>
> needed. And you know, that was probably a big reason why he sacrificed, I guess, to have
>
> a good job, to keep a good career for his family.
>
> [Brittnay] It's just what you have to do. But it's how you make a living. So, my dad
>
> always says, work's work. That's all he says, work's work. You have to make a living
>
> somehow.

However, Brittnay expressed her awareness of how her father may have preferred to stay home, but he felt responsible for financially supporting his family.

> [Brittnay] You could just see it on his face, and you can just hear it in the voice. It was nothing, really just wanting to not even go to work. It was just the feeling of it.

> Participant understanding of the sacrifices their fathers made became evident as they grew accustomed to a rotational lifestyle, perhaps serving as a coping factor towards accepting their father's need to support their family.

Empathic understanding of the other.

Empathic understanding of the other reflects the participants' tendency to empathically understand the ways in which aspects of E-RPA impacted family members. Brittnay and Katherine were empathically aware of other family members and how the experience of paternal absence may have had a profound affect on their parents.

> [Brittnay] When he was home, it's better for him. I can see it. He doesn't like going to work, but he has to go. And I'm pretty sure, it's just, becomes long days, long nights.

> [Katherine] We never went without. It's just it was hard. Especially for Mom and Dad. And I probably don't even know—have a real inclination how hard it was for them because they never showed it.

> [Brittnay] It was harder for my mom, of course, because, I think, just with three kids and he's gone, so it's a little hard.

The difficulty of rotational work for the parent at home can be further perpetuated when a crisis occurs, and a family is unable to be present to support in managing the situation, as Brittnay disclosed her related experience.

[Brittnay] I think my brother broke his leg when my dad was at work. I'm pretty sure, and then my mom was freaking out. Well, she got an ambulance and then she called my dad when he was at work. And then she just said, "He broke his leg," and I can't really remember anything. But then I'm pretty sure my dad came home that day or the next day…She was scared and stressed out because my dad wasn't there and when he's there, he could have just grabbed him, and we could have put him in the car and took him to the hospital. And when you're one parent, I think, and you see your child get hurt, your kind of hoping for your significant other to be there too, to see what's going on.

Participants emphasized understanding on how rotational work may have affected other family members, aside from their own personal experience and the impact they personally encountered throughout their childhoods. It is through these perceptions where recognition is acknowledged of how rotational work affects the family unit as whole, where no individual is left without impact.

Chapter VI – Discussion

The central feature of E-RPA is, without question, the fathers' extended period away from their family. For those who do not live this lifestyle, it might be assumed that the period of father absence is, for various reasons, a negative experience for all family members. Research by Nuttgens, Doyle, and Chang (2018) indeed pointed to a feeling among E-RPA families that others who do not live this lifestyle view it negatively. The findings from my thesis research are consistent with similar research that suggests for the most part such an assumption does not hold true (e.g., Dittman et al., 2016; MacBeth et al., 2012; Mauthner et al., 2000; Meredith et al., 2014; Parkes et al., 2005).

Rotational work within the natural resource industry necessarily means that fathers are away from home for longer periods than those who work traditional hours (e.g., 9-5, Monday to Friday). As found in the *making up time* theme in this study, some of the participants emphasized their father's desire to be involved in their daily routines and his effort to provide his full attention when he returned home. Research by InterGroup Consultants Ltd. (2005) supports this finding, as their research affirms that the advantage of the rotational work schedule is that it allows families to spend more consecutive days together at home. Comparably, adolescents interviewed by MacBeth et al. (2012) spoke about the advantage of having more opportunity for greater interactions with their fathers, given the extended periods of time when the father returned home. As a whole, research commonly indicates that work-related paternal absence may increase the amount of quality time that fathers spend with their children (MacBeth et al., 2012; Mauthner et al., 2000; Thomas & Bailey, 2006; Willerton et al., 2011).

The findings of this IPA inquiry also confirm that E-RPA circumstances mean that fathers have to miss important events and holidays when they are away at work. Even at a young

age, participants were aware of their father's absence, while some expressed concern about how the absence of important events had impacted their fathers as well. This echoes findings from other research that suggests that spending a full week away at work raises concerns about missing important milestones and major life events (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005; Mauthner et al., 2000; Thomas & Bailey, 2009).

Although missing events is a concern for E-RPA families, studies by Willerton et al. (2011) and Zvonkovic et al. (2005) found that families adapt their schedule to allow important celebrations to occur when fathers return home. This study supports these findings, as demonstrated by the *temporal adjustment* theme, as participants spoke about accommodating for their fathers' absence by flexibly timing important events to occur during their fathers' time at home. Despite exercising this flexibility, some participants in this study expressed sadness when their father was unable to be home for holidays and special events. It seems as though participants may have initially been upset with their father missing these experiences at the time, although later recognizing their father's attempt to attend brought forth understanding in their adulthood, as identified by the *sacrificial duty* theme.

It may be that missing events is not as consequential as might be assumed. In their research, Mauthner et al. (2000) found that children generally accepted their fathers' absence for important events, although a few children reported sometimes feeling upset that their fathers were not present during important milestones. One participant in Zvonkovic et al.'s (2005) study found a solution to the missing of events, where this wife would videotape the missed events so that the father could witness the experience upon his return. The strategy speaks to the positive adaptation of families who experience rotational work. The findings in my study showed that some of the fathers attempted to make up for lost time, as a way of compensating for missing

important events. The two participants in this study who indicated a warm/close relationship with their father acknowledged their fathers' attempts to engage in a greater amount of activities together when he returned home. This finding may emphasize a father's attempt to increase the quantity of time spent together. From a child's perspective, the recognition of this attempt provides understanding that the quality of this time spent together may outweigh the actual amount of time spent connecting.

Although E-RPA may impact the amount of time fathers spend on the paternal relationship, the quality of time they spend with their children appears to outweigh these concerns. Studies by Mauthner et al. (2000), Thomas and Bailey (2006), and Willerton et al. (2011) indicate that rotational work, compared to traditional employment, allows for more quality time spent on the paternal relationship. Furthermore, Cabrera et al. (2011) found that the closeness developed between child and a non-resident father is positively influenced by the quality of their relationship, rather than paternal presence or absence per se; similarly, the two participants in this study who indicated a warm/close father-child relationship talked about their fathers' willingness for quality engagement when he returned home, emphasizing the participants description of their father's commitment and effort to be involved. The findings in this study align with Allen and Daly's (2007) research exploring the effects of father involvement, where they found that the quality of the father-child relationship matters more than the actual amount of time spent together.

Troublesome experiences are associated with E-RPA, however, are not indicative of the larger picture. Largely, the results indicate that most, if not all, of the detrimental aspects related to E-RPA, were countered through the families' ability to adapt and adjust to the fathers' absence; *adjusting to paternal absence* and *temporal adjustment* speak to this ability.

