Fathers’ Pedagogical Vision: A Phenomenological Study

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a Ph.D.-degree

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Fathers’ Pedagogical Vision: A Phenomenological Study

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This work is dedicated to my children

Benjamín, Salóme, and Karítas
Abstract

Parents, both mothers and fathers, play an important role in fostering their children’s general growth and well-being. Along with the last century’s great social changes, the form of the family and family life has changed; and in some cases it has become much more complex than in the past. This makes it essential to understand parents’ vision of their role and their experience of being a parent. One way is to explore their pedagogical vision: their values, goals and practices.

Although the father’s role has changed markedly in the last decades from being mainly a provider to being more involved in parenting, and good and involved fathers are seen as important for children’s well-being, it also seems that father’s involvement has positive effects on the father himself. Still, over the years, less attention has been paid to fathers as caregivers than to mothers, and fewer studies have focused on the actual lived experiences of fathers. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision—their values, goals, and practices—and of how their lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision. Another part of the purpose is to modify an analytical model to understand their vision.

The study’s theoretical framework uses both social constructivism and an ecological perspective in the spirit of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory. In addition, Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model of teachers’ and principals’ pedagogical vision is used to add to our understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision.

Two research questions guide the study on fathers’ pedagogical vision: 1) What characterizes the fathers’ pedagogical vision on parenting and child-rearing (values, goals, and practices)? 2) What characterizes the lived experiences that the fathers in the study relate to their pedagogical vision? The participants are 23 fathers of children aged 13 and 16. Their pedagogical vision is explored using qualitative methods for both data collection (interviews) and data analysis (phenomenological approach).

The analysis revealed several values the fathers appear to use for guidance in raising their children: security, love and care, honesty, respect, trust, and the value of the family. The well-being of their children is a leitmotif running through the fathers’ parenting goals: They want their children to do well, especially in relation to their happiness and success. They want their children to be at peace with themselves and with life, have interpersonal skills, follow rules and customs, have healthy lifestyles, and be self-reliant. Providing children with security, love and care is an overarching theme in the fathers’ parenting
practices. They say they want to be there for the child, be a role model, give feedback, inform, provide freedom, and maintain discipline. In sum, they highly emphasize love and care and freedom (freedom of action, autonomy and independence) and security and boundaries. The fathers’ great emphasis on love and care is interesting both nationally and internationally because traditionally intimacy and caring has more often been attributed to women.

The fathers’ lived experiences influence their view: their desire is to do better than their fathers. They want to participate more fully in parenting their children and have more of a relationship with them, by spending more time with them, being emotionally closer to them, and having more and deeper conversations than they had with their own fathers. By far the most common pattern is that their role models are mothers (e.g., their own mother and the mother of their child). Elements of their socio-cultural and historical context, including Icelandic laws and regulations, values accepted in the community, the welfare system, media, and time and traditions also affect their views.

The analytic model, which was modified and developed to understand the fathers’ pedagogical vision, is a theoretical contribution to research on fatherhood. The modification includes adding socio-cultural and historical context to the model and explaining how it affects fathers’ views. The findings should be a valuable contribution to research on fatherhood and fathers’ pedagogical vision.

The findings should also be useful for policy makers in parent education and informative for administrators and other professionals in this area.
Ágrip (Abstract in Icelandic)


Fæðilegur bakgrunnur rannsóknarinnar er söttur bæði til félagslegar huggsmiðahyggju og vistfræðilegs sjónarhorns í anda vistfræðikenningar Bronfenbrenner. Auk þess er líkan Sigrúnar Aðalbjarnardóttur af uppeldis- og menntunar-sýn kennara og skólastjórnenda notað til að auka skilning á uppeldissýn feðra.


Niðurstöðu rannsóknarinnar benda til að gildin sem fæðurnir í rannsókninni hafa að leiðarljósi við uppeldi barna sinna sú: öryggi, ást og umhyggja, heiðarleiki, virðing, traust og gildi fjölskyldu. Velferð barnanna gengur eins og rauður þráður í gegnum markmiðið feðranna: Þeir vilja að börnin spjari sig vel, einkum að því er snertir hamingju og velgengni. Þeir vilja að börn þeirra séu sátt við sjálf sig og lífið, súe hæf í samskiptum, fylgi reglum og venjum, lífi heilbrigðu lífi og goti staðið á eigin fótum. Að veita börnunum öryggi, ást og umhyggju er ráðandi þéma í uppeldisleiðum feðranna. Þeir segjast vilja
vera til staðar fyrir barnið, vera fyrirmynd, veita endurgjöf, upplýsa, veita frelsi og halda aga. Í stuttu máli leggja þeir mikla áherslu á ást og umhyggju og frelsi (frjálsraedi, sjálfraedi og sjálfstæði) og öryggi og mörk. Mikil áhersla feðranna á ást og umhyggju er áhugaverð bæði hérrendis og á allþjóðavísu þar sem hefðin hefur verið að kenna þessa þætti við konur.


Greiningarlíkanið sem var aðlagað og þróað til að skilja uppeldissýn feðranna er fræðilegt framlag til rannsókná fóðurhlutverkinu. Þróun líkansins miðar að því að varpa ljósi á hvernig félagslegar aðstæður, menning og sögulegt samhengi hefur áhrif á sýn feðra. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar ættu að vera mikilvægt framlag til rannsókna á fóðurhlutverkinu og uppeldissýn feðra.

Einnig ættu niðurstöðurnar að vera gagnlegar við stefnumótun foreldrafraeðslu og uppeldisráðgjöf og upplýsandi fyrir stjórnendur og aðra fagaðila á þessu sviði.
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**Prologue**

I have a special interest in pedagogy and education, particularly parent education. My interest in education started early, as I am the oldest of four sisters and a mother of three children. I hold a B.A. (June 2006) and an M.A. (October 2008) in Education from the University of Iceland. I am also educated as a deacon and for many years have worked with children, adolescents and parents in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland and at the YMCA in Iceland.

For my master’s thesis I studied the parental role in child upbringing. The purpose of my M.A. study was, first, to examine parents’ perspectives on their accomplishments in their role as parents, and what they considered good parents to be. Second, I examined what parents saw as the main hindrances in accomplishing their goals, what they found difficult in their parenting roles, and whether they felt they needed support. Questionnaires were administered to 208 participants, who were parents or guardians of children in 2nd, 5th and 9th grade in three primary schools in Reykjavík.

In spring 2009, I was asked to teach a course at the Department of Education within the University of Iceland on Parenting and Counseling for Parents. As I prepared this new course, I realized (as I had also noticed when writing my master’s thesis) how few studies have been conducted in this important field in Iceland and how important it is to contribute to this field of educational studies. This lack of research in relation to my personal and professional interest in parent education encouraged me to begin doctoral studies in the fall of 2009.

Dr. Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir is my supervisor in my doctoral studies. Since January 2007 I have been a part of her research group at the Centre for Research into Challenges Facing Children and Young People (CF-CYP). My doctoral study is a part of a larger research project at CF-CYP: *Civic awareness of young people in a democratic society* (Borgaravitund ungs fólkshúslýðsins þjóðfélags), which includes approximately 1,500 young people as participants. I interviewed parents of 26 children, both mothers (24) and fathers (23). For this doctoral study I decided to focus on the fathers.

As part of my Ph.D. study I completed several courses at the University of Minnesota, USA, in the Parent and Family Education program, all within my selected specialization. The courses gave me a solid theoretical grounding in parent education. In addition to having lived in the United States for two years, I have lived in Denmark for 10 years. The experience of living abroad
and raising children in different countries has given me a broader perspective on parenting and helped me better understand different cultures and norms related to parenting.

I strongly believe that fathers can be as good as mothers at caregiving. I think that historical and cultural context influences who we become as persons, as men and women. That view is in line with what Lamb (2002) states: "With the exception of lactation, there is no evidence that women are biologically predisposed to be better parents than men are: Social conventions not biological imperatives underlie the traditional division of parental responsibilities" (p. 108).

I want equal rights for women and men in all spheres of society. Much has been published on women’s rights in the job market, but less on men’s right to take care of their children. I hope this dissertation will make a contribution to the discussion on men as caregivers.

I have a special interest in relating theory to practice: it is important that academics contribute to public discourse in their professional roles. I believe that in Iceland there is a growing need for and an interest in parent education, and I welcome the idea of the School of Education offering a program in parent education. More diversity in parental education and parental advice should benefit not only parents in this important role, but also their children and society at large. I am hoping that studying fathers’ pedagogical vision will deepen our understanding of fathers and fatherhood, and perhaps help us find ways to support them more effectively.
Introduction

Parents, both mothers and fathers, play an important role in fostering their children’s general growth and well-being in both their present and future lives (Bornstein, 2002b). The family serves a key role in the significant task of preparing children, adolescents and young adults socially, intellectually, emotionally, and morally to participate in the community, both in private and public life. Of course other societal institutions, such as public schools, also play significant roles in this preparation (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007). It is important, beginning in early childhood, to build an effective foundation for a sound parent-child relationship (Laursen & Collins, 2004; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). This is vital both for the child to have a healthy childhood and adulthood, and for the community.

In recent decades the structure and function of the family has become more diverse and in some cases more complex. According to Palkovitz and his colleagues this increased diversity has been caused by increased fluidity in relationships over the past 20 years (Palkovitz, Fagan, & Hull, 2013). For example, marriage rates have declined (Hetherington, 2002); divorce rates have increased (Amato & Dorius, 2010); single-parent families are more common (Weinraub, Horvath, & Gringlas, 2002); and multiple-partner fertility (having biological children with more than one partner) has increased (Scott, Peterson, Ikramullah, & Manlove, 2013), causing stress on children when parents leave or enter relationships (Hetherington, 2002). Other changes are that lesbian and gay parenthood is more visible than before (Patterson, 2002), and reproductive technology has enabled new forms of families to come into being (Golombok, 2002). Even as the composition of the family has changed, so has family life, because of the increased influence of media and technology (Dorr, Rabin, & Irlen, 2002) as well as globalization and increased immigration (Strier & Roer-Strier, 2010).

At the same time, parents seem not to be as secure in their parenting role as before (Bornstein, 2002b). This makes it essential to search for ways to support them effectively. It is urgent that we continuously look for the best ways to bring up children and to support parents (Bornstein, 2002b). One way to do that is by exploring parents’ pedagogical vision, using our understanding of it as a base in working with them.

Though increased attention has recently been paid to fathers, through the years they have been paid less attention as caregivers compared to mothers.
The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision—their values, goals, and practices—as well as how their lived experiences relate to that pedagogical vision. In the next section I will outline in more detail the importance of understanding fathers’ pedagogical vision.

The Importance of Understanding Fathers’ Pedagogical Vision

In this section I focus on why the topic of pedagogical vision is important to study; I then explain why it is especially important to focus on fathers. Finally, I introduce some uniquely Icelandic issues and discuss why it is particularly valuable to understand Icelandic fathers’ pedagogical vision.

As Suizzo (2002) has pointed out, it not only important to look at things that are visible, such as children’s environment and behavior and parenting practices, but also at things that are not visible, like parents’ beliefs about and attitudes toward parenting. For instance, several studies have indicated a relationship between parents’ beliefs and their children’s behavior (e.g., Kinlaw, Kurtz-Costes, & Goldman-Fraser, 2001) and associations have been found between parents’ attitudes and child-rearing (Dagget, O’Brien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000).

In this study, the focus will be on pedagogical vision. Here pedagogical vision refers to educators’ values, goals, strategies, and motivations (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010). Values are the basis of our attitudes, views, beliefs, and opinions, and accordingly influence our daily thinking and actions (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007). Therefore is it important to recognize parents’ values in an attempt to understand, for example, their attitude toward different parenting practices regarding discipline, punishment, indulgence, or towards promoting the child’s growth in general. In an attempt to better understand parenting, it is also important to look at parents’ goals. Goals motivate and direct behavior: “They specify the ends toward which behavior is directed” (Dix & Branca, 2003, p. 167). Different parenting practices lead to different outcomes in child development. Many researchers have shown that some parenting practices are more promising for their children’s healthy growth than others (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000; Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002; Steinberg, 2001). These researchers give us valuable information about the influence parents’ practices can have on children’s and adolescents’ well-being.

The father’s role has changed markedly in the last decades from being mainly a provider to being more involved in parenting (Gíslason, 2008a; Lamb, 2010a; O’Brien, Brandth, & Kvande, 2007). It has been argued that
“the father role is less well articulated and defined than the mother role” (Palkovitz, Marks, Appleby, & Holmes, 2003, p. 312). J. H. Pleck (2010a) posits that there are two interpretations of fatherhood and masculinity. One is the ‘essential father’ thesis, which he says is the dominant idea in public discourse in the United States: “The paternal essentiality thesis holds that fathers make an essential, unique, and, more specifically, uniquely male contribution to child development” (p. 27). Pleck does not see this ‘essential’ or ‘unique’ tone in European or non-Western societies (Pleck, 2013). The other interpretation is the ‘important father’ thesis. “This view holds that good fathering is one of many factors promoting good child outcomes, having positive consequences independent of other influences such as good mothering, and having these consequences in ways not necessarily linked to fathers’ masculinity” (Pleck, 2010a, p. 27).

It is well documented in the literature that fathers’ involvement is important for their children (Lamb, 2010a). Children with highly involved fathers show increased empathy, more internal locus of control, and increased cognitive competence. Fathers’ involvement and good father-adolescent relationships have positive effects on adolescent life satisfaction (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002; Zimmerman, Salem, & Maton, 1995) and happiness (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003a); they play a protective role in maintaining emotional well-being (Sheeber, Davis, Leve, Hops, & Tildesley, 2007); and they can protect against psychological maladjustment (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003b). On the negative side, fathers’ antisocial behavior may have a negative impact on their children (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003).

In addition to the positive effects that fathers’ involvement can have on children, “it is assumed that fathers who engage in greater amounts of involvement with their children will manifest more developmental change as compared to men who are less involved in childrearing or fathers who are not at all involved in raising children” (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 10). Fathers are more socially connected both with family and in the community than non-fathers (Eggebeen, Knoester, & McDaniel, 2013); and studies have also shown that fatherhood is beneficial to men’s health (Bartlett, 2004). Fathers also find it very positive to be a father (Sommer, 1999); and they believe they their quality of life improves as they take care of their children (Klinth & Johansson, 2010). Fathers also seem to be aware that they need to be closely involved in their children’s upbringing (Abril et al., 2004).

In several countries, policymakers have made an effort to support fathers in their role as caregivers (Brandth & Kvande, 2009; Sigle-Rushton, Goisis, & Keizer, 2013). For example, the Parental Leave Act in Iceland (95/2000) has
been a “huge success,” with many more men than were initially expected using the parental leave (Gíslason, 2006, p. 14). The act allows fathers to take up to six months’ paternal leave and by doing so become more involved in their children’s upbringing from the very beginning.

Despite all this, “research on fathers still lags in most countries” though research on fathering has been expanding internationally (Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, 2013, p. 386). Although research on fathering has been increasing, much more attention has been given to the mothers’ role in the past (Bornstein, 2002b; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Phares and Compas (1992) found, in their review of psychological literature focusing on child and family research, that between the years 1984 and 1991 only 1.4% of the studies were conducted exclusively on fathers, while 48% included mothers only. Phares and her colleagues repeated the review in 2005 and found that those patterns had not changed much over the past 13 years; only 2.1% of the studies focused exclusively on fathers (Phares, Fields, Kamboukos, & Lopez, 2005). Most studies on fatherhood seem to address fathering “from a theoretical, quantitative, or pragmatic vantage point” and very few give heed to “the actual lived experiences of fathers” according to Jerpbak (2006, p. 4). The assumption that fathers as well as mothers are important for the well-being of the child implies that it is essential to also elicit fathers’ points of view. Fathers’ awareness of their importance in raising children makes it important that their voices be heard, and their lived experiences explored.

Ecological factors influence fathers and the paternal role. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that any given society is constructed from its own blueprints which influence the whole society; this makes each society unique. Iceland, a Nordic country located in the Atlantic Ocean midway between Europe and America, is unique in that its location has definitely influenced Icelandic culture and society. As Jóhanna Einarsdóttir (2006) argues in her article, Iceland is “between two continents, between two traditions” (p. 159). Many Icelanders go abroad to study, both to Europe, especially the Nordic countries, and to North America; they come home with ideas and practices inspired by traditions and trends from their host country. As an example, “the development of early education policy and practice” was influenced by the Nordic countries, Britain, and North America (Einarsdóttir, 2006, p. 161).

The population in Iceland is a little over 300,000, while its area is 103,000 km², and a little over 200,000 people live in the region around the capital (Statistics Iceland, 2012). The majority, or 75%, of the population, belong to the Lutheran Church of Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2014b). In comparison
with other countries, the quality of life in Iceland is high today: Iceland ranks second of 140 countries as the best place to be a mother (Save the Children, 2007); third among 29 developed countries according to the overall well-being of children (UNICEF, 2013a); first on the overall ranking of gender gap, as it has the narrowest in the world in terms of economics, politics, education and health (World Economic Forum, 2013). Finally, most Icelanders describe themselves as very happy (over 80% in 2003, the highest mean score of 33 European countries) (Guðmundsdóttir et al., in press).

To understand parenting in different societies it is important to look at their ecological context. In this sense it is helpful to refer to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 8) when he says that by analyzing and comparing ecological context, “it becomes possible to describe systematically and to distinguish the ecological properties of the larger social contexts as environments for human development.” To enrich the current research on fathers we have to examine them in many cultural contexts; my study explores fathers’ pedagogical vision in the Icelandic context.

The Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

1) To gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision—their values, goals, and practices—and how their lived experiences relate to that vision.

2) To modify and develop a model to understand their vision.

A theoretically based analytical model of fathers’ pedagogical vision is important to help us better understand fatherhood in context, to understand what influences fathers’ vision and how. A model could also be useful in thematically analyzing fathers’ views and experiences as they raise their children.

The results of this study are intended to make a valuable contribution to research, both nationally and internationally, and thus be of scientific value. They should also provide a base for applied research which could serve as a foundation for developing effective parent education programs. In addition, the results should be useful for policy makers in parent education, and should inform administrators and other professionals in this area. At the same time, the results could rekindle the interest that both fathers and mothers take in their own pedagogical vision, making them and other caretakers, which we all are in one way or another, more aware of the importance of upbringing. Overall, this work is intended to benefit parents, their children, and the wider society.
Structure of the Dissertation
The schema of this dissertation, which is structured around five chapters, is as follows. In the first chapter I consider the theoretical framework on which the study is based and explore previous research in the field. In the second chapter I describe the research design and methods and the data collection, and discuss the analysis and interpretation process along with ethical considerations. In chapter three I present findings about what fathers have to say about parenting. In chapter four I discuss the findings and place them in theoretical context, and discuss the study’s strengths and limitations. Chapter five concludes the dissertation; I discuss the contribution to research and make some recommendations for practice and further research.
1 Theoretical Background

A theoretical framework is helpful for understanding the complexity of various personal and environmental factors that influence parents and parenting. The frameworks that have been chosen for the study are: social constructivism (e.g., Gergen, 2001; Schwandt, 2007; Shotter, 1993) and the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000b). In addition, I am using Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2007, 2010) of teachers’ and principals’ pedagogical vision in an effort to add to our understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision, with a special focus on their values, goals, and parenting practices. In this chapter I discuss these theoretical frameworks and then introduce theories and research on parents’ attitudes and ideas about parenting in connection with children’s and adolescents’ development. It is important to keep in mind, as Jónsson and Ólafsson (1991) have pointed out, that when findings from values studies are evaluated, people’s answers reflect not only their attitudes but also the conditions in which they live. Therefore some information about the social context in Iceland will be woven into the discussion. The first section looks at the social constructivist framework and is followed in the second section by a discussion of the historical and cultural changes with regard to the role of the father in the child’s upbringing. The third section discusses Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective; the fourth follows with discussion of some ecological factors that can influence pedagogical vision. The fifth section looks at Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model of pedagogical vision; the sixth discusses the central concept, pedagogical vision. Finally, the seventh and last section enumerates the aims and research question.

1.1 Social Constructivist Framework

Social constructivism is about how, as a person develops and gains in experience, she continually constructs and reconstructs her knowledge of herself and her social, cultural and historical environment (e.g., Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1932/1965; Vygotsky, 1930/1978). In contrast to constructivism, which claims that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43), social constructivism goes further, claiming that “we depend on culture to direct our behaviour and organize our experience” (Crotty, 1998, p. 53). Schwandt (2007) explains this in more detail:

Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive – a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind – but active; that is, the mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forms
abstractions or concepts. ... We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but, rather, against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth. This ordinary sense of constructionism holds that all knowledge claims and their evaluation take place within a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained. (p. 38)

This means that from a social constructivist perspective, people assign individual meanings to their experience and that they form these subjective meanings “through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Sociobehavioral concepts like family, childhood, and fatherhood are, according to social constructionism, “linguistic products of historically situated interactions” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 20).

This leads us to discussion about truth, reality, and knowledge. Berger and Luckmann argue that “reality is socially constructed” and that “the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs” (1966, p. 13). They define reality as “a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition” and they define knowledge as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (p. 13). Indeed, as Schwandt (2000, p. 198) points out, “many (but not all) constructionist accounts hold that there is no truth to the matter of interpretation.” On this matter Gergen and Gergen (2004, p. 19) say that “truth is only found within community. Beyond community there is silence. In this sense, social constructionists do not embrace universal truths, or Truth with a capital T.” Rather, they say that “there is truth with a small t, that is, truth that issues from the shared ways of life within a group” They add:

Seekers of Truth attempt to reduce the world to a singular, fixed set of words. To declare The Truth is to set language into a deep freeze, and thus reduce the realm of possibilities for new meaning to emerge. In contrast, constructionists favour an ever-open dialogue, in which there is always room for another voice, another vision and revision, and further expansion in the field of relationship. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 25)

In this light I have chosen social constructivism as an epistemological base for this study. I find it important to make space for the voices of the fathers, in order to hear what they have to say about parenting. I also find it
important to explore fatherhood in as many social cultural contexts as possible (in this study by adding Iceland) to expand our view of fathers. This is in line with several studies in the field of parenting that indicate that parents’ attitudes, opinions, and expectations about parenting are highly influenced by the general values predominant in the culture (e.g., Bornstein et al., 1996; Harwood, Schölmerich, & Schulze, 2000; Okagaki & Bingham, 2005). In this study, I will look at fathers’ pedagogical vision, being aware that fathers construct these views within their cultural context in interactions with other individuals (i.e., their own parents, children, spouses, and others), and that they need to be placed in historical and social perspectives.

1.2 Some Historical and Cultural Changes in the Role of Fathers

Parents and parenting are influenced by a multitude of factors. Lamb (2010a, p. 2) points out: “Historical, cultural, and familial ideologies inform the roles fathers play and undoubtedly shape the absolute amounts of time the fathers spend with their children, the activities they share with them, and perhaps even the quality of the relationships between fathers and children.” In the past decades Europe has “witnessed an evolution, if not a revolution, in the father’s role in the family” (Halman, Sieben, & van Zundert, 2011, p. 17). In this section I discuss some historical and cultural changes toward the role of fathers, focusing especially on the last two decades, from the time the fathers of this study had their children (in 1995 and 1998) until today. This will provide a clearer understanding of the context in which these fathers are living and raising their children.

There have been significant changes in the role of fathers. Halman and his colleagues (2011, p. 17) state that in Europe their “role has transformed from the pre-World War II ‘colonial’ distant father, via the ‘absent’ breadwinner, to the modern involved dad.” It is clear that fathers are “diverse,” as the editors of the book Fathers in cultural context conclude (Shwalb et al., 2013, p. 387). Further, differences in fathers’ roles can be seen in diverse ethnic/cultural groups; for instance between African-American and African-Caribbean fathers (Roopnarine & Hossain, 2013) and between fathers in Japan, China, and Korea (Shwalb, Nakazawa, Yamamoto, & Hyun, 2010). But by looking at fatherhood ideals, certain trends emerge, as Pleck and Pleck (1997) have described for fathers in the United States:

The ideal father of the colonial period was the stern patriarch. In the period from 1830 to 1900 he was the distant breadwinner. The ideal was the genial dad and sex-role model between 1900 and 1970, and
since then, dad is supposed to be a co-parent, who shares equally with his wife in the care of children. (p. 35)

Sandqvist (1990) has similarly divided parents’ roles in Sweden into three time periods. The first period was until around 1860, when parents had different authority and different roles; the second period from 1860–1970, when parents had similar authority but different roles; and the third period was from around 1970 to the present, when parents have similar authority and similar roles. Iceland and Sweden are alike in many ways, though we might ask how similar the authority and roles of mothers and fathers are in reality. An historical perspective such as those of Pleck and Pleck, and Sandqvist, can be useful, but Williams (2008) criticises it, pointing out that it inaccurately understates the impact of social change on the construction of gender roles, especially with regard to parenting. He argues that “fatherhood is becoming increasingly individualized, as fathers are forced to confront change within the family and within society more broadly and as traditional models of fatherhood are progressively called into question by partners and by a range of social institutions including the media and government” (p. 488). Roles of fathers will be discussed in the next sections.

In the 18th century, as in previous centuries, Icelanders mostly lived by farming and fishing. During this period the extended family lived together; and all family members, not only the parents, played a vital role in raising children. The farm was both a home and a workplace where the women governed inside the house and the men outside. That concept of gender roles and the division of labor can be traced back in Icelandic historical writings such as Grágás, the Icelandic Free State law written around 1270 (Halldórsdóttir & Jónatansdóttir, 1998). The children worked alongside their parents. As public education was not well formalized in Iceland until after 1900, each family was responsible for educating its children (Guttormsson, 2008).

Improved fishing techniques allowed families to move to the coast, and towns were established in Iceland. During this time of increased urbanization the father’s role began to change. Members of the entire extended family no longer lived together. Fathers often worked outside of the home while the mother stayed home and took care of the children. The father became the economic support of the family, the ‘breadwinner.’ These changing gender roles can be observed, for example, in social security and tax laws from the early 19th century (Eydal, 2010). Is it clear in the Social Security Act from 1946 (Lög um almannastrýggingar nr. 50/1946) that the husband’s primary role was to provide economically for his wife and children—to be the breadwinner—and the wife’s primary role is to take care of the home and the
children. These changes resulted in the father becoming increasingly distant from his children (Gíslason, 2008a).

Mothers’ participation in the labor force has increased steadily since World War II in Western societies (de Singly & Cicchelli, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). That has also been the case in Iceland, where around 1970, Icelandic women’s participation in the labor increased markedly (Jónsson & Magnússon, 1997). In Iceland today it is most common for both parents to work outside of the home. Current labor force participation for males 25–54 years of age is 92.7%. For females in the same age group it is 85.2% (Statistics Iceland, 2012). Icelandic people, both men and women, have one of the highest rates of participation in the job market in all of Europe: in 2008 it was 84%, 80% for women and 88% for men. The equivalent rates were, for Switzerland 79.5%, Denmark 78.4%, Norway 78.1%, Netherlands 76.1%, and Sweden 75.7%, and under 75% in other OECD countries (OECD, 2009). Icelanders also work long hours compared to other nations (Gíslason, 2006), and the fertility rate (average of 2.15 children), is also one of the highest in Europe (Eurostat, 2010). Not surprisingly, with about 90% of Icelandic adults having children, it is often difficult to harmonize work and family responsibilities (Atlason, 2006).

While mothers have increased their work outside the home, the increased role of fathers as child care providers remains in some ways unacknowledged (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). Statistics on fathers’ roles provide a somewhat conflicting picture and they vary greatly between different countries as Johansson (2011) points out. In exploring the role of fathers Hofferth, Pleck and colleagues (2013) found for example that between 1997 and 2003, fathers in the United States exhibited more control and teaching, but decreased warmth and discussion of rules. Other research indicates that fathers have increased the time they spend caring for children (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Sullivan, Coltrane, McAnnally, & Altíntas, 2009).

In the global context, however, fathers are “almost always portrayed as secondary to mothers” (Shwalb et al., 2013, p. 386). That seems also to be the case in Iceland where mothers in general are still the main caregivers (Arnalds, Eydal, & Gíslason, 2013; Arnardóttir, 2008; Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004; Eydal, 2004; Júlfusdóttir, 1993; Rannsóknastofnun í barna- og fjölskylduvernd, 2010) and have the main responsibilities at home (Arnardóttir, 2008; Gíslason, 1997) which is similar to findings for example, in Sweden (Johansson & Klinth, 2008).

A few years before the children of the fathers in this study were born, Shulman and Collins (1993) showed that compared to U.S. mothers, U.S. fathers spend less time with their children, are less engaged, and take less
responsibility for care giving. Two Icelandic doctoral studies done around that time had similar findings and indicated that mothers and fathers played considerably different roles (Júlíusdóttir, 1993; Kristjánsson, 2001, 2006a). While the mother had a part-time job and took the main responsibility for domestic labor and childcare, the father worked long hours (Júlíusdóttir, 1993). The other study, which was a joint Nordic study, showed that Icelandic fathers spend considerably less time with their children than Icelandic mothers. Furthermore, only in the Icelandic sample did some of the children not see their father on a daily basis (Kristjánsson, 2001, 2006a). Eydal’s study (2004) on Icelandic parents of children born in 1997 supported the earlier findings. Fathers initially took much less charge of the child than the mothers, but their participation increased as the child grew older. Still, the mothers remained the primary caregivers.

A comparable study (Eydal, 2008) of parents with children born in 2003 indicated a significant change in the care giving roles of fathers in Iceland. She found that, at that point, parents were dividing both the care of their young children and their paid work more equally. Children born in the year 2003, for example, received more care from their fathers than children born in 1997. A more recent study (Arnalds, Eydal, & Gíslason, 2013) also found that fathers’ participation in the daily care of their children has been steadily growing in the past few years. Some findings in Iceland have shown that men consider domestic labor to be equal in their households, but researchers doubt that that is the reality (Gíslason, 1997; Pétursdóttir, 2008). In any case, Johansson (2003) says that in Sweden “there is still a great discrepancy between images of the ideal father and children’s actual experiences of their fathers” (p. 247).

Einarsdóttir and Pétursdóttir (2004) found that Icelandic women tended to put motherhood as their highest priority, above their role in the workplace, while the men view themselves as primarily breadwinners. They add: “The Icelandic sample also embraces examples of very caring and concerned fathers; however, these are exceptions” (Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004, p. 53). Klinth and Johansson (2010), considering the same matter, say that for many men in Sweden, family life—taking care of home and children—is the part of life one can negotiate, while working life is fixed and not negotiable. In a 1993 study in Iceland, 67% of fathers said they work first and foremost to provide for the family, and 16% for the enjoyment of it, compared to 40% of the mothers, who said they work first and foremost for the enjoyment of it (Júlíusdóttir, 1993, 1997).
Many factors can influence the role and involvement of fathers, including family structure; specifically, it matters whether the father is living with the child or not. For instance, when fathers become nonresident, “some fathers remain regularly involved, although involvement tends to decrease over time” (Carlson & McLanahn, 2010, p. 254). Divorced fathers tend to have less contact with their children, although the frequency of their contact with their children has increased in recent decades (Amato & Dorius, 2010). Single fathers are the most involved of all (Hofferth et al., 2013). On the other hand, it does not seem to matter whether the father is a stepfather or a biological father, whether he is or cohabiting or married: stepfathers do not “differ from biological fathers in degree of involvement when family involvement was compared within households” (Hofferth et al., 2013, p. 79), and cohabiting fathers (biological and stepfathers) seem to be as involved as married fathers, and have similar fathering behaviors (Manning & Brown, 2013).