The theme *adjusting to paternal absence* refers to participants' ability to adapt to their experiences of rotational work with acceptance and understanding, in part through seeking and utilizing familial support and using technology to communicate during periods of paternal absence. At the outset of this study, I neglected to consider the impact that the timing of E-RPA may have had for children. For some participants, they began experiencing their father working away from home during early childhood, while for others, rotational work began later in middle childhood. It is possible that a child's stage of development influences how paternal absence is experienced. Research suggests that families who experience E-RPA long term, learn to adapt to their living circumstances over time (InterGroup Consultants Ltd., 2005; Mauthner et al., 2000; Parkes et al., 2005). Mauthner et al. (2000) found that children became accustomed to their fathers working away regularly, although when absence was only occasional, children expressed difficulty. The experiences of having a father begin working away from home at differing points of development spoke to the adaptive acceptance found amongst all participants.

When considering the use of support to cope with the experience of E-RPA, research suggests that seeking external family support is beneficial (Haugene Ljoså, & Lau, 2009; Zvonkovic et al., 2005); however, these findings are a reflection of parental perceptions. Participants in the current study spoke about the use of familial support, although when referring to extended family, the support was for their parents, and not necessarily for themselves. Rather, from a child's perspective, participants emphasized the role their parents played in providing support to cope with the rotational lifestyle, with emphasis on their mothers' role. Notably, participants also spoke about the role they themselves held in their families in reciprocating the support to other family members by engaging in household duties as a way of helping their parents.

Some research emphasizes the importance of the use of technology during paternal absence, as the findings suggest that technology helps maintain familial connection (Parkes et al., 2005; Thomas & Bailey, 2009; Zvonkovic et al., 2005). Participants in this study similarly used technology to communicate with their father when he was away at work. Participants with a more warm/close father-child relationship spoke about the connections made during absences, while those with a less warm/close father-child relationship spoke more about rare communication when their father was away. It would seem that technology may have helped decrease feelings of loneliness through fostering a sense of father-child connection when one's father was away.

Research supports that transitional periods during leaving and reunification uniquely affect functioning among E-RPA families. Families encounter a transition period when fathers return home (Parkes et al., 2005; Thomas & Bailey, 2006; Willerton et al., 2011). For many families, this time is often mixed with both excitement and disruption (Thomas & Bailey, 2006). The findings in this study align with these results, although I note that the discrepancy between the positive and negative connotation associated with transitional periods, depended on the warmth/closeness of the father-child relationship. The feeling of excitement and coming together as a family encapsulated participant experiences when there was a warm/close relationship. Those with a less warm/close father-child relationship adjusted by managing feelings of unfavourable anticipation and bracing for a declining mood, and preparing for dad's arrival home.

Zvonkovic et al. (2005) found that departure transitions can be an especially difficult time for children. My research supports this finding, as participants spoke about the sadness associated with their fathers' transition back to work. This is similar to Meredith et al.'s (2014)

review; their findings indicated that families engaged in preparing for a parent's departure and

adaptation once a parent returns home. The theme of *adaptive acquiescence* suggests that over

time the negative affect associated with paternal absence may decrease as children increasingly

adopt an accepting attitude when their father is away at work. The findings in this study highlight

that the timing of a father beginning to work away from home during a child's upbringing,

whether paternal absence begins during early or middle childhood, has little bearing effect on a

child's ability to adapt to these circumstances. The process of acceptance, specifically the

strategies utilized when learning how to adapt, may more accurately reflect the developmental

stages of childhood and the level of ability for children to understand how to manage both

individually and together as a family unit. Perhaps children's understanding of the necessity of a

work-life dynamic counteracts any resistance towards the changing circumstances of paternal

absence.

An interesting and unexpected finding in this research study was the degree to which

participants entered an imaginal space, attempting to appreciate, understand, or empathize with

their father's experience. *Perceiving the experience of others*, identifies this tendency among the

participants. Here it can be seen that participants viewed their father's work away as difficult for

all family members and could empathize with the difficulty associated with the rotational

lifestyle and the sacrifices made by one's father to support the family's needs.

In gathering children's perspectives through qualitative studies, research commonly

found that children were better able to understand the circumstances surrounding their parents'

employment when parent-child conversations on this topic occurred (Mauthner et al., 2000;

Pimlott-Wilson, 2012), suggesting that these conversations helped children cope with paternal

absence. These suggestions were supported in part by the findings under the *sacrificial duty*

theme, as one participant spoke about her father's openness with her about his need, or duty, to

work away from home to support the family. Perhaps, this involvement led to the empathic

understanding of other family members and how the experience of paternal absence may have

affected them, as participants grew to understand the difficulty associated with rotational work.

Similarly, research by MacBeth et al. (2012) found that adolescents were aware of the effects of

rotational work on other family members and on the family dynamics. These findings suggest

that nurturing empathy among family members may counteract the negative effects of E-RPA,

such as to provide greater understanding and communal support during periods of absence.

Retrospectively, participants appreciated the benefits of rotational work, as they reflected

on what it was like to be raised in an environment where their father worked away from home.

Some participants spoke about how rotational work improved the connection found in the

paternal relationship, while others emphasized how this lifestyle contributed to their father being

more involved when he was present. Paternal absence also strengthens the families of the two

participants who did not have a strong relationship with their father, by providing an opportunity

for these families to reset before coming together again. Similarly, MacBeth et al.'s (2012)

findings demonstrated that adolescents believed that their relationship with their father, was

stronger due to the rotational work circumstances.

The findings in this study were similar to the research conducted by Shen and Dicker

(2008), where fathers in their study expressed their appreciation that rotational work had held for

them. The young adults in my research grew to appreciate the E-RPA lifestyle, as some of them

reflected on how rotational work may have provided greater opportunity for father involvement.

A sense of retrospective appreciation was evident in how the experience of having a father work

away from home contributed to participants' chosen lifestyle decisions regarding their personal

choice in employment. For some, rotational work influenced and shaped their own familial

values, such as the desire to support one's family. Mauthner et al.'s (2000) findings may support

the *retrospective appreciation* theme, where the children in their study expressed that their

experience of having a parent work away from home influenced their desires to establish home-

work balance.

The question of whether or not, or to what degree, E-RPA may have detrimental effects

on the children of these family has received little attention within scholarly research. Existing E-

RPA research seems to indicate that despite the experiences of paternal absence, these families

seem to experience healthy family functioning (Dittman et al., 2016; Meredith et al., 2014;

Parkes et al., 2005); however, this research is far from definitive due to the limited existing

research, especially the lack of studies that explore children's experience. Research on other

types of paternal absence (e.g., father residence, divorce, or separation) suggests that the

closeness or connection developed in the paternal relationship can improve father engagement

and involvement (Cabrera et al., 2011; Carlson, 2006; Nixon et al., 2012). Research by Nuttgens

et al. (2018) found that parents of E-RPA families do, indeed, at times worry that their chosen

lifestyle may negatively affect their children. The findings from the current research do not lend

credence to such a worry. As noted, families who experience E-RPA most often demonstrate

healthy family functioning (Dittman et al., 2016; Kaczmarek & Sibbel, 2008; Meredith et al.,

2014). In fact, a father being away for a week of a time may actually strengthen families by

providing a built-in, so to speak, break to relieve tension that may have built during the time that

a father was present (see the theme *resetting*).

Chapter VII – Conclusion

This research presents the first Canadian study to explore the childhood experience of short-term E-RPA. The purpose of this study was to provide readers of all types (e.g., health professionals, counsellors, those interested in the topic) with a rigorous, detailed account of the experiences of E-RPA from the perspective of four adults whose fathers worked away from home during their childhood. An increased understanding of these childhood relational experiences may help those who work with E-RPA families provide support that is sensitive to the needs of children and adolescents who have been raised within this familial dynamic.

The use of interpretive phenomenological analysis afforded an in-depth exploration of the experience of E-RPA. Data analysis for this study yielded four superordinate themes and 13 subthemes. The advantage of IPA's ideographic approach arises through its ability to foster a more contextualized understanding of the E-RPA lifestyles. An example of this contextuality was evident in James' disclosure about the conflictual dynamic between his father and him where it was revealed that the disconnect found in this relationship was not the result of his father working away from home, but rather, personality differences between the two. Without gathering an in-depth understanding of this child-father relational dynamic, one could have assumed that this disconnect was associated with the physical distance he encountered when his father began working away from home. With an understanding of the emotional distance, or less warmth/closeness, that was evident within this familial dynamic, James' perception of his experience of E-RPA is presented with this perspective in mind, revealing that this strained relationship was not the result of E-RPA circumstances.

Limitations

While features of the IPA method helped produce a detailed, holistic account of the experience of E-RPA for children, the small sample size limits the ability to generalize these

results to other paternal absence contexts. For example, variables such as the type of industry, time spent away, and access to technology would all likely influence the effects of paternal absence on children. More accurately, the current study reflects individual perceptions of the experience of paternal absence. Consequently, participants excerpts provided a rich, in-depth, and individualized understanding of the relational dynamics between the participants and their fathers within the context of having their father work away from home.

Regarding sampling, in retrospect I might have limited the sample participants to those who no longer resided at home with their parents. As previously discussed in the sample description, one of the participants in this study currently resided at home. This factor led to a degree of overlap between talking about his current experience versus his childhood experiences. Interviewing participants who had left home may have helped to provide this separation. However, there was initial concern that gathering childhood experiences during later adulthood might hinder accurate recall of childhood memories. It was important to gather in-depth accounts from these adults, to provide a rich description and understanding of the phenomenon and of how paternal absence circumstances shaped their experiences. I chose to interview young adults so that their memory of childhood experiences would be relatively intact. However, it may have been helpful only to include participants who had lived away from home for a period of time (perhaps at least a year or two) as a way to separate current experiences from childhood experiences.

The use of IPA methodology proposes the limitations associated with the subjective nature of qualitative research. Inherently, researcher bias occurs when analyzing the data and upon subjectively interpreting the thematic findings. To ensure validity in this qualitative study, I closely followed Yardley's (2000) four overarching principles, while also rigorously following

Smith et al.'s (2009) six-step research process. However, to abide by IPA methodology, researcher interpretation of the data had occurred. To reduce researcher bias, I used a research journal for decision-making strategies throughout the several drafting phases of this study. The use of a research journal helped when seeking clarification and understanding of the meaning behind my participants excerpts. Specifically, by weighing the recording my initial thoughts and challenging these notes through the questioning of my personal and professional assumptions held towards this understanding, had supported the navigation of balancing researcher interpretation and participant explanation. This process became particularly evident during the phase of thematic development, when attempting to separate the current literature's findings, with the emergent themes unique to this study, and to each participants transcript. Continual reflection of my thematic interpretation led to repetitive verification seeking to ensure that participants direct quotes appropriately supported the thematic definitions, and that this evidence was substantially and repetitively supported within my reflective writing. This process ultimately challenged prior assumptions, through the continual attempts to purposefully seek verification of the accurate representation of participant meaning.

Future Research

Despite its many benefits, IPA, like most other qualitative approaches is not well-suited to discerning meaningful differences across larger populations of participants groups. Herein, future research could employ quantitative methodologies to examine subtypes of paternal absence, such as variations in the duration that one's father is away, the amount and quality of communication during the time one's father is away, or variations in family cohesion and the effects of paternal absence. Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore how gender influences the experience of paternal absence. It may be that a father being away from home affects daughters differently than

sons. For example, Mauthner et al. (2000) found that boys tended to know more about their father's work than did girls. This finding suggests that meaningful gender differences may exist among children who experience work-related paternal absence. Similarly, although a less common experience, researchers could explore the effects of employment-related maternal absence. Exploration of the effects of having a mother versus a father work away from home may reveal a differing impact on children's development and behaviour. As it becomes more common for mothers to enter the workforce, and for some to work away from home, it would be valuable for researchers to remain aware of the shift in parental roles and how this shift impacts familial dynamics. When gathering participants for this study, there was interest from those who had a mother who worked away from home for short-term rotations; however, due to the focus of this study remaining on paternal absence, exploration of this maternal dynamic has yet to be explored.

This study serves as a valuable addition to the literature in understanding what it is like to have a father work away from home from the perspective of an adult child participant, an area of research yet to be examined in Canada. While the findings of this research suggest that E-RPA can be a positive experience for the children involved, there is certainly a need for further research. Further research could explore the differences in children's adaption depending on whether they experience paternal absence from early or middle childhood. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to explore whether age, gender, or the paternal relationship dynamics influence the desire to make a connection when experiencing E-RPA circumstances, as this paternal connection seems to support children and families to thrive in managing a rotational lifestyle. It would be of benefit for future research to examine the perspectives of siblings or parents, as a way of comparing the impact that E-RPA may have within these additional relational dynamics.

This suggestion follows from Katherine's reflection that her sibling's experience of their father

working away from home may have resulted in a differing perspective, perhaps one with a

contrasting outlook, given the caregiving role that this sibling held within the familial dynamic.

Implications

       This study has implications for families who experience E-RPA, for counsellors working to

support these families. Implications for counsellors include the consideration of preventative

measures and coping strategies when supporting these families to manage stressors associated

with experiences of paternal absence, while normalizing the experience of this type of lifestyle.

For example, the literature suggests that families who experience E-RPA should adapt their

schedules to allow for important celebrations to occur when fathers return home (Willerton et al.,

2011; Zvonkovic et al., 2005). This study supports these findings, as found in the *flexible*

scheduling theme, where participants spoke about adjusting the timing of events to accommodate

father's work schedule. Counsellors can encourage families to remain adaptive in their schedules

when promoting familial connection. Parkes et al. (2005) also emphasized the importance of

helping parents understand when and how to discuss concerns associated with paternal absence

to promote healthy family functioning.