1.2.1 Social pressure and fathers’ willingness to take on a larger role

Society seems to pressure fathers to take a larger role in childcare. Fathers feel this pressure “from policy-makers as much as partners,” according to a study conducted in South Wales (Williams, 2008, p. 488). Brandth and Kvande (2003), who have studied fathers in Norway, say that today it is not enough for the ideal father to be a financial provider; he also has to be a physical provider. As O’Brien & Moss (2010) put it: “Today, fathers in Europe are expected to be accessible and nurturing as well as economically supportive to their children” (p. 551). On the same matter, Johansson and Klinth (2008), who have studied what various men in Sweden say about fatherhood, argue that “The hegemonic structure is changing. To qualify for hegemonic masculinity, it is no longer enough to be rational, goal-means oriented, career-oriented, and disciplined. Today men must also show their readiness to engage in child care, their child orientation, and their willingness to live up to the ideal of gender equality” (p. 58). One study in Iceland (Gíslason, 2005) showed that fathers get positive responses from their surroundings if they take care of their children. In 2008 the European Values Study showed that almost all Icelanders (99%; males 98%) believed that men should take as much responsibility for the household and the children as women (European Values Education, 2011). Similar findings were reached in the 2009–2010 version of this same study (Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2012). This was probably also the case around the time that the children of the fathers in this study were born; in 1992, 80 percent of upper secondary students agreed that
mothers and fathers should jointly take care of their children the first two years of their lives (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2007).

Fathers in Iceland also seem to be willing to take a larger role in the children’s upbringing and in the household. However, willingness to take a larger role is not the same as taking a larger role. Having discussed their involvement in the sections above I now focus on their willingness. Gíslason (2008a), who has studied gender roles for many years, says it is clear that Icelandic men are interested in decreasing their paid work and increasing their participation at home and in family life. For example, the fathers in a 1993 study expressed “frustration and discontent” with their “restricted time” with their children; 75% of them felt they did not have enough time with their children, compared to 40% of mothers (Júlíusdóttir, 1993, p. 280). Similar attitudes were observed in a 1997 qualitative study, which found that fathers generally wished to be able to take more part in family life (Gíslason, 1997). According to data collected in 2005, the situation remains similar; the majority of men want to decrease their paid work, with 75% of them wanting to spend more time with their family in comparison to 58.8% of women (Stefánsson, 2008b). Fathers seem also to be aware of their responsibility to provide care for their children: “The discussion among young men today is in a way similar to that of women, namely, that now they, as well as their partner, have to be competent to meet varied demands in many areas of responsibility” (Gottfreðsdóttir, 2005, p. 132). Williams (2008, p. 490) argues that “fathers are squeezed between the ‘new man’ models on the one hand, and, on the other, the traditional cultural models of fathering”. In his study many of the men did not find their role as fathers a matter of choice “that is, to be a ‘breadwinner’ or an ‘involved’ father – but was, instead, broadly shaped by circumstances which they saw as beyond their control” (p. 490).

Fathers’ interest in child care can also be seen in the relatively recent development that Icelandic fathers write and publish books about their experience of being fathers. In that context a number of such books bear mentioning. One father describes his experience of having a disabled child (Rúnarsson, 2004); a blind father writes about his experience of expecting and taking care of an infant (Oddsson, 2010); an expectant father keeps a diary (Johansen, 2007); and another father talks about his experience of losing his job and being forced to become a stay-at-home dad (Þorláksson, 2009). On the cover of the last one mentioned, the author says that he sometimes wishes he had lost his job earlier. Then, he says, he might have learned to appreciate the small things in life: the modest, the invisible, the things that men don’t talk about.
1.2.2 Hindrances

It appears that fathers are not sharing as much in domestic labor and childcare as they want to, or as they experience the social pressure to do, and several authors have pointed out hindrances to their doing so. One of them is traditional views of gender roles. The attitudes toward different gender roles seem to be strong in Iceland. A qualitative study (Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004) indicated that a dominant theme in the Icelandic sample was “a particularly specific and distinct gender role pattern” (p.40). Compared to people in other European countries, Icelanders seem to have more of a “firm belief in different roles for men and women, even to the extent that people believe in the different nature of the sexes” (p.45).

Similarly, another quantitative study found that Icelanders seemed to have more traditional stereotypes compared to those in other western countries (Stefánsson, 2008a). For instance, 55.5% of Europeans and 66.8% of Icelanders say that men are less able than women to handle emotions in a relationship (Halman, 2001). The younger generation seems to be conservative as well (Guðmundsdóttir, Sigfússon, Kristjánsson, Pálsdóttir, & Sigfús dóttir, 2010); compared to older generations they have a more conservative attitude towards equal rights, and adhere to more conservative attitudes about the division of housework (Hjálmsdóttir, 2012). A study among upper secondary students (Bjarnadóttir & Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2011) found boys to be more conservative than girls, as “40% of the boys would likely or very likely take a doll” away from a younger brother, compared to only 7% of the girls (p. 1).

Attitudes towards different gender roles can also be seen in the distribution of child-related tasks. In a study from 20 years ago (Malpas & Lambert, 1993), most Europeans considered that “all child-related tasks should be the responsibility of both parents” (pp. 93, 95) but the researchers did find some differences. Child-related tasks like dressing and feeding children, changing their diapers, and taking them to the doctor were considered to be of a “more ‘maternal’ nature, whereas playing sport with the children, giving them pocket money or punishing them are tasks of a more ‘paternal’ nature.” A study done in Iceland (Gíslason, 1997) found that forms of domestic labor that men mainly took care of or did on an equal basis with their wives included cooking, doing the dishes, and cleaning the house. They were less likely to be in charge of the children’s clothing or to load the washing machine. In addition, parental involvement in education has been seen as a “gendered phenomenon,” as fathers are less likely to be involved in homework or other educational activities than their wives (Gottzén, 2011, p. 631).
Traditional ideas about masculinity can be a hindrance to the involvement of fathers. Studies have shown that common ideas about masculinity are related to power, physical strength, discipline, logic, objectivity, competition, and the ability to respond quickly to imminent problems (Jóhannesson, 2004), whereas care and intimacy have traditionally been seen as feminine characteristics (Gilligan, 1982). Brandth and Kvande (2003) point out that the main problem with the concept of masculinity is that it is used as a causal explanation for men’s actions, instead of their actions defining their masculinity. An emphasis on masculinity can therefore inhibit the views that fathers, and others, hold on fatherhood. Traditional ideas about masculinity do not describe the diversity of men.

To emphasize the diversity and differences of men as well to stress that masculinity changes in the context of culture and history, it is probably best to use the plural term masculinities which Connell (1995) proposed in his eponymous book. In the 1960s traditional gender relations were questioned, and the idea of the ‘new father’ started to emerge (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). Since that time, attitudes toward fatherhood have changed. Those changes could, for example, be seen in Denmark, around the turn of the century, by observing how many fathers were walking around pushing baby carriages, taking their children to preschool or picking them up, coming to parent meetings at school, participating in Christmas crafts at preschools, or staying with their children when they were admitted to hospitals (Madsen, Munck, & Tolstrup, 1999). In the UK, involved fathers became more visible as they started to care for their young children in public, something they had only done before in the privacy of the home (Lewis, 2013). Hearn and his colleagues (2012, p. 39) say that in Sweden “‘involved fathering’ has become incorporated into hegemonic masculinity” and Brandth and Kvande (2003) say that the same applies in Norway. In Iceland, in a qualitative study (Gíslason, 1997) men were asked what came to their mind when they heard the term masculinity. All of the participants had to take time to think, as the answer was not obvious. More than half of them felt they could not mention anything particular which they felt characterized masculinity, while a few mentioned strength. This is in line with findings from a study conducted in 1992 among secondary school students indicating that traditional female and male gender identities have in many ways lost their meaning (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2007). On the same matter, Gíslason (2008b) believes that household chores and childcare do not threaten men’s egos. For instance, one father in his study stated, “‘No, I have never felt it to be something un-masculine to do these chores or even to wear pink rubber gloves’” (Gíslason, 2005, p. 300).
In addition to traditional views, researchers have pointed out hindrances to fathers participating in their children’s lives. One of these is the breadwinner role, which fathers have for instance, invoked as an explanation for not taking greater responsibility for their children’s education (Gottzén, 2011). Another hindrance is the gender wage gap. Although that gap is decreasing, males continue to earn higher wages than women (Hagfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2009; Hagstofa Íslands, 2010). In many cases it is more economical for a couple for the mother to take care of the infant while the father continues his work. Numbers for earnings for the private and the public sector show that the mean of total full-time salaries is 526,000 ISK; 591,000 for men and 457,000 for women (Statistics Iceland, 2014c). The Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund’s monthly payments to parents during maternity/paternity leave have been decreasing since the economic crisis; from 2010 onward the amount has been capped at 300,000 ISK (Eydal & Gíslason, 2014). A study among parents of children born in 1997 showed that seven percent of mothers had returned to their jobs six months after the birth of the child and 57% 13 months after the birth. By the second month after the child’s birth almost all of the fathers had returned to work (Eydal, 2004). Studies show that mothers are more likely than fathers to reduce their paid employment in order to take care of their children until they enter preschool (Eydal, 2008; Rannsóknastofnun í barna- og fjölskylduvernd, 2010). Whatever the explanation is, “the effects of having children are particularly obvious for women. As the number of children increases the number of women working full time decreases.” Further, “The more children a man has, the longer are his working hours while the reverse is true for women” according to numbers from 1991 and 2002 (Gíslason, 2006, p. 11).

1.2.3 Custody

One intimation of changes in the paternal role can be seen in the history of child custody. From the time Iceland was settled over 1000 years ago, the father had the custody of the children (Halldórsdóttir & Jónatansdóttir, 1998). That was similar to British and American law, where in the early days children were considered their fathers’ property (Fabricius, Braver, Diaz, & Velez, 2010): “In the early 20th century, when the Industrial Revolution pulled fathers to work outside the home and mothers became children’s main caretakers, the trend reversed to maternal custody” (Fabricius et al., 2010, p. 203). In Iceland the Act for Legal Majority took effect in 1917, and parents became equally responsible for their minor children (Halldórsdóttir & Jónatansdóttir, 1998).

Divorces were rare in the early days, but when a couple did divorce, the child became the sole responsibility of the father. This was followed by a
period when it was more common for the mother to have custody of the children after divorce or the end of cohabitation, but the father had the right of access (Júlfusdóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2000). Joint custody was legalized in Iceland in 1992 (Act in Respect of Children no. 20/1992). The following years saw a rapid increase in the number of parents who took advantage of the joint custody arrangements. In 2005, 74% of divorcing parents participated in joint custody (Gíslason, 2007). Since 2006, joint custody has been the principle means of custody (according to Article 31, the Act in Respect of Children) unless it is negotiated in some other way (Gíslason, 2010).

Though divorces too often result in less association between the child and the father, joint custody seems to work well for both. One study has shown that fathers who have joint custody are more satisfied and have a more positive view about their continued part in upbringing than those who do not (Júlfusdóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2000). Another study (Arnarsson & Bjarnason, 2008) has shown that children that split time equally between their separated parents had equally easy communication with their father as children that lived with both biological parents. Today joint custody is the predominant regulation in divorces in all of the Nordic countries (Eydal & Friðriksdóttir, 2010).

1.2.4 Summary

Because father’s roles are shaped by history (Shwalb et al., 2013), some historical, cultural and familial ideologies which are likely to inform the role of Icelandic fathers have been discussed in this section. Based on this review, and chapter 1.4.3 on parental and paternity leave, I offer the following rough picture of a typical Icelandic father who had a child in year 1995 or 1998, as did the participants in this study.

The father took two to three weeks off from work after the child’s birth, but he did not take parental leave. The mother stayed home the first months or years or until the child entered preschool. She was the primary caregiver. She returned to her job when the child started preschool. The father did not participate a great deal in childcare in the beginning but did more after the child’s first year. He worked, and still works, long hours like his father did. He would like to decrease his amount of paid work and spend more time with the family, but he finds it difficult as he is likely to earn higher wages than his partner. Due to this economic and financial difference, it is better for him to work more than she does. Despite the prevalence of traditional gender norms in Iceland, he experiences some social pressure to take care of the house and the child along with his spouse. His participation has increased and he wants to believe they take an equal share, even though his spouse might not agree.
He admits that the mother has the primary responsibility for the children. If the father and the mother of the child are divorced, they have joint custody and the child mostly lives with his/her mother, spending every other weekend with his/her father.

1.3 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Perspective

Innumerable factors can influence a person’s life and development and shape his/her views and actions. In this section I use an ecological perspective to examine some of these influences. The ecological view takes into account various connections and interactions in a person’s life. Here Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2000b) early pioneering ecological perspective is useful in understanding how a person develops through interactions with the environment. In his 1979 book, *The Ecology of Human Development*, Bronfenbrenner proposed his ecological perspective, building his idea on the work and theories of Lewin, Mead, Freud, Thomas and Thomas, Tolman, Vygotsky, Goldstein, Rank, Piaget, and Fisher.

The ecological model has undergone some changes since that initial publication. In the beginning the model contained four systems: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. Later, Bronfenbrenner (1993) added the fifth system, the chronosystem. Further, he extended the ecological paradigm by involving the “reconceptualization of the role of genetics in human development” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 41) and started to refer to the model as “bioecological” (2000b, p. 129). Moreover, he (2000a, p. 119) continued to develop the model and argued that the developmental outcome is a joint function of four factors: Process, person, context, and time (PPCT): “a joint function of a process; characteristics of the developing person; the nature of the immediate, ‘face-to-face’ environmental context in which the person lives [micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem]; and the length and frequency of the time interval [chronosystem].”

For this study, I believe that Bronfenbrenner’s environmental context has the most relevance and I will adapt this part of the model to fathers. Thus the focus will be on Bronfenbrenner’s early work; the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 21) describes the ecology of human development as follows:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.
By development, Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 3) means the “lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment.” Further, he says (p. 21): “The developing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides.”

Bronfenbrenner (1979) compares the ecological environment to a set of Russian dolls where everything is conceived topologically as a set of nested structures, inside one another. In the sections below I explain each level of the ecological schema/model: the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

1.3.1 Microsystems
At the innermost ring of the ecological schema is the microsystem, and in the center of this is the developing person in his immediate setting: “A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). When we place the father in the center of the microsystem, his immediate setting could be the home, the workplace, and/or his social network. A setting, according to Bronfenbrenner, is a place where people engage in face-to-face interaction. If we take the home as an example of a setting for the father, the people he interacts with, on a face-to-face basis, would likely be the child, the child’s siblings, and his spouse (see Figure 1).

The microsystem covers the complex interrelations within the immediate setting. It covers connections between the person in the center and others in the setting, such as the interactions between the father and the child, as well as connections between others in the setting, such as interactions between the spouse and child. These two examples of connections are regarded as equally important, as they both influence the father.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, pp. 7–8) states that “the principle of interconnectedness is seen as applying not only within settings [as within the microsystem] but with equal force and consequence to linkages between settings.” This leads us to the meso- and exosystems. The mesosystem covers the interconnections between settings within which the developing person participates, while the exosystem covers the interconnections between settings within which the developing person does not participate. Both systems affect the developing person and his immediate environment.
1.3.2 Mesosystems

The second level of the ecological schema is the mesosystem. This level comprises the relations between two or more different settings in which the developing person actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Therefore a mesosystem is a system of microsystems.