       Counsellors can also help families focus on the benefits of an E-RPA lifestyle. Existing

literature suggests that it is beneficial to include children in discussions regarding employment

and home functioning as a way to promote greater understanding of the work-related paternal

absence lifestyle (Mauthner et al., 2000; Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). As described in the *empathic*

understanding of the other theme, the participants in this research seemed to understand the

impact that E-RPA had on other family members. It would be valuable to explore the

components that aided in this empathic understanding. Counsellors can encourage families to

discuss how having a father work away from home impacts their lifestyle, as a way of encouraging congruent understanding between family members. Furthermore, instead of focusing on what E-RPA families have lost, or how their families may be different from families who experience traditional employment, counsellors can foreground the strengths displayed in this study to foster warmth/closeness between the absent father and other family members. Specifically, a portion of therapy could focus on teaching or encouraging coping mechanisms, such as flexible scheduling or empathic understanding, through the shared understanding of the findings presented in this study.

Counsellors can benefit by understanding how father-child relationship shapes the experience of E-RPA. A counsellor working with an E-RPA family might assume that the presenting problem is a result of the father's absence, however, my findings suggest that it may be valuable first to explore the relational dynamics between family members, followed by exploring how the E-RPA lifestyle serves to magnify or reduce the presence of any conflictual issues. For example, it is likely that for the two male participants in this study, if their fathers lived at home full-time, there would have been greater conflict in their relationship. The *resetting* theme demonstrated that it was the time spent apart that helped to alleviate the pressure and tension between family members. One participant who spoke to this theme described the resetting process as a protective function against family discord and how traditional employment may have led to dire consequences. By gaining knowledge of the relational dynamic between father and child within the context of E-RPA, counsellors can be better equipped to support families through the navigation of this complex relationship.

The *familial support* theme holds implications for counsellors who utilize a family systems approach to counselling. This theme suggests that family members each hold a critical role in

being able to cope with and manage an E-RPA lifestyle, including both the parents and children

sharing the work at home. Understanding the role that each member holds in the family and

appreciating each other's contribution could make for a more cohesive system. From a family

systems perspective, counsellors could encourage families to understand the role that each family

member holds within the family dynamic, and how their role contributes to healthy family

functioning. By having this understanding, families can utilize the support of one another to bear

the load of what may feel like added tasks or to be presently attentive. Counsellors could use

relational genograms and ecomaps (Rempel, Neufeld, & Kushner, 2007) to show that although

the family members are separated, there are still warm/close emotional ties worth preserving

while recognizing the functions that each member could fill. This visual demonstration can

validate family members experiences and firm their resolve to be there for each other, whether

they are absent or present.

Implications for school personnel can involve informing the school community of the

themes found within the E-RPA literature and how this phenomenon affects their students.

Specifically, a school might monitor the degree to which a child's behaviour is influenced by the

return and departure of the father, as a way of tracking whether these transitional periods impact

a student developmentally, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally. There was a cyclical

pattern present in this research, suggesting that the return and departure of these fathers can be a

difficult time for children and adolescents or a time of adjustment. To best support their students,

informing school personnel of these transitions can provide a more supportive environment,

specifically related to their students' social-emotional adaptation, and ultimately may help

families to reduce their stress levels, particularly during times of transitions.

Furthermore, school personnel could draw upon the *making up time* theme found in this study, to better understand these family's needs. For example, school personnel are sometimes quick to judge parents who pull their children from school for no apparent reason. One participant in the study spoke about her father removing her from school early, ostensibly to increase the amount of time that they could spend together. A better understanding of paternal absence might decrease such negative judgements while also helping schools to work more collaboratively and creatively with E-RPA families to address times when their children are absent. Caregivers and school personnel can work collaboratively through parents and students self-advocating their needs, and perhaps helping educators understand, appreciate, and be responsive to the unique needs of these families.

The in-depth and rich analysis and presentation of the findings afford an in-depth understanding of the complexity of having experienced paternal absence, for those who reside in Saskatchewan and have a father who works short-term rotational work away from home. The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of short-term E-RPA, the impact of the paternal relationship and how this relationship influences children's development, paternal connection, and family dynamics, and how counsellors can better support these families. As more families come to experience E-RPA (Haan, Walsh, & Neis, 2014), exploration of the effects of rotational work and paternal absence is critical, as a way of ensuring that these families receive appropriate support in managing the stressors they encounter, while promoting the protective mechanisms utilized in preventing family dysfunction.

Fathers hold a unique role within familial dynamics of a household, while also represent a significant portion of those who are employed in the natural resource mineral industry in Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). A father's role in the paternal relationship are emphasized by his

commitment and effort to spend quality time with his children, to be available and involved with

his children, while supporting his family as a whole, both emotionally and financially.

Encouraging father involvement amongst those who experience paternal absence, reflects the

unique nature that this relationship holds for children alike.

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Appendix A

Athabasca University Research Ethics Approval

Athabasca University
RESEARCH CENTRE   **CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AUREB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The AUREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: **22799**

Principal Investigator:
Mrs. Wendy Monks-Janzen, Graduate Student
Faculty of Health Disciplines\Master of Counselling
Supervisor:
Dr. Simon Nuttgens (Supervisor)
Project Title:
Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence and Childhood Lived Experiences: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Effective Date: December 12, 2017   **Expiry Date**: December 11, 2018

Restrictions:

Any modification or amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval.
Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

A Project Completion (Final) Report must be submitted when the research is complete *(i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable))* or the research is terminated.

Approved by: **Date:** December 12, 2017

Donna Clare, Chair
Faculty of Health Disciplines, Departmental Ethics Review Committee

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Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
University Research Services, Research Centre
1 University Drive, Athabasca AB Canada   T9S 3A3
E-mail rebsec@athabascau.ca
Telephone: 780.675.6718

Athabasca University Research Ethics Approval Renewal

Athabasca University
RESEARCH CENTRE

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL - RENEWAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AUREB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The AUREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: **22799**
Principal Investigator:
Mrs. Wendy Monks-Janzen, Graduate Student
Faculty of Health Disciplines\Master of Counselling

Supervisor:
Dr. Simon Nuttgens (Supervisor)

Project Title:
Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence and Childhood Lived Experiences: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Effective Date: October 1, 2018   **Expiry Date**:   September 30, 2019

Restrictions:
Any modification or amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.
A Project Completion (Final) Report must be submitted when the research is complete *(i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable))* or the research is terminated.

Approved by: **Date:** October 1, 2018

Carolyn Greene, Chair
Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

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Appendix B Recruitment Form

Athabasca
University

Research Participants Required

As a child, were you raised in an environment where your father worked at away from home in a natural resource industry? If so, I would like to invite you to participate in my study titled:

"Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence and Childhood Lived Experiences:

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis"

I am a Master of Counselling student at Athabasca University. I am studying how individuals, between the ages of 18-25, have learned to adapt and adjust to having an absent father, who worked away from home for one to two-week rotational durations.

Purpose of the Study: The natural resource industry in Saskatchewan necessitates that many families will experience periodic, work-related paternal absence. This research examines the impact on individuals, between the ages of 18-25, who were raised in an environment where their father worked away from home for one to two-week rotational durations. I want to learn about the impact of being raised in a family that encountered paternal absence.

I hope to use this information to help counsellors support the developmental needs of children and adolescents who are being raised within this type of family. It is hoped that this research will also be of interest to natural resource companies and their aspirations to support families who are involved in rotational shift work.

Procedures: I will individually interview three or four participants. The interviews will take approximately 90 minutes. I will ask you questions about how your father's absence influenced your development as a child, as well as about your relationship with your father, and how your family functioned, at your own comfort level.

I will audio-record the interviews, and after I have transcribed the recordings, I will look for patterns and themes that emerge, with the goal of understanding your experiences and learning how we can help families to thrive.

If you would like to know more about this, and possibly participate, please contact me at:

Wendy Monks-Janzen   (306) 514-3121   wendym010@hotmail.com

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. For what duration of your childhood did your father work in natural-resource employment? What was his schedule (e.g., one-week rotations or two-week rotations)?

2. Were there any siblings that were raised in the same home?

3. What were transitional times (leaving and coming home) like for you?
   o What were these times like for your family (e.g., parents or sibling(s))?

4. What were the positive aspects, or benefits, of having a father who worked away from home?

5. What were the negative aspects, or challenge, of having a father who worked away from home?

6. What was it like for you when he was home/at work? How did you feel?

7. How did your father's employment impact the relationship you had with him? With others in the family? How did your father working away from home affect your relationship with him? What words do you use to describe your childhood relationship with your father?
   o Would you describe your relationship with your father as generally positive or generally negative? Explain. How did these circumstances feelings of connection with your father?

8. What was life like for you when he was away/at home (e.g., at school, at activities, connecting with others)?

9. Having your father work away from home, how did that influence family dynamics/functioning (e.g., when father was away and when father was home)?

10. What had helped you and your family to adapt/cope to the rotational schedule? How did you cope during times of absence?

11. In what ways, if any, has your childhood experiences of paternal absence influenced your life today?

12. Please describe how paternal absence might influence how you parent/will parent (e.g., raise your own children/co-parenting/disciplining decisions).
    o How have these circumstances influenced the relationship you have developed with your children?

Appendix D

Methodological Journal

In support of IPA's methodological procedures, I have begun an audit trail of my initial research decision-making strategies by documenting this process within my methodological journal. This journal supports my desire for a reflexive research study.

A (Hopefully Not Too) Late Starting Point [June 21, 2017]

After utilizing a methodological journal for one of my recent research assignments, I recognized the value in such a reflective process. The value of this experience in gathering a greater understanding of my decision-making process brought clarity during weeks of feeling obscured. Thus, I have made the evident attempt to begin this process now for my thesis study. Although I have previously completed the process of defining my research topic and gathering relevant literature for my supporting literature review, the defining of my methodological process is an expanding starting point. Until recently, I had not fully considered which approach I would utilize, beyond that of surface-level understanding. However, after consulting with my thesis supervisor (several times), I have narrowed my approach that of IPA, strongly influenced by the recommended writings of Smith et al. (2009) and supporting philosophers.

Time for Methodological Learning: What is IPA and How was it Derived? [June 28, 2017]

To understand what IPA is, I needed to understand the derived theoretical underpinnings of this approach. I will admit, I was initially apprehensive of coming to understand IPA's theoretical assumptions, given my prior difficulty in understanding philosophical theories; however, Smith et al. (2009) simplified IPA's theoretical constructs, thus making my understanding more tangible. As I learned today, there was several phenomenological philosophers and even more theorists that contributed to the development of the IPA approach,

each with their unique directions. In appreciating these differing perspectives, I have come to

maneuver which approaches (a combination thereafter) account for my intended purpose in

utilizing this methodological approach.

Time to Make Some Methodological Decisions [July 2, 2017]

As I continue to examine the relevant literature on the IPA approach, I related to Smith et

al.'s (2009) acknowledgment: "First-time qualitative researchers may find themselves with a

topic in mind, and an idea that qualitative research may be the way to investigate it" (p. 41). This

statement precisely reflects my current stance, and it is comforting to know that the feelings I am

experiencing are common with other novice researchers.

Data Collection and Analysis: Aligning Purpose with Preference [July 5, 2017]

After gathering a more in-depth understanding of IPA methodology, I feel much more

comfortable with my decision to utilize this approach, given that the explanations of each step of

this research approach (Smith et al., 2009) strongly correlates the aligning of my purpose and

preference. At this point, I am beginning to visualize what this research process looks like as I

move forward with defining my methodological approach; however, I feel pulled between

closely following the relevant literature's suggestions, while defining my own unique research

methods related to IPA. As a result, I have taken some time to reflect on a few internal questions

that I have: *What draws me to IPA? Which specifies about data collection and analysis will be*

useful for my study and which ones are not preferred? Ultimately, these questions led me to

continue this reflective practice with my thesis supervisor, to ensure that my research ambitions

were within a Master's level student's abilities.

Writing Out the Details: Data Collection [July 6, 2017 – July 10, 2017]

I began condensing all of the collected relevant literature on IPA data collection procedures; I found this process exciting as attending to the details allowed me to visualize how I would finally conduct my study. Some of these details included the ethical requirements needed at each step of the research process, while simultaneously acknowledging the realistic time commitments that these steps entail. Additionally, I have begun to narrow down my sample size while outlining the interview process. Although, I also recognize that some of these details may change or may require more fine-tuning and I progress through this process. Nonetheless, I see this opportunity as a fresh start to a newly developed understanding of my IPA study.

Writing Out the Details: Data Analysis [July 11, 2017 – July 15, 2017]

By carefully attending to the relevant literature in regards to what existing studies have done for IPA data analysis, my developed process emerged. By outlining a specific framework on how I intend to analyze my data, I began to tie together how my theoretical orientation influenced this process. I wanted to ensure that the IPA theory expressed was intertwined within each stage of my research process, up to and including my data analysis and final write-up process; however, I also recognized that these decisions require flexibility in that the way I intend to display my data will reflect my data collection. I can anticipate what this may look like, yet, I also need to make adjustments when necessary.

Thesis 1: Officially Beginning My Research Journal [September 9, 2017]

After spending this past week, in addition to the previous months of preparation, for beginning my thesis, I have begun to navigate the procedural processes that are required as I move forward. Although there is an overwhelming number of required steps that are yet to come, the support received through Thesis 1, from my supervisor, GCAP peer group, and family and friends, will help to support me in checking each step off in a timely manner.