Examples of mesosystem factors in the case of a father could be the home, his workplace, and his social network (see Figure 1). For example, many mesosystem factors refer to interrelations between the home and the father’s social network. The mother might ask neighbors to pick up the child after school and take him or her to a soccer tournament. This interaction influences the father because he does not have to worry about taking the child to the soccer tournament.

1.3.3 Exosystems

The third level of the ecological schema is the exosystem. These are settings of which the developing person is not a part, but they have a profound affect
on him or her. As Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 25) outlines it, “An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person.”

Exosystem factors in the case of a father could include the child’s school, the child’s afterschool programs, the neighborhood peer group, the school board, or his spouse’s workplace (see Figure 1). Of course the father could be an active participant in one or more of those settings, but in those cases that would not be an example of an exosystem factor. An example of an effect of an exosystem factor would arise if the child’s school and music school decided to cooperate. This collaboration would make it possible for the child to take music lessons as a part of his or her school day. This might influence the father if it meant he no longer needed to take time off from work to drive the child to his or her lessons. The father is not involved in those two settings as an active participant, but their interrelation influences his life.

### 1.3.4 Macrosystems

The fourth level of the ecological schema, the macrosystem, influences all of the other levels, as it comprises the influence of the culture that the person is a part of: “The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

The macrosystem is the reason why elements within a given society or social group tend to be similar. In other words, this construct purports to explain why the structure and the substance of micro-, meso-, and exosystems are similar in each society. Purportedly, the reason is that each society is constructed from the system’s blueprints, which influence the whole society.

An example of macrosystem factors in the case of a father could be values accepted in the community, media, or in the welfare system such as the school system and the healthcare system, and different acts like the Parental Leave Act and Children’s Act (see Figure 1). Public policy, which is part of the macrosystem according to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 9), explains how the macrosystem determines all the other levels of the schema “that occur at the level of everyday life and steer the course of behavior and development.”

The Parental Leave Act, which permits and encourages fathers to take paternal leave, is an example of a macrosystem policy that influences all other ecological levels: It influences the microsystem: i.e., the father and his immediate settings, the child and spouse. It makes a difference to the father
himself, who now has the opportunity to stay at home and take care of the child. It influences the father-child interactions, because the father gets more time to spend with the child than he would have if he were working outside the home. It also influences the mother, as she gets increased support at home. The act influences the mesosystem as well, in that it influences the relationship between different settings in which the father takes an active part, such as the home and the workplace. When the father takes paternal leave to spend more time with his child, he takes time off from work. Those in his workplace have to figure out how to function without that employee, the father, for a period of time. The Parental Leave Act also influences the exosystem that is defined as the setting(s) in which the father is not active but which still affects him, such as his wife’s workplace. If the father takes paternal leave, his wife might be able to return to her workplace sooner after the birth of the child than if the father had not taken paternal leave.

The levels are interrelated, as Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 22) states: “Since the environment also exerts its influence, requiring a process of mutual accommodation, the interaction between person and environment is viewed as two-directional, that is, characterized by reciprocity.” For example, when fathers take parental leave, the fathers’ and mothers’ roles should become more equal, both as parents and employees. This reflects the interaction between the systems in developing values in the community.

1.3.5 Chronosystems

The fifth system of the ecological schema is the chronosystem. It “encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which the person lives (e.g., changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in every life)” (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 40).

For example, fathers’ experiences of parenting might differ according to their age; i.e., their attitudes towards fathers’ roles at different times.

As a theoretical framework, the ecological perspective is a good fit for this study because it provides a broader perspective on the innumerable things that may influence parenting and shape the fathers’ pedagogical vision. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 14) has pointed out that “it is neither necessary nor possible to meet all the criteria for ecological research within a single investigation. Provided the researcher recognizes which qualifications are and are not met, useful scientific information can be gained.” Well aware that many factors influence fathers’ pedagogical vision and at the same time aware that it is not possible to look at all
factors within a single investigation, I have limited the scope of this study to microsystem ecological factors with underlying aspects of macro- and chronosystem factors. Also, I study only one immediate setting: the home. I do not study other settings in which the father might engage in face-to-face interaction, like his workplace or social circles. I use the term home (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to describe the father’s interactions with the child and the mother of the child, not to describe where he lives. That is, I use the term home even though the father might not be living with his child or with the mother of the child. The study focuses on the father’s relationships with the child and with the mother of the child. It also focuses on the father’s childhood home and his relationship with his parents.

1.4 Some Ecological Factors that can Influence Pedagogical Vision

In this section I examine a few of the various factors that can influence fathers’ pedagogical vision. Among those at the macro level that I discuss are culture and views accepted in the community and public policy. Factors at the chrono level that I address are societal changes over time where the focus will be on the child. Factors at the micro level are previous experience and role models, and the father’s relationship with the child and the mother of the child.

1.4.1 Culture and community values

As I discussed in chapter 1.2, the parenting role is culturally and socially constructed (Harkness & Super, 2002): “The images of motherhood and fatherhood reveal our shared ideals, standards, beliefs, and expectations regarding women and men as parents” (Thompson & Walker, 1989, pp. 859–860). Community differences can be observed in parental expectations and childrearing beliefs (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998), parenting cognition, feelings of competence and satisfaction in the parenting role (Cote & Bornstein, 2003), parents’ attitudes and beliefs regarding control and discipline (Chen et al., 1998), proper demeanor (Harwood et al., 2000), and expectations about children’s achievement (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). Community values relate to parents’ expectations and goals. For example, many Western societies emphasize independence, individualism and self-reliance (Triandis, 1989), while many Asian communities place an emphasis on interdependence, collectivism and relational goals (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Ethnicity has been found to explain differences in promoting interdependence and independence in parenting (Suizzo, 2007), but such differences are not only to be found between different cultures. Even communities with similar cultures, like European countries, can have dissimilar values. In a study conducted in six Western
countries Harkness and Super (2006) compared parents’ descriptions of their children, and they found differences as well as similarities from country to country. That was also the case in a study that compared the child-rearing values of Finnish and Estonian parents (Tulviste & Ahtonen, 2007). Many similarities to other Western nations can be found in Icelanders’ values, but some decisive distinctions can be found as well (Jónsson & Ólafsson, 1991).

Freedom is deep-rooted in Icelandic culture, even more than in other Nordic countries, and has a large influence on how Icelandic children are brought up (Einarsdóttir, 2006; Kristinsdóttir, 1998, 2000; Kristjánsson, 2001, 2006a). By freedom I mean an emphasis on freedom of action, autonomy granting (individual expression), and independence (being self-reliant). The Icelandic emphasis on freedom can be traced all the way to the first settlers in Iceland around the year 900, who wanted freedom from King Harald Fairhair’s reign in Norway. This emphasis can be seen in attitudes toward children in the Icelandic Saga, where it seems that children receive almost unlimited freedom as soon as possible (Júlíusdóttir, 1993). Wagner (2006, p. 289), an American scholar who has worked and studied in the Nordic countries for many years, sees a “stark contrast” between certain aspects of Nordic and American childhood; the first of these is the tradition of freedom in upbringing. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir (2006, pp. 163–164) describes it out this way:

Historically, Icelandic children have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and have often been left to their own devices throughout much of the day. School-age children were frequently left unsupervised during the day; and from a young age, children have taken care of their younger siblings. Likewise, children have been allowed to play freely outdoors for hours without adult guidance.

The freedom in upbringing can be seen in preschools. For example, Einarsdóttir (2006), who has done several studies on pedagogical practices in Icelandic preschools, indicates that “a large proportion of a typical Icelandic preschool day is devoted to free play and free choice, that is, activities that the children choose themselves” (p.168). In some preschools the preschool teachers are present when the children are playing, but in others the children are often left to play by themselves. Preschool teachers say that it is “important for children to have freedom to play undisturbed by adults” (p.170); they rationalize that by saying that children need to learn they are “trusted” and given “responsibility.” Einarsdóttir also found “that Icelandic preschool practitioners have a rather passive or reserved role in children’s play” and that “they are reluctant to participate in the play unless the initiative
comes from the children.” She observed that adults participated infrequently in the children’s play (p. 170).

Wagner (2006) also talks about the freedom in Nordic preschools and “the notion that children should be free from excessive adult control and supervision” (p. 292). She shares her experience as an outsider:

I have photos of toddlers running naked in a daycare center, climbing a rappelling wall …. I have photographs of preschoolers cutting apples with paring knives as they concoct a recipe for a cake, as well as pictures of 4-year-olds hanging by their knees from a tree branch high above my head, while their classmates use a real saw and power drill to construct a fort. Again, the grownups are nearby, but not hovering or orchestrating. (pp. 289–290)

Iceland seems to provide even more freedom in upbringing than in other Nordic countries. A pan-Nordic study (Kristjánsson, 2001, 2006a) on childhood and changes in the Nordic societies indicates that Icelandic children are more often alone or out of their parents’ sight compared to children in the other Nordic countries. The Icelandic parents also found it more difficult to report their children’s daily activities than did parents in the other Nordic countries. And the initiative in interactions between parent and child in Iceland was much more often taken by the child than by the parent. Similar findings were found in another Nordic study (Kristinsdóttir, 1998, 2000) in which the Icelandic children did not have as much interpersonal care and security as the other Nordic children. From an early age, the Icelandic children were expected to be more independent.

1.4.2 Societal changes over time

Parental values and goals change and develop as society changes: “Each major type of human socioeconomic adaption” influences how adults approach the parenting role (LeVine, 1988, p. 6). In chapter 1.2 I discussed some historical and cultural changes in the role of fathers. Here, my focus will be on the child.

The shift from an agrarian to an industrial society influenced how children were valued (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; LeVine, 1988). In Europe today, children are no longer seen as laborers on which the family depends for survival, nor are adult children expected to provide parent care when the parents are elderly. Having children has become an “option” (Halman et al., 2011). For instance, 98.6% of Icelanders think that people should decide for themselves whether to have children (Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2012).

European home life has slowly become more child-centered according to the European Values Study; a large percentage of Europeans now agree with
the statement “Parents’ duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being.” In 1990, 50% of Icelanders agreed to this statement, compared to 75% in 2008 (Halman et al., 2011). A turning point in attitudes towards children came in the twentieth century, influenced among other things by the Swedish writer Ellen Key and her book *The Century of the Child* (1900). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified in 1989 and validated by Iceland in 1992 (Umboðsmaður barna, 2014b), also had a big influence. It radically changed the views towards children and their rights (Pálsson, 2011). As an example, Icelandic children’s “legal rights to have a say in their own matters” and their “legal right to care and support” have increased gradually from the 1920s to 2010 (Eydal, 2010, pp. 158–159). This shift toward child-centeredness can also be seen in research, where there is a growing desire to explore children’s views and opinions (Andersen & Kjærulff, 2003), and in parenting practice, which has “moved toward more egalitarian family environments” (Trifan, Stattin, & Tilton-Weaver, 2014, p. 744). Kristjánsson (2006b) talks about Nordic child-centeredness and states that Nordic people value childhood highly. He takes as an example of this child-centeredness the institution of the Ombudsman for Children, “a commissioner with statutory rights and duties to promote and protect the rights and interest of children and young people” (p. 13). It has been an office in Iceland since 1995 (Umboðsmaður barna, 2014a). Even so, Kristjánsson states that Iceland is still less child-centric than the other Nordic countries.

A shift toward more individualistic values has also been noted by researchers (Diel, Owen, & Youngblade, 2004; Halman et al., 2011), where the emphasis is on the ability of the individual to be self-sufficient. In Europe, “values oriented towards autonomy, privacy, self-actualization and personal happiness have become more important, and oust values that point at collective goals” (Halman et al., 2011, p. 35). Young people in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are no exception (Jónsson, Guðmundsdóttir, & Sigurðsson, 2000). This trend is also to be seen in the emphasis on upbringing where “obedience is losing ground as an important quality for children to acquire at home, while independence is gaining ground” (Halman et al., 2011, p. 35). In a study done in eight countries, Hoffman (1988) and his colleagues found that parents who “saw children as satisfying economic-utility need were more likely to want obedient than independent children” whereas parents who “valued children as a source of love and companionship sought qualities of congeniality in their children” (p. 120).

Parents with less education tend to emphasize obedience in upbringing, while highly educated parents stress independence (Halman et al., 2011). This trend is also present in Iceland, and not surprisingly, in light of the previous
discussion about freedom, Icelanders have Europe’s second highest score for independence (European Values Education, 2011): 81% of Icelanders find it especially important that children learn independence at home. Only Norwegians value it more, at 85%; Turkey values freedom the least, at 20%. On the other hand, only 13% of Icelanders believe that it is especially important for children to learn obedience at home, giving them the second lowest score in Europe. Only Germans value it less, at 12%; Moroccans the most, at 51%.

1.4.3 Public policy
As outlined earlier, several studies indicate that parents’ attitudes, opinions, and expectations on parenting are highly influenced by general values that are predominant in the culture (e.g., Bornstein et al., 1996; Harwood et al., 2000; Okagaki & Bingham, 2005). Here I will examine the child-rearing Acts and the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave, which have had a big influence on parenting in Iceland. In section 1.2.3 I considered custody and how acts on that matter have changed.

Child-rearing values established in Icelandic law
National laws are one key place to find the child-rearing values accepted in democratic communities. According to the Act in Respect of Children (no. 76/2003, Article 28) and the Child Protection Act (no. 80/2002, Article 1), children in Iceland have a right to care, and shall be treated with respect and consideration. They also have a right to protection: “No child may ever be subjected to violence or any other degrading treatment.” Children’s “rights shall be maintained in accordance with their age and maturity.” Parents shall “observe their duties of upbringing and custodianship as to best suit their child’s interest and needs.” They shall provide access to legally mandated education and foster industriousness and morality. They shall also “create satisfactory conditions for their children to grow up in and ensure their welfare in all respects.”

Compulsory school laws also reveal what the community finds important to teach children and adolescents. The Compulsory School Act (no. 91/2008, Article 2) states that the role of the school, “in cooperation with the home, is to encourage pupils’ general development and prepare them for active participation in a democratic society.” Further, its “practice and methods shall be characterized by tolerance and affection, Christian heritage of Icelandic culture, equality, democratic cooperation, responsibility, concern, forgiveness, and respect for human values.”
Parental and paternity leave

In some countries, social policies and laws which affect the roles of fathers have become effective in recent years. European policy makers, for example, have “increasingly seen fathers as both workers and caregivers” (Sigle-Rushton et al., 2013, p. 92) and “investment in parental leave schemes to support the early weeks and months of childhood has become a focus” (O’Brien & Moss, 2010, p. 552). More and more countries are attempting to involve men in activities related to childcare and in parental leave. For example, “endeavours to increase the involvement of fathers in childcare and family issues” have occurred in Norway, Spain, Germany and Iceland (Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004, p. 54). These countries follow different paths in enacting support for fathers as caregivers, though (Brandth, Einarsdóttir, Kvande, 2005). The Nordic countries, for instance, have included in their social policies “a unique program for fathers” (Brandth & Kvande, 2009, p. 178). For instance Sweden was the first nation to legislate parental leave for both parents, in 1974 (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2011). The arguments in favor of parental leave are based on the child’s well-being: children should have equal access to and the opportunity to foster close ties with both parents, not just the mother (Brandth & Gíslason, 2011). Lamb et al. (1988) found three situations in which fathers were more involved with their toddlers: if their partner worked more outside of the home, if the father felt responsible for the childcare, and if they had been involved from the beginning. Hwang and Lamb (1997) also found that fathers who were involved in infant care were in general also involved when the child was older (8.5 years). Therefore, parental leave is not only valuable during infancy, but may also have an effect on later father-child relationships.