Key Thoughts This Week on Research Topic [September 10, 2017 – September 17, 2017]

Question to reflect on: *How my interests and experiences, including my background and worldview, influence my views on the research topic and question*. My research topic is greatly influenced by my own childhood experience of growing up in an environment consisting of employment-related paternal absence, where my father worked a one-week Fly-In/Fly-Out rotation for a local mining organization. I believe that this experience has influenced my worldview in how I connect to others, particularly loved ones, given that the familial dynamic involved that of a distance relationship. Also, the nurturing received from a parent, who was both present as well as away, had impacted how I view relationships and their necessity for children to thrive developmentally. In minimizing the influence of this experience on my study, I have purposefully taken a *curious* stance, where I will provide adult participants the opportunity to share their experiences of how E-RPA has influenced their lives. This refrain will become particularly important to remain aware of when gathering data, by ensuring that I do not lead participants with prior arranged questions.

This weeks to do list involves that of developing one sentence related to explaining the significance of my study and to gather relevant feedback from my peers. *Initial draft: significant of my study:* The significance of my study is to explore the impact that short-term employment-related paternal absence has on children's development and relational experiences, provided the limited voice available in the existing literature. *Revised statement:* Provided the limited voice available in the existing literature, the significance of my study is to explore the impact that short-term employment-related paternal absence has on children's development and relational experiences as a way of enhancing counselling intervention and the development of protective and coping mechanisms when working with these families.

Also, this week, I have been in discussion with my supervisor to revise my *research question*. When beginning this conversation, my statement was: Specifically, my research question asks (*anthropomorphism??*): how does ~~being~~ a child raised in a context of E-RPA, including the dynamic interplay between risk and protective factors (*against what*?), impact individuals' childhood development and relational experiences? Upon collaborative review, my **research question** reflects several versions: (1) Specifically, I ask: how does a child raised in a context of employment-related paternal absence impact individuals' childhood development and relational experiences? (2) What is the childhood experience of being raised in the family when the father works away from home? (3) What is it like for a child to be raised a family when the father works away from home?

Reminder to self: see dropbox IPA studies – explore how they posed a research question.

Beginning My Research Proposal [September 18, 2017]

After putting together an official thesis binder this week, I finally felt prepared to begin my research proposal and all the sections that insertion will be required. I began by creating a document outline, while developing headings for each section; this process gave me an overview of what is expected, what areas will apply, including what area that will not. As I can see – there is a lot of work ahead of me; however, I will begin to tackle this proposal one page at a time and one chapter at a time.

Re-Evaluating the Significance of My Topic [September 19, 2017 – September 20]

This area has been a particular struggle for me, especially in delving deeper into the reasons why my topic is significant to explore further. After receiving some consultation, I now recognize that my thesis will be exploring new terrain, an area that has yet to be researched on.

Outlining this is clear content has been my most recent focus, and I recognize that this will require more reflection on my behalf.

Re-Evaluating My Literature Review [September 20-21, 2017]

The focus of this week is to re-evaluate my literature review. Partly, I am in need of restructuring my review and how I have integrated my sources. Although I have made several strong arguments about what has been found in the relevant literature, I need to explore the connections I have made, while seeking whether other connections have been negligently missed. Provided that I have not looked at the literature in several months, this has become the priority task of my week as I complete this section within my research proposal.

Refining and Sending My Literature Review for Feedback [September 22 – October 3, 2017]

This week has been challenging as I continue to refine my literature review, condense the content, while also making it more legible and easy to understand for readers. I found myself feel incompetent this week, perhaps because it felt as though I kept hitting a wall; I was not getting anywhere. Then, it occurred to me that the job was needed to be done, and I needed to persevere through this process; I reached out to my colleagues and thesis mentor as a way of gathering critical feedback. This process helped me realize that I have come a long way, while I also have some more refining work to complete. I am looking forward to the discussion forum feedback I receive this week, in hopes that new perspectives will help me see my project through a new lens of learning.

This week, I reduced my initial 8 themes down to 7, and I anticipate that this will continue to narrow as I weed out irrelevant information. I also asked for specific feedback of my research question, to help me decide whether I should make this question more specific or to

keep it broader; this is a discussion I intend to have with my supervisor when seeking his feedback later this week.

Receptively Considering Literature Review Feedback [October 7-10, 2017]

From the peer feedback I received on my PowerPoint this week a few key aspects came up:

1) Defining certain words for an understandable explanation.

Local uranium mines: what does local mean? Local represents to the province of Saskatchewan and the northern mines found within; I need to add explanation of Cameco's international operations, to specify what my population will NOT include.

2) Emphasizing the important gap found in research by considering children's perspectives.

3) Justifying my choice in interviewing adults: these participants can reflect more indepth on their experience.

    a. How does their perspective shift over time and how will this influence my research?

    b. There are a few reasons I chose to interview adults rather than children: 1) my supervisor recommended this age, given the difficulty in getting ethics approval for children; 2) after much discussion with my supervisor, we agreed that this age would more likely provide greater depth of reflection, as individuals can understand (from a distance) how this form of paternal absence had impacted their experiences; 3) there was concern that by interviewing a child themselves, who are in the midst of experiencing the phenomenon that it may be difficult to detach this concept during reflection 4) there is also possibility that by exploring from the adults perspective, that findings may arise as to how these individuals choose

to live their lifestyle or parenting style similarly/differently than what they were raised in.

4) Clarifying my intended population and the explanation I provided in my PP.

5) Research question: narrow or keep broad?

    a. Suggests reflected that with short-term absence being my focus, should my question be more specific to short-term absence or rather refer to the broader population?

    b. A classmates' suggestion for a RQ: "How do young adults describe their childhood experience of being raised in a family where the father works away from home on short-term rotations?"

6) Defining Key Terms: remembering to relate them back to the RQ and my intended purpose.

    a. Definition of employment-related paternal absence: needs to be more inclusive of family component, rather than employee focused; this definition currently speaks to the concept of the person as an employee, as it doesn't speak to the concept of the person as a father.

7) Given the criteria for the PP I did not include how my literature was collected; however, I can see the benefit to include this information, demonstrating that I had to pull from other areas of paternal absence, so these comparisons could not be accurately made.

After compiling this feedback, my literature review was sent off to my supervisor for his feedback and approval.

Research Design [October 11-13, 2017]

This week I have been exploring the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that encompass the topic of my study and my intended IPA approach. I spent some time clarifying the differences between IPA and the founding phenomenological approach, for explicit demonstration. Some of the key concepts that arose reflected: iterative nature, interpretative approach or paradigm, meaning-making, ecological systems theory, the transactional model, hermeneutic approach (double hermeneutic engagement), and the idiographic framework. As I work my way into next week, I will be exploring the relations of these concepts in preparation for Webinar II presentation.

This week I also explored the research design of my IPA study, by clearly outlining the four general phases of my study, including initial research planning and preparation, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting the results. I also began exploring the role of reflexivity and rigour within my study, while acknowledging potential limitations.