In Iceland, the authorities have passed several laws to encourage fathers to take on a larger share of childcare. Examples include providing an act on paternal leave (Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95/2000), and increasing the provisions for joint custody (Act in Respect of Children no. 76/2003). They have also worked to ensure that men and women have equal rights in the society. The aim of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men (no. 10/2008) “is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men,” for example, by working “against wage discrimination and other forms of gender-based discrimination on the employment market” and “enabling both women and men to reconcile their work and family life.” The following sections explore these legal provisions in detail.

Fathers in Iceland today have the same rights to parental leave as mothers (Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95/2000), but that
has not always been the case. In 1946, working mothers first received compensation for the loss of income caused by the birth of a child (Eydal, 2006; Gíslason, 2007). It was in 1980 that fathers first gained the right to paternity leave. If the mother agreed, the father could take the third month after the child’s birth, but not the first two months which only the mother could take. In December 1997, the legislation was amended and for the first time fathers gained the independent right to paternity leave. All fathers were granted a two-week paternity leave after the birth of their child (Gíslason, 2007). In 2000, fathers received rights equal to mothers; both fathers and mothers gained the right to take three months of leave. In addition, parents received the right to take more months to be used at their discretion (Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95/2000). This means that in Iceland fathers receive more paternity leave than in any other Nordic country (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2011).

Until 1998, when fathers received the independent right to paternity leave, few men took advantage of it. In 1995, when half of the participants in this study had their children, only nine fathers took the leave, according to numbers from Tryggingastofnun (the Social Insurance Administration) (2003); this means that only 0.2 percent of children born that year had their father on leave. In contrast, 1,167 fathers (28.4%) took paternity leave in 1998, when the other half of the fathers in this study had their children. However, we should remember, as Gíslason (2007) points out, that low numbers do not “entail a lack of interest or participation on the behalf of fathers in relation to a birth” (p. 9). A qualitative study conducted in 1996 showed that all but one of the fathers interviewed had taken unpaid leave or used summer vacation in relation to a birth, with 2 to 3 weeks of leave being quite common (Gíslason, 1997).

After the 2000 amendment, significantly more fathers used the leave than had been expected (Gíslason, 2007). Today, around 90% of fathers in Iceland take advantage of their right to parental leave (Eydal & Gíslason, 2014). The proportion of days on paid parental leave used by fathers is higher in Iceland than in the other Nordic countries (Eydal & Gíslason, 2008).

The parental leave act is a good example of how a macrosystem factor can influence the behavior of a person, in this case the father. The aim of the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave (no. 95/2000) is “to ensure a child’s access to both her/his parents. Furthermore, the aim of this Act is to enable both women and men to reconcile work and family life” (Article 2). Spending more time with their newborn tends to mean that fathers will be more involved in child-caring tasks in the future (O’Brien et al., 2007). This
Theoretical Background

has been shown to be the case in Iceland. Eydal (2008) compared parents of children born before and after the law came into effect and found that “More fathers are actively engaged in their children’s care and not only during their leave taking periods but also until the child reaches the age of three.” Further, the fathers who do take parental leave “are significantly more involved in their children’s care than fathers that do not take leave” (p. 142). Another study (Atlason, 2006, p. 9) similarly found that fathers were taking a more active role in childcare and housework, and were more confident in doing so than before. The fathers found “that the leave had provided them with more opportunities” to build “their relationships with their children as well as their partners, as relationship can only be built by using time with the children and staying at home for a while.” Still another study (Arnardóttir, 2008) found that fathers who had taken parental leave believed it had contributed to enhanced emotional ties with their children and increased their satisfaction in childcare.

The parental leave act in Iceland appears to be a success, as Gíslason (2008b, p. 106) notes in a comprehensive book on parental leave in Iceland: “The Icelandic system of parental leave clearly encourages a development towards a dual-earner/dual-career society.” Public policy has made it easier for fathers to take a larger role in their children’s upbringing, to spend more time with their children, and therefore potentially to forge stronger attachments with them. Results from a new study (Arnalds, Eydal, & Gíslason, 2013) indicate that the laws have “had the intended effect of providing children with care from both parents” (p. 323).

It is clear that public policy has influenced families and transformed the role of the father. On this matter Giddens (1998, p. 93) says: “The family is becoming democratized, in ways which track processes of public democracy; and such democratization suggests how family life might combine individual choice and social solidarity.” Along these lines, Williams (2008, p. 500) argues that the changes in fathering described by the men in his study are “the product of decisions they are compelled to make rather than choices they pursue of, as they see it, their own volition.”

The next section moves from discussion of macro- and chrono-level factors to micro-level factors.

1.4.4 Previous experience and role models

Parents perceive that, compared to their childless peers, they carry a greater responsibility; they also have clearer and more explicit values with a view to their developmental histories (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 11). Lamb (2002) articulated that “fathers’ recollections of their own childhood relationships
play an important role in shaping fathers’ sensitivity.” One generation affects
the next (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003).

Parents influence both their children’s opinion and behavior. Young adults
(age 18–24) find that their families are influential in shaping their attitudes
(Finnbogason, Gunnarsson, Jónsdóttir, & Ragnarsson, 2011). Parents and
adolescents also have similar value systems (Barni & Knafo, 2012). For
instance, the majority of Icelanders (75% to 86%) say that they share religious
beliefs, ethical beliefs, and social attitudes with their parents (Jónsson &
Ólafsson, 1991). Parents are said to want to transmit their personal values
to their children (Tam & Lee, 2010) though only 20.3 percent of Icelandic
parents say they try to have a religious influence on their children (Björnsson

Parents’ behavior can have both positive and negative effects on their
children. For instance, children learn caring behavior by experiencing care
(Noddings, 2002) and associations have been found between being mistreated
as a child and later mistreating one’s child (Belsky, 1984) or having negative
attitudes about one’s own child (Daggett et al., 2000). A UNICEF (2013b)
report found that, of boys in Iceland who experienced domestic violence,
more than half (54%) felt that sometimes violence is warranted or deserved,
while only 29% of boys who did not experience domestic violence viewed
violence as sometimes warranted.

Parents play a critical role in the social development of their children
(Killen & Coplan, 2011). Findings indicate “that the intergenerational
transmission of parenting likely involves a direct effect; presumably, the child
learns parenting techniques in the family of origin and then practices them
years later in the family of procreation” (Capaldi, Pears, Patterson, & Owen,
2003, p. 139). For example, in his doctoral study Jerpbak (2006) found that
even though the fathers had a “desire to be different from their fathers” (p. 82)
in discipline and emotional expression, they saw their fathers in themselves
when they corrected and disciplined their children and when they felt
“awkward in their expression of emotions with their children” (p. 78). Fathers’
early life experiences and their own upbringing are therefore likely to
influence how they view their parenting role.

Too often, fathers do not see their own fathers as role models for
involvement in childcare. A stay-at-home dad on a parental leave wrote about
his experience in a magazine article in 2001; he claimed that fathers have
neither experience nor role models for being stay-at-home dads (Jónasson,
2001). That was probably the case for other fathers as well around the turn of
the century. In a 2005 study among first-time fathers, the fathers found their
role unclear and “were not sure what was expected of them” (Gottfreðsdóttir, 2005, p. 132). The same fathers “emphasized that they did not see their fathers as role models in this respect.” Þorgerður Einarsson (1998) similarly found in her study on new fathers that the fathers seldom had a clear and defined role model when they tried to define the content of fatherhood. Most of the fathers, however, were influenced both consciously and unconsciously by their own fathers when they talked about their ideas about parenting and good fathering. Those connections were both positive and negative; they wanted to do some things like their fathers and other things differently (Einarsson, 1998). The older generation of fathers had a vastly different experience of fatherhood than did the younger generations. For example, it was not until the 1970s that it became common for fathers to be present at the birth of their children (Madsen et al., 1999). It seems that the new generation of fathers lack paternal role models and perceive a gap between their experience and roles and those of their own fathers.

Many fathers seem to have experienced an absent or distant father themselves. Abramovitch (1997), after reviewing some of the recent titles in 1997 in the psychology of the father, argued that the key element is the “suffering of the abandoned son, yearning for a father who is loving and emotionally available and who is able to initiate his son into the world of the mature masculine, the realm of ‘true men’” (p. 21). Absence and regret was clear in a Swedish study among men about their fathers (Johansson, 1998, 2004). In a study in Iceland among young men (20–35 years old) most (17 men of 25 interviewed) felt they had little or no relationship with their fathers, though some (8 of the 25 interviewed) felt they had or had had a strong relationship with their father (Gíslason, 1997). The study among new fathers also found an emphasis on absence; the participants had very strong opinions on their fathers’ absence during their own childhood (Einarsson, 1998). Gíslason (1997) found that the most common presumed cause of distant relationships between fathers and sons was the fathers’ large work load and absence from home. Another presumed cause was a lack of valuable conversations: in the previously mentioned study many participants indicated that their own fathers had not been very ‘open’ (Gíslason, 1997). For example, none of the first-time fathers in the study had “discussed pregnancy or birth with their own father” (Gottfreðsdóttir, 2005, pp. 132–133). A study conducted in 2009 (Hart Research Associates, p. 13) found that “mothers are the family member most parents turn to for regular input” at 47%; 12% turn to their father or father-in-law.
1.4.5 The father’s relationship with the child and its mother

Another microsystem factor that can influence the father, and is of special interest for this study, is the child and the mother of the child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) claims that recognition of the parent-child relationship, the dyad, “provides a key to understanding developmental changes not only in children but also in adults who serve as primary caregivers” (p. 5) such as fathers. He continues, “Several findings indicate that the capacity of a dyad to serve as an effective context for human development is crucially dependent on the presence and participation of third parties, such as spouses, relatives, friends, and neighbours” (p. 5). Newer findings support this and indicate the importance of the quality of parent-child relationship and the quality of the relationship between the adults raising the child for child’s healthy development and adjustment (Lamb, 2012).

According to the ecological perspective, “The developing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21). This is the case not only for the parent, but for the child as well. Earlier parenting was viewed as unilateral, with parents as active ‘agents’ and children as passive recipients of parental actions. More recent conceptions of parenting acknowledge the impact of the child. Kuczynski (2003) described a bilateral model of parent-child relations where parental and child ‘agency’ are seen as equal.

A child’s temperament, age and gender are examples of ecological characteristics likely to influence parenting. Of those, temperament has received the most attention (Belsky, 1984; Karraker & Coleman, 2005). Children’s behavior problems can, for instance, increase the risk of marital conflicts (Jenkins, Simpson, Dunn, Rasbash, & O’Connor, 2005). A child’s age as a factor in parenting has also received significant attention; infants (e.g., Bornstein, 2002a), toddlers (e.g., Edwards & Liu, 2002), children in middle childhood (e.g., Collins et al., 2002), and adolescents (e.g., Steinberg & Silk, 2002) require different parental strategies. Thus, child-parent interactions change as the child ages, while the relationships may not change (Collins & Madsen, 2003). Parents also tend to adhere to normative gender roles, emphasizing the difference between boys and girls (Leaper, 2002).

Parents influence each other and the way they parent (Fincham & Hall, 2005) and their relationship is significant for the well-being of the child (Carlson & McLanahan, 2010; Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010; Fincham & Hall, 2005). Their relationship can have either a positive or negative impact on the child (Lamb, 2012). Belsky (1984, p. 87) claims “that
the marital relationship serves as the principal support system for parents.” For instance, over 90% of parents say that they discuss parenting with their spouse (Þórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010). Another study (Hart Research Associates, 2009) showed that 21% of fathers turn to their spouse or partner for parenting information and seven percent of women turn to their spouse or partner. On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner argues that “if such third parties are absent, or if they play a disruptive rather than a supportive role, the developmental process, considered as a system, breaks down” (1979, p. 5). Marital conflicts are associated with maladjustment (Lamb, 2012) and negative effects on children’s well-being (Amato, 2000).

The father’s involvement in childcare may also be shaped by maternal gatekeeping behavior: the mother’s encouragement increases the father’s involvement, and her criticism has the opposite effect (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowsky, 2008). Allen and Hawkins (1999, p. 200) defined maternal gate-keeping as “a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaboration effort between men and women in families by limiting men’s opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children.” Gottzén (2011), for instance, found in his study that fathers excused their lack of educational involvement by depicting mothers as gate-keepers. Maternal gate-keeping behaviors have been found in Icelandic households: Gíslason (1997) found that the mothers distributed household tasks and controlled what was done, when, and how. This was also the case regarding childcare and the fathers’ role in relation to the children. Júlíusdóttir and her colleagues (1995) found that divorced and single mothers were generally not interested in the father taking more responsibility in the daily upbringing of the child, though 60 percent of them wanted the fathers to take greater fiscal responsibility. However, this may have changed since 1995. Icelandic women in 2008 at least appear to believe strongly in the fathers’ capability for care (even more than the fathers themselves), with 96% of female respondents (and 84% of males) agreeing to the statement that fathers are as able to look after their children as mothers. Icelandic and Finnish women have the highest level of agreement with this statement compared to those in other European countries (European Values Education, 2011).

1.4.6 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined some of the many factors that can influence fathers’ pedagogical vision. I focused on factors at the macro, chrono, and micro levels. The macro factors I discussed were different cultures, community values, and public policy. A special focus was on the value of freedom which is deeply rooted in Icelandic culture and has an influence on how Icelanders parent. The
focus on public policy was on child-rearing values in legislation and parental and
paternity leave which authorities for example in Iceland have passed to encourage
fathers to take on a larger share of childcare. Chrono factors that were discussed
were societal changes over time. Some historical and cultural changes toward the
role of fathers were discussed; the focus was on the child and how it has changed
how children are valued. The micro factors I discussed were how previous
experience and role models influence parents’ vision and how one generation
affects the next, regarding both opinions and behavior. Parents also affect each
other and the way they parent. Their relationship is significant for the well-being
of the child. The parent-child relationship is also important. Not only do parents
influence their children; children also influence their parents, for example through
their temperament, age and gender.

1.5 Aðalbjarnardóttir’s Model of Pedagogical Vision

In understanding how fathers view their parenting role, it will be helpful to
explore their broader pedagogical vision. For this study I will use Sigrún
Aðalbjarnardóttir’s (2007, 2010) model of teachers’ and principals’ pedagogy
(see Figure 2). The aim is to develop and adapt her model to fathers’ pedagogical vision.

The theoretical roots of the framework lie in both philosophy and psychology.
Aðalbjarnardóttir draws on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology
(Heidegger, 1927/1962; Husserl, 1936/1970) with an emphasis on hermeneutics
(the study of ways to interpret human experience and place it into context). She
also draws on theories of psychosocial development, with an emphasis on how a
person constructs and reconstructs her knowledge and understanding of herself
and her social, cultural and historical environment with increased age,
development and experience (e.g., Kohlberg, 1976; Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget,
& Duffy, 2009) captures the integration of these traditions (Aðalbjarnardóttir,
2007). I discussed the concept of social constructivism (e.g., Gergen, 2001;
Schwandt, 2007; Shotter, 1993) in section 1.1.

Aðalbjarnardóttir (1994) started to develop the model two decades ago as
she worked with teachers and principals. She developed a program called
Fostering Students’ Social and Emotional Growth which focused both on
“teacher professional development and on how students develop socially and
interpersonally” as they work on social, emotional, and ethical issues in the
classroom (2010, p. 743). She has since continued to develop the model with
her colleagues (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007, 2010; Aðalbjarnardóttir & Selman,
1997; Selman, Buitrago, & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2003).
Using the model, five integrated issues are explored. As illustrated in the upper part of the model, the proposition is that a teacher’s pedagogical vision (in the center) is reflected in the way she integrates the three issues of motivation, values and aims, and teaching strategies and style. Underlying the teacher’s pedagogical vision is her life story.