Informed Consent and Recruitment Forms [October 12, 2017]

Today was a busy, but productive day, writing up my informed consent and recruitment forms. I am finding that I am having difficult writing 2-3 clear sentences to discuss the importance of my study and this has been a challenge that I seek to continue to work on. I am finding that I have been incorporating Cameco Corporations into the focus of my thesis proposal; however, I have yet to personally make contact with this organization regarding participant recruitment. I am hoping to have a discussion with my supervisor soon, when this conversation would be deemed appropriate.

Defining Key Concepts [October 15, 2017]

I had spent today reading through all of my literature review articles to provide an

explanation of what short-term employment-related paternal absence represented. This process

involved a discussion surrounding the different types of paternal absence, the different types of

employment and mobility choices. It was evident that there was no consensus on a specific

definition, thus I provided my own for the purposes of my own study.

Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence: For the purposes of this study,

short-term employment-related paternal absence refers to a rotation system, or long-distance

commuting where fathers repeatedly travel away from home to their place of work, for short-

term durations, between one to two-week rotations. Specific to the direction of my study, the

employment factor refers to a father who works in mining-related employment within the

boundaries of Saskatchewan, who is required to be periodically absent for employment

circumstances.

Mapping Out My Research Plan [October 16-22, 2017]

By preparing for the Webinar II presentation for Thesis I, I was able to refine several

areas of my research intentions, including:

- *Rationalizing the research paradigm for my specific research question*: Why

  IPA? →IPA is a qualitative inquiry approach that brings greater understanding of

  how individuals experience the phenomenon at hand. →No Canadian studies have

  been conducted from the perspective of the child, or adult reflecting on their

  childhood experiences of being raised in an environment consisting of short-term

  E-RPA. →Given that qualitative methods are especially suited to researching new

  areas of investigation, I will draw upon IPA to develop a rich, interpretive account

  of children's' experience of paternal absence.

- *Describing the conceptual framework of my study*: this part was difficult, given

  that IPA does not support this type of framework but rather reflects a theoretical

  framework; coming to understand the difference has been a challenge. →

  Theoretical Framework of IPA: IPA is theoretically rooted in phenomenology and

  hermeneutics (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). →**Phenomenology** involves

  generating a rich understanding of individuals' lived experiences by how

  individuals perceive these experiences to be; this process involves gathering the

  essence of the explored phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). →Rather,

  IPA involves generating phenomenon *meaning*, through participant interpretation

  (Smith et al., 2009). An IPA approach provides insight into how the researcher

  understands each participant's perception of the explored phenomenon. → IPA is

  idiographic, in understanding the particular (Smith et al., 2009). → With the

  guidance of my supervisor, who is familiar with IPA, I will utilize this qualitative

  inquiry approach, which Johnathan Smith (1996) developed. My research

  question is best explored using IPA, given the focus on the recognition of

  phenomenon meaning making for participants (Smith et al., 2009). IPA guides my

  study to elicit how participants perceive short-term E-RPA to have impacted their

  experiences. These experiences may reflect the reciprocal nature of context and

  relational experiences, which may have potentially influenced their childhood

  development and relational connections.

  o → Hermeneutic & Interpretative Nature: **Double Hermeneutic**

    Engagement - Requires collaborative engagement with my participants.

    This type of engagement captures understanding through the researcher's

understanding of what the participant has shared of their own phenomenon

understanding (Smith et al., 2009). Understanding is second order, as the

researcher can only understand the phenomenon through the perception of

the participant's unique account (Smith et al., 2009). This process allows

for participants to gain *meaning-making*, whereas the researcher engages

in *sense-making* of what the participant has shared (Smith et al., 2009).

Interpretation reflects both the researcher and the participant (Smith et al.,

2009).

    o   → Connecting IPA & Context – Relations: →**Bronfenbrenner's (1997)**

        Ecological Systems Theory of Development - It is valuable that the

        interpretations of paternal absence be understood within a contextual

        framework, given that this type of lifestyle is intertwined amongst an

        individual's subsystems. →**Sameroff's (2009) Transactional Model -**

        Provides understanding of how individuals affect or are affected by others

        in all transactions. →**IPA -** By acknowledging these conceptual

        frameworks regarding the understanding human development, analysis

        may explore mitigating factors found within these contextual realms of

        being.

- *My proposal sampling protocol and justifying this plan*: →Participant Sample and

  Recruitment - I will invite Saskatchewan residents between the ages of 18 to 25 to

  participate in my study. Participants, both male and female, will have been raised

  with a father who worked away from home for one to two-week rotations. As a

  gatekeeper, I will partner with Cameco Corporations, where participants (from

their familial pool) will receive a formal explanation of my research intentions.

My IPA study will utilize a small *homogenous* sample (Smith & Osborn, 2007)

of 3 participants. → I will *purposefully* select participant sampling, given the need

for these individuals to have experienced the phenomenon (Smith & Osborn,

2007) of having a father who worked away from home. Provided the detail

associated with IPA analysis (Smith, 2004), my IPA study will utilize a small

homogenous sample (Smith & Osborn, 2007) of three participants. Relevant IPA

literature recognizes that this sample size is appropriate for a master's level study

(Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011), to account for meaningful participant analysis

and case comparisons without becoming overwhelmed with the accumulated data.

- *The data collection strategy I propose and justifying this choice*: Interview

  Process - **Semi-structured interviews** are the most commonly preferred type of

  data collection for IPA studies, in eliciting rich accounts of participant

  experiences (Larkin et al., 2006; Smith, 2004). These interviews will be

  conducted in an approximate **90-minute** time frame. An **interview guide** will be

  used for discussion facilitation, rather than direct questioning, and will reflect

  genuine interest, engagement, and a curious stance for discovery. Due to IPA's

  requirement for later *verbatim* transcription (Smith et al., 2009), **audiotaping** will

  aid in providing a transparent audit trail, as a way of evidently capturing content

  meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Each interview will be **transcribed** in the

  sequence of conduction. This **sequence** ensures individualized thematic

  derivation, prior to the cross-case analysis step. → IPA interviewing begins by

  establishing rapport between myself and the participant (Smith & Osborn, 2007),

by informing them that I am interested in their unique phenomenon experiences

and that no answer is wrong (Smith et al., 2009). Also, I need to be patient while

listening and not rush the participant but rather give them ample time for active

engagement (Smith et al., 2009). This engagement will reflect my genuine

interest, engagement, and curious stance. Ultimately, this participant-led format

allows for flexibility to divert when topics arise throughout an interview (Smith,

2004). Furthermore, to gather a more in-depth understanding of short-term E-

RPA, it will be essential to develop an interview guide (Hefferon & Gil-

Rodriguez, 2011) outlining my open-ended questions and relevant prompts to

explicitly consider my interview involvement while addressing potential issues

(Smith & Osborn, 2007). However, these interviews will involve discussion

facilitation, rather than direct questioning (Smith et al., 2009). Given the nature of

question flexibility, IPA's open inquiry can be modified to participants'

meaningfully emerged responses as I actively listen to them freely discuss their

personal experience (Smith et al., 2009), and engage in meaningful conversations.

My interview guide will explore: general (positive/negative) experiences of

growing up in a context or E-RPA; how this type of employment impacted their

paternal relationship (or relationships with others); how this type of employment

impacted family functioning; coping mechanisms used during absences; how this

experience influenced their own lifestyle, partner decision, parenting; the

challenges of this lifestyle; the advantages of this lifestyle.

- *How I plan to analyze the data:* 4 Stages of Data Analysis and Interpretation

  →The Initial Step: First Case Interpretation - A researcher begins by constructing

phenomenon meaning through *thematic identification* (Converse, 2012). Involves *line-by-line analysis* of participant intended meaning of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). →The Next Step: Emergent Theme Derivation - **Creating separate analysis components;** Creating an overarching statement for each theme; Provide excerpt evidence under each theme; Provide researcher's analytical interpretation. **Abstraction:** Attending to patterns found between subordinate themes; **Polarization:** examine thematic differences of emerging patterns by utilizing *numeration* to provide thematic frequency; **Contextualization:** identify how phenomenon may relate to participants' major life events, including relational development, and how these moments influence their understanding of the phenomenon →The Final Step: Repeat and Compare: Rigorously *repeating* the previously discussed steps with my subsequent participant transcriptions. These steps allow for independent analysis of each transcription to allow for the emergence of the individualized and subjective meaning of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Following these independent analyses, I will attend to patterns by *cross-case contrasting* my findings, which may alter my initial thematic derivation (Smith et al., 2009). Participants are made aware that I will no longer be able to remove their content, provided the overlapping thematic derivation that will ensue. →Reporting Results and Discussion: **Presenting my substantive results** (Smith et al., 2009). This **write-up** will include a combination of my analytic interpretation of phenomenon meaning, supported by *excerpts* (Smith & Osborn, 2007). **Displaying results** will include a combination of a graphic representation of the derived generic and participant-specific themes,

which can be narratively expanded through further sequential explanations with supporting excerpt evidence (Smith et al., 2009). Ultimately, the study will conclude with a **discussion** outlining the results in comparison to supporting and relevant literature (Smith, 2004) on the topic of short-term employment-related paternal absence. Furthermore, this opportunity may include addressing ideas found from this research relating to how counsellors can support these families now, or how mining organizations can provide resources to encourage these families to thrive.

- *Steps I plan to take to enhance and maintain the quality of the data:* Role of Reflexivity and Rigour: **Sensitive Engagement -** Supportively incorporating excerpts in my interpretative analysis, thus providing a voice to participants (Smith et al., 2009). To establish accuracy, I will verify my interpretive accounts by participant *member checking* (Hays & Wood, 2011), recognizing their contribution to phenomenon understanding. **Transparency -** I acknowledge that I cannot entirely remove my held biases from the research process; therefore, I will remain transparent by acknowledging my pre-understandings of the phenomenon in my written discussion by noting how they may influence the study. **Methodological Journal -** From the onset of preparing for this study, I compiled an audit trail of research notes and decision-making strategies, to provide an opportunity for review, if needed.

- *Potential limitations to my study design:* Study Limitations: **Generalizability -** IPA researchers often only utilize a **small sample size**, thus limiting generalizability and data to be representative of the population. Rather, the

proposed study will acquire information that brings awareness to the gap found in

Canadian literature. Moreover, the lack of generalizability reflects that this

study's population is limited to the cultural focus of Saskatchewan residents, who

are a part of a specific mining organization. **Participant Recruitment -** May pose

potential challenges of being able to access participants in remote areas of the

province, specifically Northern Saskatchewan; concerns of potential weather

conditions or limited and expensive transport are real factors. However, to

accommodate these concerns, interviews conducting through Skype or Adobe

Connect programs, can potentially alleviate these concerns, if internet access is

available.

Appendix E

Tri-Council Ethics Certificate

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Wendy Monks

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **17 November, 2012**

Appendix F

Short-Term Employment-Related Paternal Absence and Childhood Lived Experiences: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

Principal Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Wendy Monks-Janzen	Dr. Simon Nuttgens
Ph. (306) 514-3121	Ph. (250) 496-5143
Email: wendym010@hotmail.com	Email: snuttgens@athabascau.ca

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in research that examines short-term-employment related paternal absence. In Saskatchewan, many fathers leave home for one to two weeks at a time to work in natural resource employment. This research considers the influence of fathers working away from home from the perspective of young adults (18-25 years of age), who were raised in this environment.

My name is Wendy Monks-Janzen, and I am conducting this study as a requirement to complete my Masters of Counselling degree at Athabasca University, under the supervision of Dr. Simon Nuttgens.

Research Procedures

As a participant, you are asked to take part in an audio recorded interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about your experience of being raised in a family where your father worked away from home, while reflecting on how it impacted your development, the paternal relationship, and family functioning dynamics. The interview can take place at a time and place on which we both agree.

You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. If you choose to withdraw prior to the data analysis stage, all of the information you have provided will be removed. There is no penalty for discontinuing.

Risks and Benefits

You may learn more about yourself and your connections with others by participating in this study. These insights can potentially help counsellors to support children and adolescents who have been raised with paternal absence, while promoting the development of protective and coping mechanisms, as a way of helping these families thrive. However, there are minimal risks in participating in this research. Sensitive topics related to childhood experiences may arise.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this research is confidential. To protect your identity, participants will be asked to provide a pseudonym. The data will be stored and secured at my home office. Paper data will be kept in a

locked file cabinet; digital audio recordings will be kept on password-protected computers. All data will be destroyed five years following the completion of the research. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personal information that could identify you will be shared.

Results of the Study: Results of the study, including direct quotations from participants, will be presented as my thesis dissertation, published in peer-reviewed journals, and presented at academic conferences. A copy of the results will be provided to you upon request.

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Wendy Monks-Janzen or Dr. Simon Nuttgens using the contact information above.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at 1-800-788-9041 or by e-mail to rebsec@athabascau.ca

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

CONSENT:

I have read the Letter of Information regarding this research study, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I will keep a copy of this letter for my records.

My signature below confirms that:

- I understand the expectations and requirements of my participation in the research;
- I understand the provisions around confidentiality and anonymity;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time with no negative consequences;
- I am aware that I may contact Wendy Monks-Janzen, Dr. Simon Nuttgens, or the Office of Research Ethics if I have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research procedures.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Researcher   Date

By initialing the statement(s) below,

_____   I am granting permission for the researcher to use an audio recorder.

_____   I acknowledge that the researcher may use specific quotations of mine, without identifying me.

A copy of this consent will be given to you. Please keep it for your reference.