In this study I use only the upper part of the model, but its conical shape represents the developmental dimension of the conceptual picture:

The assumption is that with time, experience, and reflection, teachers put their pedagogical ideas and vision into a broader social, historical, and political context and refine or develop new aims in their work with their students. Gradually, over time, they integrate their pedagogical values, aims, and practices. Moreover, they become more aware of how their life story relates to their values, aims, and practice as well as their motivation for working on social and civic issues. (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010, pp. 746–747)
The upper part of the model is adapted to fathers’ pedagogical vision (see Figure 3). Instead of looking at teaching strategies and style, I will look at “Father’s Parenting Practices.” And instead of looking at motivation, values and goals each receive their own box; more specifically, “Father’s Parenting Values” and “Father’s Parenting Goals.” As in Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model, I will place a special focus on life stories or lived experiences, extensively exploring “Fathers’ Lived Experiences” and how they relate them to their pedagogical vision.

![Model of Pedagogical Vision](image)

**Figure 3 Model of Pedagogical Vision**

### 1.6 Central Concept: Pedagogical Vision

The central concept in this study is fathers’ pedagogical vision and how their values, goals and practices are reflected in their vision. Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir (2007) defines values as follows:

> [Values] ... are the foundation of our views and our attitude to life, ... our attitude to what it is worthwhile to aim for in life, for the individual and for society. Values are thus the foundation for our ethical stance and political views. They are the foundation of our pedagogical and educational vision. They are our guiding light in becoming better human beings. (p. 37, translation)

As Aðalbjarnardóttir (2007) points out, values can be categorized as general or particular, and as basic values or ethical values. General values are those values that are universal, regardless of cultural and linguistic traditions.
Particular values differ from one individual to another, from one group to another, and between communities. Basic values are general and are guided by common concerns and interests and should therefore be found in every community. It can be useful to consider what a newborn child needs to thrive and develop by reflecting on what goals are classified as basic values. Therefore, some examples of basic values are security, both physical (food and shelter) and emotional (warmth), along with love, care, and justice. The difference between basic values and ethical values is not always clear because some basic values are ethical, and others are not. For instance, love, care and justice are examples of general ethical values that are also basic values. Ethical values can be general, as those examples show, but they can also be particular. Examples of particular ethical values are faithfulness and helpfulness. Some values can be categorized as neither basic nor ethical. These are particular values like hard work and punctuality (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007).

Human behavior has for decades been seen to be purposive, “that is, initiated, directed, and motivated by people’s desire to satisfy basic drives or promote other concerns and objectives,” according to Dix and Branka (2003, p. 167). They define goals this way:

> Goal concepts deal with the motivation basis of behavior. They specify the ends toward which behavior is directed and explain action in terms of drives, motives, or desires to produce particular ends. Thus, goal-oriented theories emphasize what people want, wish, or prefer—what they are interested in or concerned about. (p. 167)

Goals can be either long-term or short-term. They can be oriented toward the child, the parent, the relationship, or socialization. As Grusec (2002, p. 143) describes it, “The term socialization broadly refers to the way in which individuals are assisted in the acquisition of skills necessary to function successfully as members of their social group.”

In this study the main focus will be on long-term, child-oriented socialization goals that are recommended to ensure that children develop optimally (Dix & Branca, 2003).

### 1.6.1 Parents’ values and goals

Though the importance of reflecting on parenting values and goals is not a new concept (Ágústsson, 1938), currently little research on parenting values and goals is available in Iceland. However, some surveys have been conducted on the values of the nation. One 2000 survey (Proppé, 2000) asked respondents to mention one quality they valued the most in others, liked the
most about themselves, or wanted to have. The qualities most often mentioned were honesty, candor, optimism or positivity, trust, and diligence. In 2009, following the economic crises in Iceland, a meeting called the National Assembly (Þjóðfundurinn) was held, with over 1,200 participants. The most common values that came up were honesty, equality, respect, justice, love/care, responsibility, freedom, sustainability, democracy, family, equity, and trust. In addition, there was an emphasis on education, optimism, safety, and human rights (Gunnar Hersveinn, 2010). In a qualitative study in which teachers reflected on their relationships with their students (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007), their most often mentioned values were trust, respect, safety, and care. Additionally, some child-rearing values accepted in Iceland are to be seen in national laws, as discussed in chapter 1.4.3 on public policy.

The European Value Study has collected data for some years, including a small amount of data on parenting values (European Values Education, 2011; Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2012; Halman et al., 2011). Participants are asked how important they feel it is that children learn different things at home. According to the study, European parents want to teach their children good manners, responsibility, and tolerance and respect for other people (Halman et al., 2011). The results for Iceland are similar to those for other European countries. In 2009–2010, Icelandic participants considered it especially important for children to learn the following values at home: tolerance and respect for other people 86% (males 81%); independence 82% (males 76%); feeling of responsibility 79% (males 75%); good manners 74% (males 78%); value of hard work 46% (males 51%); unselfishness 31% (males 32%); determination and perseverance 29% (males 26%); use of imagination 20% (males 20%); thriftiness 20% (males 20%); obedience 13% (males 16%); and religious faith 7% (males 8%) (Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2012). For each year (1981, 1990, 1999, 2008, and 2009–2010) in which this survey has been conducted in Iceland the same topics have been in the top four: tolerance and respect for other people, independence, feeling of responsibility, and good manners (European Values Education, 2011; Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2012).

Robert LeVine (1974, 1988) studied parenting goals around the world. He highlighted three universal parenting goals: a) survival, where parents promote the physical survival and health of their children so they will be able to have children of their own; b) economic security, which fosters skills and capabilities so the children can be economically self-sufficient as adults; and c) the concept of locally defined virtue, which fosters behavioral capabilities to support the acquisition of cultural values such as morality or achievement. Dix and Branca (2003, p. 174) note that studies which have looked at parents’
goals have found that “parents also place high value on obedience, respect for property, and maintenance of family routines (e.g., eating, sleeping).” These authors have categorized findings from numerous studies into 14 categories of parental socialization goals and concerns. These are: survive (be healthy and safe); follow moral values (be sensitive to others); be obedient; be economically self-sufficient (get a good job); respect property; follow family routines (eating, sleeping, health, cleanliness); display proper manners; perform/achieve at school; be good natured, friendly, popular, and socially skilled; be loyal to the group/family; be amusing, fun, and stimulating; be happy; and respect cultural traditions and customs (Dix & Branca, 2003).

Parents’ goals and concerns are closely related, as Dix and Branca (2003) point out; parents’ concerns are likely to influence their goals. Therefore it is worth considering several issues that might concern Icelandic parents. Overall, the well-being of Icelandic children is high on the list. Iceland is in third place on the child well-being table for rich countries (UNICEF, 2013a) which examines material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviors and risks, and housing and environment. Icelanders have been successful in preventing adolescent substance abuse (Sigfúsdóttir, Thorlindsson, Kristjánsson, Roe, & Allegrantel, 2008) with 40 percent of Icelandic adolescents (15–16 years) having never tried alcohol or illegal drugs. This is the highest rate in Europe (Hibell et al., 2012). Icelandic parents might have some cause for concern, however, because in Iceland cultural conventions for underage drinking do exist—for example, at high school dances (L. Arnardóttir, 2011)—and research shows that alcohol consumption increases when they enter the upper secondary school level (Rannsóknir og greining, 2011). Icelandic parents, like other parents around the world, might have concerns about their children’s safety, as “unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death in children aged 5–19 years in the WHO European Region, with road traffic, drowning and poisoning ranking among the top 15 causes of death in 0–19-year-olds” (World Health Organization, 2010). The frequency of medically attended injuries is high in Iceland compared to other Western countries (Velferðarráðuneytið, 2011). For example, 51% of 15-year-old Icelandic girls and 55% of boys reported at least one medically attended injury over the previous 12 months, compared to 42% in other countries that participated in the study (World Health Organization, 2012). Between 1988 and 1993 children’s deaths from drowning were among the highest in western countries (Pingskjal 1554). Kristjánsson (1991) argues that the high frequency of injuries among children in Iceland can be attributed to social interaction patterns between parents and children and the socio-historical context.
Less serious than the lives of the children, but also of concern to Icelandic parents, is their children’s access to inappropriate content on the Internet. Icelandic teenagers say they find pornography to be ubiquitous, easy to access, and difficult to avoid on the Internet (Ólafsdóttir & Sigmarsson, 2006). Icelandic boys in the age group 16–19 seem to watch more pornography than their peers in the other Nordic counties; 76% of Icelandic boys say they do so at least once a week (Guðmundsdóttir et al., 2010). Less than half (47%) of parents of 15–18 year olds say they establish rules about the child’s Internet use (Arnalds, Karlsdóttir, Jónsdóttir, & Jónsdóttir, 2012). A qualitative study (Kristinsdóttir, 2000) on parents’ concerns regarding their children (10-year-olds) indicated that parents had concerns about their children’s eating habits, school, and their ability to follow rules at home.

1.6.2 Parents’ practices

Research shows that parents use a variety of parenting practices. These practices affect the child’s development and well-being (Bornstein, 2002a; Collins et al., 2000; Collins et al., 2002; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Researchers have divided parenting approaches into various categories. One of the best known classifications is based on Baumrind’s theory (1971, 1991b) on different parenting styles: authoritative, permissive, authoritarian, and neglectful. Numerous scholars all over the world have used this classification (see overview in Steinberg, 2001). Though some have found different results when considering racially and ethnically diverse samples (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011) others have not (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Studies around the world have supported the importance of an authoritative parenting style for children’s growth and well-being (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, 2001). The authoritative parenting style is characterized by the way the parents expect and encourage mature behavior from their children, welcome their ideas and show them warmth and encouragement. Such parents have clear rules about what is appropriate and what is not, and place emphasis on explanations and encouraging their children to explain their points of view. The authoritarian parenting style is characterized as “detached and controlling, and somewhat less warm than other parents,” as opposed to a permissive parenting style, which is described as “noncontrolling, nondemanding, and relatively warm” (Baumrind, 1971, p. 2). In general, children and adolescents who are raised by authoritative parents have been shown to have advantages in psychosocial development and mental health (such as school achievement, self-reliance and self-esteem, and less anxiety, depression, and antisocial behavior) over their peers who were not raised authoritatively (Steinberg, 2001).
In a longitudinal study in Iceland, Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir studied parenting styles in relation to various developmental and risk factors in the lives of adolescents (age 14 to 22). She found that adolescents are less likely to begin drinking and to use illegal substances if their parents use authoritative parenting (Aðalbjarnardóttir & Hafsteinsson, 2001), more likely to show greater educational achievement on standardized tests in 10th grade (Aðalbjarnardóttir & Blöndal, 2004), and more likely to have graduated from upper secondary school at the age of 22 (Blöndal & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2014). In addition, are they are more socially competent (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2005), have more positive self-esteem, and are less likely to be depressed than other adolescents (Aðalbjarnardóttir & Garðarsdóttir, 2004a, 2004b).

**Parent-child relationship**

Authoritative parents create good parent-child relationships, which make the child more receptive to parental influence, which in turn makes their approaches more effective (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg, 2000; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Research correspondingly indicates a significant link between the quality of the parent-child relationship and optimal child development and well-being (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Birch & Ladd, 1996; Lamb, 2012; O’Connor, 2002; Pianta, 1997; Smith, Perou, & Lesense, 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). As pointed out in a World Health Organization report (2012): “Parental communication is one of the key ways in which the family can act as a protective health asset, promoting pro-social values that equip young people to deal with stressful situations or buffer them against adverse influences” (p. 19).

Studies among adolescents in Iceland have showed the importance of time spent with parents, parental monitoring and support: They are happier (Guðmundsdóttir et al., in press), do better academically (Kristjánsson & Sigfúsóttir, 2009), and are less likely to abuse substances (Sigfúsóttir et al., 2008). Further, “youth who are strongly integrated into their families are less likely to succumb to anomie and suicidality” (Thorlindsson & Bjarnason, 1998, p. 94).

Therefore it should be of concern that in a study of Icelandic primary school children, 12% to 16% reported that they spent time with their parents after school or on weekends only occasionally or never (Guðmundsdóttir, Kristjánsson, Sigfúsóttir, & Sigfúsósson, 2007). The percentage of teenagers in 9th and 10th grade who reported spending time with their parents has increased in recent years (Kristjánsson, Sigfúsósson, Sigfúsóttir, & Pálsdóttir, 2012). This has also been the case with upper secondary students (Pálsdóttir, Sigfúsóttir, Kristjánsson, Guðmundsdóttir, & Sigfúsósson, 2011). According to a 2007 UNICEF report, less than half (44%) of 15-year-old Icelandic youth
reported that their parents frequently sat down to talk with them, putting Iceland second to last among OECD countries (UNICEF, 2007) in this category. On the other hand, another study (World Health Organization, 2012) found that over 80% of 15-year-olds in Iceland (83% of girls and 84% of boys) reported that it was easy to talk to their mothers. Fewer children found it easy to talk to their fathers (65% of girls and 78% of boys).

Compared to other Western countries, Icelandic parents are above average: among all Western countries, 78% of 15-year-olds find it easy to talk to their mothers and 60% find it easy to talk to their fathers (World Health Organization, 2012). In general, young people find it “easier to talk to their mother than to their fathers” (UNICEF, 2007). Of upper secondary students in Iceland, 76.6% say they talk to their mother when they feel bad or are worried compared to 34.7% who report that they talk to their fathers in such situations (Júlíusdóttir, Arnardóttir, & Magnúsdóttir, 2008). Similarly, a study conducted in 1992 found that fewer 18-year-old students confided in their fathers about their concerns than their mothers: 40% of boys and 50% of girls spoke to their mothers, compared to 19% of boys and 14% of girls who spoke to their fathers (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2007). Almost 60% of upper secondary students in Iceland report that they would like to spend more time with their closest family members, and 57% would like to be closer to them (Júlíusdóttir et al., 2008). In that context, it is interesting that over 90% of young people say that in any given week they frequently eat the main meal of the day with their parents. This number was high in comparison to other nations; the only higher percentage was in Italy (UNICEF, 2007).

Parents in Iceland have also been asked about their relationships and time spent with their children. The majority of mothers (76%), but only 48% of fathers, said they had had a pleasant time at home with their child at least once in the past month, where they either talked or played (Arnalds et al., 2012). These findings are similar to those of an older study (Júlíusdóttir et al., 1995) where most parents said they discuss everything and anything with the child, and the majority (85%) said they played with their children and 75% said they read to them. In the same study it was found that parents commonly went to a movie or to a sports event with their children (51%) and about half (53%) said they play sports with them (Júlíusdóttir et al., 1995). Another study (Björnsson & Pétursson, 1990) found that 64% of parents said they pray regularly or sometimes with their children. The great majority said they had helped their children with homework within the past month, though 23% said they had not (Júlíusdóttir et al., 1995). According to another study (Arnardóttir, Kristmundsson, & Björnsdóttir, 2006) fathers seem to be less
involved in their children’s homework than mothers. Only 5% said they helped their children with homework, compared to 66% of mothers.

**Warmth, control and autonomy**

Researchers have thoroughly documented the relationship between high parental warmth/affection moderate parental control and autonomy granting and positive outcomes for children (Baumrind, 1991a; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Palkovitz, 2007; Silk, Morris, Kanaya, & Steinberg, 2003). When Icelandic fathers were asked in a qualitative study (Einarsdóttir, 1998) what characterized good fathers, the main themes were warmth and parental control. Similar findings were found in a quantitative study (Þórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010) in which parents were asked to name the characteristics of good parents.

Bowlby (1965) is one of many psychologists to emphasize that children need warmth and love from parents. Bronfenbrenner (1977, October 5, p. 5) made the famous statement that every child needs at least one person who is really “crazy about” him or her. Similarly, Spock (1968, p. 564) said that every child “needs someone to dote on him”; to think he is the most wonderful child in the world, to talk to him, “to hug him and smile at him.” In a 1997 study, the majority of U.S. parents reported that they show their children warmth and affection at least once a day: hugged or showed physical affection to the child (mothers 87%; fathers 73%); said they love her or him (mothers 85%; fathers 62%); and said they appreciate something the child did (mothers 55%; fathers 37%) (Child Trends, 2002). The emphasis on the importance of parents showing love, care and warmth can also be seen in a study among Icelandic parents (Þórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010), in which almost all participants emphasized these attributes. When asked about their greatest strength, the largest proportion of parents, about a quarter, reported that they were loving, warm and tender. Some 9th and 10th-graders, though, say that they find it difficult to get warmth and affection from their parents (boys 4.3%; girls 4.5%) (Kristjánsson et al., 2012). These numbers are similar for upper secondary school children, though a little higher for boys (boys 5.9%; girls 4.6%) (Pálsdóttir et al., 2011).

Caring for children requires that we respond to their needs; Noddings (2002) says it is the ethical responsibility of the caregiver. Caring is vital for the well-being of the child. Research indicates that if the caregiver focuses on the child’s need for caring and warmth in early childhood, and the child successfully develops secure emotional connections with the adult, the child is more likely to have good self-esteem, be more persistent, and to adjust more easily to new situations when older (Sroufe, 1996). The importance of parent-child attachment is well documented in the literature (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978;
Belsky, 2006; Bowlby, 1991; Cummings & Cummings, 2002; Lamb, 2002; Roisman, Padrón, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2002; Sroufe, 1996).

On the subject of parental control, most parents in one study in Iceland said they have good control of their children (Júlíusdóttir et al., 1995). In a survey (Arnalds et al., 2012) where parents who said they had rules about their children’s Internet use were asked if it was easy or difficult for them to have the child to follow those rules, 65% said that it was easy. In another study (Pórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010), a little less than a third (27%) of the parents said they found it difficult to maintain discipline. They said for instance that they found it most difficult to “be determined,” to “say no and stick to it,” and that it was difficult to avoid being indulgent. Júlíusdóttir and her colleagues (1995) found that 14% of parents said they were about to give up on their children. On the other hand, Icelandic parents say they reject physical punishment (Júlíusdóttir, 1993), with 93% saying they never use physical punishment (Júlíusdóttir et al., 1995). Less than five percent (4.4%) of adolescents in Iceland say that they have experienced physical violence at the hands of an adult in the home at any time (UNICEF, 2013b).

Parental supervision of 9th- and 10th-graders has increased from 2006. Today about half of 9th- and 10th-graders report that their parents have rules regarding what they can do at home and outside of the home (Kristjánsson et al., 2012). The father’s role as a disciplinarian has also been changing, according to Pleck and Pleck (1997). They state that before 1900 the father was the head of the household and “set the moral standard for the family and served as the last resort in administering serious punishment” (p. 38). He was “a man honored, revered, respected, feared, and unquestioningly obeyed by his children” (p. 39). In the period from 1900 to 1970 “there was less emphasis on the father’s role as a disciplinarian” (p. 41) and from 1970 “there was little emphasis on the father’s distinctive role as a disciplinarian” (p. 45).

**Fathers’ approaches**

Researchers have come to different conclusions about how different fathers and mothers are in their parenting approaches. Connell (1995, p. 21) states that there has been “a remarkable amount of ‘sex difference’ research” from the 1890’s to the 1990’s; it has covered mental abilities, “emotions, attitudes, personality traits, interest, indeed everything that psychologists thought they could measure.” He continues:

Sex differences, on almost every psychological trait measured, are either non-existent or fairly small. Certainly they are much smaller than the differences in social situations that are commonly justified.
by the belief in psychological difference – such as unequal incomes, unequal responsibilities in child care and drastic differences in access to social power. (p. 21)

Similarly, Lamb (2012) points out that different cultures, different contexts and different responsibilities may explain the differences found in fathers’ and mothers’ parenting approaches. About those differences he says:

Many studies have pointed to differences between the ways in which mothers and fathers interact with their children; they indicate that, on average, men’s patterns of interaction are dominated by a more boisterous, playful, unpredictable interaction, while women’s patterns are more soothing, containing, and restrictive. (Lamb, 2012, p. 103)

Several “studies have consistently shown that fathers tend to ‘specialize’ in play, whereas mothers specialize in caretaking and nurturance, especially (but not only) in relation to infants” (Lamb, 2010a, p. 3). Fathers’ focus on play has also been seen in a study conducted in Iceland (Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004). A study conducted in Denmark (Sommer, 1999) found that the mothers more often took care of what was ‘necessary’, while many fathers where most involved when it was ‘fun’. Fathers in an Icelandic study (Gíslason, 1997) describe their parents’ role in a similar way. Those who considered that they had a good relationship with their own fathers recounted that their fathers played with them whenever possible, while their mothers took care of daily needs. Larson (1993, p. 21) found that the term ‘Disneyland Dad’ described the fathers in his study, where the focus in the father-adolescent relationship was on having a good time. His findings suggest “that, in playing this role, fathers may be missing the boat. ... By setting enjoyment as the standard, men may be missing what is most valued by adolescents” as the adolescents, even though they may enjoy this time, it does not “create closeness with their fathers.” His “data provide the intriguing suggestion that it is those fathers who can tolerate negative emotion in their adolescents who are experienced as warm” (p. 21). On the same matter, “surveys of adolescents indicate that disagreements are most common with mothers, followed by siblings, friends, and romantic partners, and finally fathers” (Laursen & Collins, 1994). It appears that fathers often focus on play and having fun when interacting with their children, at the cost of developing emotional closeness with them.

**Models of paternal involvement**
A well-known and influential scheme of paternal involvement was offered by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1987). They suggest three dimensions: interaction, availability, and responsibility:
Interaction refers to the father’s direct contact with his child through caretaking and shared activities. Availability is a related concept concerning the father’s potential availability for interaction, by virtue of being present or accessible to the child whether or not direct interaction is occurring. Responsibility refers to the role the father takes in ascertaining that the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for the child. (p. 125)

Much has changed in the last decades in terms of both fathers’ roles and the types of studies on fatherhood (Lamb, 2010a). J. H. Pleck (2010b) has therefore revised his “conceptualization of the construct of paternal involvement.” He proposes “three primary components: a) positive engagement activities, b) warmth and responsiveness, and c) control.” His model “also includes two auxiliary domains: d) indirect care and e) process responsibility” (p. 58). Similarly, Palkovitz (2007) has pointed out three groups of characteristics that matter in father-child relationships:


1.6.3 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the central concept of pedagogical vision. I defined values and goals, and discussed values of various nations and data on parenting values. Tolerance and respect for other people, independence, feeling of responsibility, and good manners seem to be the parenting values Icelanders value the most. I also discussed universal parenting goals and mentioned several things that might concern Icelandic parents. I also discussed parenting practices and the importance of an authoritative parenting style for children’s growth and well-being: the focus on good parent-child relationship; warmth, control and autonomy. Steinberg (2004) summarizes what has been said above on parenting: the most important task of parenting is to love, guide, and respect the child. Fathers’ approaches and models of paternal involvement were also discussed.

1.7 Aims and Research Questions

The review of published literature raises doubts that earlier studies on parents’ attitudes towards parenting have been sufficiently thorough and probing.
Much of the research in the field of parenting appears to rely on quantitative data (such as questionnaires to parents); this limits the possibilities of presenting the subtlety of parents’ beliefs and thoughts, and also pays insufficient attention to fathers’ lived experiences.

Moreover, until recently, research conducted with parents has collected data almost exclusively from mothers. There seems to be a growing recognition of the importance of eliciting also input from fathers and there is an increasing societal consensus that fathers’ roles are crucial in the upbringing and well-being of children (Lamb, 2002). Also, the father’s role has been changing in the last decades, from being mainly a provider to being more involved in parenting (Gíslason, 2008a; Lamb, 2010a; O’Brien et al., 2007). Fathers seem to be willing to take a larger role in family life (Gíslason, 2008a; Stefánsson, 2008b) and to spend more time with their children (Bianchi et al., 2006; Sullivan et al., 2009). Still, few studies have addressed fathers’ pedagogical vision.

In addition, when literature on parents’ values and goals is reviewed, the focus seems to be more on parents of young children than adolescents; which is the focus of this study.

Thus, the purpose of the present study is to contribute to research on parenting by gaining a deeper knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical visions with a focus on their values, goals and practices. The participants in this study are the fathers of 13- and 16 year-old children.

This study addresses the gap in the research literature in two ways: It focuses on the fathers’ pedagogical vision and uses in-depth open-ended interviews to elicit the fathers’ lived experiences to understand the origins of their vision and how it has evolved.

The research questions are:

1) What characterizes the fathers’ pedagogical vision on parenting and child-rearing (values, goals, and practices)?

2) What characterizes the lived experiences that the fathers relate to their pedagogical vision?
2 Research Design and Methods

A qualitative methodology was chosen to seek answers to the research questions. Qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Many different forms of qualitative research exist depending on the epistemology, theoretical perspectives, and methodology the researcher chooses to use. Creswell (2007), however, has pointed out common characteristics of qualitative research. The data are collected in the participants’ natural settings; researchers collect the data themselves and are therefore seen as the key research instrument; and often, multiple sources of data are gathered. The focus of the data analysis is on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the issue or problem, and the analysis is inductive: the researcher gradually gets to the patterns and themes of the data by working back and forth between themes and data. The overall research process is emergent, changing dynamically according to how data collection unfolds in the field, as researchers try to develop a complex picture of the issue or problem studied. Finally, researchers often use a theoretical lens to view their studies; they make an interpretation of what they hear, see and understand.

In the rest of this chapter I offer an overview of the research paradigm, methods, data collection and analysis, and ethical challenges of this study.

2.1 The Research Paradigm

Social constructivism is the epistemological framework for this study (see chapter 1.1). Its purpose is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of Icelandic fathers’ pedagogical vision; i.e., their values, goals, and parenting practices, as well as how their lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision. The study is further framed by the ecological perspective (see chapter 1.3) which is the theoretical perspective of the study.

The methodology of the study is a phenomenological approach based on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Husserl, 1936/1970). “The phenomenological perspective is central to our conception of qualitative methodology” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 10). “Phenomenology involves the description of things as one experiences them, or of one’s experiences of things” (Hammond, Howarth, & Keat, 1991, p. 1). This perspective fits well for this study because it allows the researcher to capture how the participants (in this case fathers) construct their realities, with
the focus being on the actor’s point of view and how these participants
develop a phenomenon (in this study, the fathers’ pedagogical vision).
Phenomenologists focus on offering careful descriptions of everyday life as it
is experienced by the participants (Schwandt, 2007).

Phenomenology requires the researcher to set aside, as much as possible,
her prior knowledge of the particular phenomena under investigation and
“have a fresh look” at it (Crotty, 1998, p. 80). This perspective encourages the
researcher to actively and conscientiously listen to the participants’
perspective. In this study, I have done my utmost to put my personal
pedagogical vision in the background and have made the fathers’ vision the
central focus of my research. The phenomenological perspective forces the
researcher to question her own cultural understanding, because culture
imposes meanings on objects and excludes other meanings of the same object.
This perspective demands a critical awareness of my own cultural framework
and how this framework has influenced my meaning making and
understanding. Critical awareness keeps my own cultural understanding
(discussed in the Prologue) from eliminating the fathers’ perspective and the
meaning of the phenomena I am seeking.

Phenomenology also requires the researcher to be aware that a “concept”
is not the same as “reality” and “a concept is never able to exhaust the
richness of a phenomenon … there is always so much that the concept fails to
express” (Crotty, 1998, p. 81). I have to be aware that the definition and
classification I have proposed simply exemplify concepts; they are not the
whole reality. “Phenomena are not of what is distinct from the real, but simply
of how one experiences things” (Hammond et al., 1991, p. 2). Phenomenology
“calls into question what is taken for granted” (Crotty, 1998, p. 82). The
perspective reminds me to be critical and to question the systems of meaning
that we have inherited. The phenomenological perspective requires critical
thinking and analysis around the proposed concept while framing the research
in the life experience of the participants.

Because knowledge depends on a person’s subjective understanding of
reality, it is essentially phenomenological (Denicolo & Pope, 2001). This is in
line with the perspective of Social Constructivism, which identifies this
‘reality’ as stemming from a cultural tradition (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). To
demonstrate the links between epistemology, theoretical perspectives,
methodology and method applied in the study, I have set out the four elements
in Figure 4 using Crotty’s (1998) paradigm.

As the aim of the study is to capture fathers’ views and experience about
parenting by listening to what they have to say, I chose social constructivism
as the epistemology of the study. According to a social constructivist perspective, meaning is “formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Social constructivism assumes that “knowledge is not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience, but is in some sense ideological, political, and permeated with values” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 198). That is in line with the ecological perspective, discussed in chapter 1.3, which takes into account various interactions and connections in a person’s life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000b), and with the phenomenological perspective, which focuses on how the participants construct their realities and how they develop a phenomenon. The phenomenological perspective, with its focus on the individual, and the ecological perspective, with its focus on the surroundings, are therefore appropriate theoretical perspectives. They fit well together and well with the chosen epistemology (cf., Figure 4). They also fit well with the aim of the study. Social constructivism also “favour[s] pluralism” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 90); for instance, the multiple voices and values of parents.
2.2 Research Methods

As shown in Figure 4, this study uses a phenomenological approach as methodology and semi-structured interviews as a method. The methodology will be explained and discussed first.

In studies based on the phenomenological approach, data are collected primarily by interviewing several individuals (in this study, 23 fathers). The participants all have “lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). ‘Lived experience’ is the “world of human experience and social action” as it is “lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings” (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 100, 177). ‘Lived experience’ in phenomenology is “the experiences described by participants that lead to the essence of the experience” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 324). In this study the ‘lived experience’ is fatherhood, and the phenomenon is the father’s pedagogical vision. It is important that the lived experience under investigation be as recent as possible so that participants can best recall their lived experience in detail (Creswell, 2007).

In this study the fathers have children who are either 13 or 16 years old. With a phenomenological approach, the focus is on gathering the participants’ lived experiences (in this study, fatherhood) because it is from that experience that the phenomenon (in this study, pedagogical vision) develops and matures. After the researcher gathers the participants’ lived experiences, she describes the common threads “to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). As the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision, phenomenology is a good fit. Fathers’ pedagogical vision will be described in order to reduce the experiences of the participants to a central meaning or as essence of a pedagogical vision.

2.2.1 Participants in the study

Choosing participants

As I said earlier, this study is part of a larger research project: Civic awareness of young people in a democratic society (Borgaravítund ungs fólks í lýðræðisþjóðfélagi) at the Centre for Research into Challenges Facing Children and Young People (Lífshættir barna og ungmenna), led by Sigrún Aðalbjarnardóttir.

For this study, fathers of 13 and 16 year-old children were chosen. I chose to focus on two different age groups in order to gather the diverse experiences of fathers. Two criteria were used for selecting the fathers. First, based on the results of a questionnaire, I selected data from the fathers of the 13-year-olds that represent each of Baumrind’s four parenting styles: authoritative,
authoritarian, permissive, and neglective (Baumrind, 1971, 1991b). Second, I selected the fathers of the 16-year-olds for practical reasons, as their children had already been interviewed as a part of the large research project. In both instances, participants were selected from the previous study with the intention of providing possibilities for future research and deeper understanding by later comparisons with other data from the research project.

**Backgrounds of participants**

The participants in the study were 23 fathers ranging in age from 35 to 60, from three places throughout Iceland: The city of Reykjavík (10 fathers), a seaside town (6 fathers) and a country town (7 fathers). Participants’ educational levels ranged from compulsory education only, to Ph.D. All of the fathers were born as Icelanders except one who was born in Asia but had lived in Iceland for 15 years. All of the fathers were working outside the home, except for one who had been unemployed for some time but was looking for a job.

The participants were fathers of 23 children from the original study (see Table 1). Half of the children (11) were 13 years old, born in 1998 and the other half (12 children) were 16 years old, born in 1995. Half of the children (12) were girls and the other half (11) were boys. Thirteen of these children lived with both of their biological parents, while the parents of nine of the children were divorced and one couple was going through a divorce at the time of the study (the child lived with them in rotation). The other nine had been divorced for 2 to 14 years, and many of them lived with a new partner. One father informed the researcher that he was gay. The divorce rate in Iceland is 34% (Statistics Iceland, 2014a). In this sample the divorce rate is even higher, at 43%. One child had been raised for the last six or seven years by his single father. All the other children of divorced parents lived with their mother and spent varying amounts of time with their father, ranging from “every other week” to “once in a while.” I interviewed seven of the divorced biological fathers and three stepfathers. The stepfathers had been a part of the family for six to 14 years and were interviewed to increase the representation of variety in the participants’ experience. In phenomenological studies researchers avoid homogeneity avoided by selecting participants who have both typical and atypical experience of the phenomena (Halldórsdóttir, 2013a). Table 1 provides an overview of the participants’ backgrounds.

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1 63% of the population lives in the Reykjavík area (Statistics Iceland, 2015).
2 Members of the Icelandic population with an immigrant background are 8.1% (Statistics Iceland, 2013).
Table 1 The Participants’ Backgrounds, Listed Alphabetically by Pseudonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathers’ pseudonyms</th>
<th>Age of the father</th>
<th>Age of the child</th>
<th>Gender of the child</th>
<th>Parents’ Marital Status</th>
<th>The child lives with…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnaldur</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>alternating weeks with mother and father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Árni</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>her mother and every other weekend with her father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldur</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Stepfather</td>
<td>her mother and stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagur</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>his mother and spends varying amounts of time with his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eiður</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Going through a divorce</td>
<td>her parents in rotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flóki</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guðni</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannes</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilugi</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jónas</td>
<td>36+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>his mother and every other weekend with his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kári</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lárus</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Stepfather</td>
<td>his mother and stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markús</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Níels</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Óskar</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pálmi</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynir</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tómas</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>her mother and every other weekend with her father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnar</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigfís</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Stepfather</td>
<td>his mother and stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ýmir</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Þröstur</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of his biological parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Össur</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>both of her biological parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Data Collection

Before I began the study, I sent an announcement to the Data Protection Authority in Iceland (Persónuvernd). I then sent informational letters to the selected fathers at the children’s home addresses. I followed up with a phone call a few days later, asking for any parent of the particular child. In all cases I then got the mother of the child on the phone, except in the case of the single father. I introduced myself and asked whether she had been raising the child alone or if she had a partner. I also asked who the other main caregiver was (if any): the biological father, stepfather, or other. I then asked to talk to the father (the other main caregiver), or asked for his phone number if they were
not living together. When I had the father on the phone I asked him if he had received the letter and if he had any questions.

I specifically asked the fathers to participate in the study, telling them how important it was for the study to hear their views. I put extra effort into encouraging them to join, as several authors have pointed out that researchers often have problems with getting fathers to participate (e.g., Ramey, 2002). I informed the fathers that many studies with parents had not included fathers, and emphasized the importance of hearing their perspectives. All of the fathers who were asked agreed to participate. We set up a convenient time and place for each interview.

I gathered the data for this study in the summer of 2011 through interviews with the 23 fathers. I conducted them with one father at a time, out of earshot of others as much as possible. Just over half of the interviews (12) were conducted in the participants’ homes, six in an interview room at The Social Science Research Institute at the University of Iceland, four at the father’s workplace, and one at a research center in the countryside. Most of the interviews took about an hour and a half, though they ranged from 64 to 131 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded (after each participant had given written permission) and later transcribed verbatim.

2.3.1 Interviews

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured and open-ended. I, the interviewer, am a female native Icelandic speaker, the parent of three children of ages similar to the participants’ children; my background is acknowledged in more detail in the prologue. I chose to use interviews for data collection because they seemed most appropriate to the study and most likely to provide rich data. Social constructivism favors interviews, since out of dialogues, “new realities and values might emerge” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 21). Interviews are also appropriate given the phenomenological approach.

Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher creates an outline of the topics to be covered, including suggested questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 130). When formulating the outline for the interviews, Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model was taken into consideration. As described in chapter 1.5 of this study, her model consists of values and aims, motivation/interest, and teaching methods; it is influenced by the participants’ individual life stories. Therefore an interview frame was developed that included five groups of questions in an attempt to understand fathers’ pedagogical vision and how their lived experiences related to it. These groups are: 1) values (questions in part 8); 2) goals (questions in part 7); 3) practices (questions in part 5); 4) life
story (questions in part 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 10); and 5) the child (questions in part 4). I followed the outline when interviewing the fathers, generating follow-up questions during the interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts and perspectives.

I listened carefully to what the fathers had to say; the questions were open-ended and most of them were broad and general. Because the questions were open-ended, each interview developed differently. Creswell (2007, p. 21) recommends that questions be as open-ended as possible in the practice of social constructivism, so that “the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons” (p. 21).

In this study the focus is on statements and verbal utterances. As Langdridge (2004, p. 332) points out, by using interviews the researcher may get only “a partial version of a person’s world” as people may fail “to tell the whole story in an interview,” which limits “the possibility of making claims about the talk beyond this particular setting”.

2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and the use of theoretical tools

In this study I used an inductive approach to analyze the data, as in phenomenological studies everything is supposed to emerge from the data: quotes, themes, texture and structure, and the ‘essence.’

Data analysis procedures

Before analyzing the data, I transcribed the interviews, with help from assistants who were familiar with the protocol (in order to ensure validity). Then I listened to all of them again, to catch the tone and reticence pauses and to compare the typed text and make necessary corrections.

I categorized the data under issues as in Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2010); then I followed a phenomenological data analysis procedure. According to Creswell (2007), the procedure of phenomenological data analysis starts with finding ‘significant statements’: I repeatedly went through the transcribed interviews and marked meaningful sentences and quotes from the fathers that helped me understand their pedagogical vision. I then developed the meaning units from those significant quotes into themes.

Next, I used the themes and significant statements used to make a basic scheme and structure, and to write a description of the fathers’ lived experiences. The last step was a description of the “essence” of pedagogical vision, where the focus was on the common experience of the fathers.
Despite the fathers’ diverse backgrounds (e.g., age, education, residence and family patterns) after analyzing the 23 interviews I felt I had reached saturation: the point at which the researcher stops hearing anything new regarding the researched phenomenon (Halldórsdóttir, 2013b).

Writing in English
I decided, early in my study, to write my dissertation in English, to make it more accessible to a wider audience. It also allows me to better communicate internationally within the field. All the interviews were conducted in Icelandic and transcribed in Icelandic. I conducted the data analysis on the material in its original Icelandic form and wrote it up in Icelandic. Transcribing an interview opens up possibilities for varied interpretations and misunderstandings, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 178) point out. They even say that “transcripts are impoverished, decontextualized renderings of live interview conversations.” This problem becomes even larger when translating participants’ quotes from one language to another. To ensure the study’s authenticity, I had the findings chapter initially translated into English by a native speaker of Icelandic. Then the original text and the translation was compared and corrected by a professional translator who is a native speaker of English. Throughout this process, we made an effort to have an “‘elegant’ free translation” (Birbili, 2000) rather than a word-for-word one.

2.5 Ethical Considerations
One of the major sets of principles associated with ethical conduct in research is privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality (Lichtman, 2013). This is especially salient in a small country like Iceland with a population of around 320,000 (Statistics Iceland, 2012). Therefore, in reporting the data I have been careful not to reveal any identifying information about the fathers. They are anonymous: I have given each of them a pseudonym, changed all identifying information, and do not mention the names of the two towns where I collected data. Reykjavik is not given a pseudonym because there is only one “city” in Iceland. It should not be possible to identify the fathers from the textual descriptions. Equally important, the fathers will not know who else participated in the study. It is my responsibility as a researcher to keep the information I learn confidential.

Since different researchers see different things, Creswell (2007) points out that researchers who use social constructivist perspectives should be aware that their own personal, cultural, and historical backgrounds shape their interpretation. In addition, every researcher resides “within a distinct interpretive community, which configures, in its special way, the multicultural,
gendered components of the research act” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 23). In the prologue I briefly explored and acknowledged my background and experience in order to increase the plausibility of the study, and thus strengthen its validity (Creswell, 2007). As a parent myself, I expect to see and understand things differently than non-parents would. Though I have many things in common with the fathers—for example, cultural background and children of similar ages—my gender is obviously different. It is, however, not uncommon for women to carry out research on men. Folkeson (2000) found that, in the Nordic countries, almost 60 percent of studies on men were conducted by women. But being a woman may influence what I see and how I understand things. For example, after having repeatedly listened to and read the interviews with the fathers, I noticed nuances that I had not noticed in the beginning; in some cases I came to understand parts of the interviews differently. I noticed that some of the fathers used words, or described their parenting role, in ways that were unfamiliar to me. I realized that I, as a woman, had much more experience listening to mothers’ talk about parenting. As a result of this shift, I began to question my own ‘cultural’ understanding as a woman and how I might begin to include and not marginalize the fathers’ perspectives and meanings. From that point on, I made a stronger effort to read and listen to the interviews with a focus on the fathers’ perspectives and meanings.

I have worked to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study in several ways. Not only have I acknowledged the background and experience I bring as a researcher, and changed all identifying information as discussed earlier. In addition I ensured that I do not know any of the participants personally, and that the themes emerge from many participants (23 fathers) who are not known to each other. The participants come a range of backgrounds, in rural and urban situations, and have children of different ages and genders. Also, I carefully documented the data collection and analysis, and carefully recorded, transcribed, and quoted from the interviews.
3 Findings: 
What do Fathers have to say about Parenting?

The purpose of this study is to gain deeper knowledge and understanding about the pedagogical vision of Icelandic fathers. More precisely, the purpose is to examine their values and goals, and the parenting practices they have chosen in order to reach their goals. A further goal is to look into how their lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision.

The fathers’ values, goals, parenting practices, and lived experiences make up the four categories explored in this study. The categories all come from the adapted pedagogical vision model (cf. Figure 3) which is based on Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2010).

![Figure 3 Model of Pedagogical Vision](image)

The four categories (cf. Figure 3) make up the structure of this chapter. In the first section, I discuss themes and subthemes of the category fathers’ parenting values, and then fathers’ parenting goals, followed by fathers’ parenting practices. In the fourth and last section of this chapter, I will discuss the themes and subthemes of fathers’ lived experiences. Factors from that category will, however, also be embedded in the discussion of the other categories when appropriate, in the hope that it will add to the understanding of why fathers have
chosen to emphasize particular issues in the upbringing of their children. Finally, I will examine the lessons the fathers have learned, along with their role models.

3.1 The Fathers’ Values

The only thing you can give your children to help them prepare for life’s journey is some kind of values. … [Values] you really want the children to take with them. … Values that you know have been useful to you … [and] you believe [to] be right. (Ymir, one of the fathers)

In this section, I discuss the category *father’s parenting values* (cf. Figure 3): the values the fathers appear to use for guidance in bringing up their children. My analysis revealed six themes in this category: 1) security; 2) affection: love and care; 3) honesty; 4) respect; 5) trust; and 6) the value of family. These themes and subthemes are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Affection: Love and care</th>
<th>Honesty</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>The value of family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subthemes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical security</td>
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<td>Parents’ respect for their children</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Emotional security</td>
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<td>Children’s respect for their parents</td>
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<td>Children’s respect for themselves and others</td>
<td>Social customs</td>
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In Appendix 3, a table displays the themes and the emphases of each of the 23 fathers. It also shows the total number of fathers who emphasize each value, as well as the number of fathers of boys versus fathers of girls who emphasize each value. I now discuss the emergent themes.

3.1.1 Security

All the fathers emphasize the security of their children, although their emphases vary. They believe that security is the key to a healthy childhood. For example, Lárus, one father, says that “the main goal [of parenting] is that the individual grows up in security” because children “surely have to feel secure to be able to be happy and do well in school and elsewhere.” Pálmi, another father, says that you need “a certain security” to be able to “fulfil yourself.” Reynir, the third father, feels that if children are insecure “they just
feel bad.” He added that if you are insecure, “then you are always on edge and on the defensive\(^3\) and stressed [and] that is not healthy.”

The theme security has two subthemes: 1) physical security, for example in the forms of housing, food and clothing; and 2) emotional security. Examples of ways parents provide emotional security include the parent being there for the child, providing familial stability, setting boundaries for the child, and treating the child with affection.

**Physical security**

The fathers talk about physical security and their role as parents to “feed [and] clothe the child” and provide “shelter.” Children feel “security” if these basic needs are fulfilled and “they are simply happiest that way,” says Unnar, one of the fathers. He believes it is important that his son “should not have to worry about things that could affect him like food, clothes and the home ... [so] he can just concentrate on being a boy.”

**Emotional security**

Children’s emotional security seems to be very important for the fathers, i.e. parents should be there for the child, provide a stable household, provide boundaries, and show the child affection.

Children have to “feel that there is someone who cares about them and that they are not alone” when something “happens in their life” or when “they do something wrong,” says Reynir. They need “support to” feel that “it is possible to work through life’s challenges,” he says. Another father, Hannes, says: “I don’t regard it as good parenting” if the children feel that “there’s no point talking to” Dad or Mom “about it” because “they don’t understand” or “go crazy,” as young relatives of his have said of their parents. Lárus says he wants the child “always to feel that the family will be a haven, with parents and siblings,” that he/she can “always turn to [them] ... later in life, too.” He himself says he grew “up with security” and “when I started to get older and grow up” he found a “backup” if “I was having a difficult experience.”

Reynir, who also emphasizes security in the parenting of his children, says that in his youth he was “secure” and felt “good.” because in his childhood home he had “a safe refuge and ... everything was stable.”

Some of the fathers talk about how stability or “steadfastness” in the household makes the children more secure. “There has to be a fixed point, there has to be a home,” says Kári. Moving can be a positive experience, but if people

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\(^3\) Words in **bold type** are words emphasized especially by the fathers
move often they “become completely rootless and don’t belong anywhere,” he says. Guðni, who never moved as a child, tends to emphasize not moving his children’s home, so that they do not, for example, have to change schools. Lárus points out that to make a safe environment for the children it is important that there is “harmony in the home, and things are not in uproar, as happens a lot.” And it is also “not good for the kids to listen to Mom and Dad quarrelling,” says Þróöstur. Pálmi talks about how important it is for the children to know “what tomorrow will bring,” i.e. that the child knows “more or less what will happen tomorrow ... [and] is able to plan” for him/herself. Vigfús points out the importance of regular mealtimes, and Unnar says:

[Children] are, like, unformed creatures and most kids that I have been around, they really like knowing in advance more or less how things are. When mealtimes are, and when do they go to school and what they should do in between and so on, and [they] often find it disturbing when people decide to do something at short notice. They have maybe found ... some continuity in life. I am not saying that you can never do anything unusual and different ... [but] that there shouldn’t be too many unnecessary changes.

Most of the fathers agree on the importance of regularity, but Árni has a different view: He thinks children should “not always have [to] be somewhere at a certain time to do a certain thing. He prefers “to play the day by ear.”

Regarding the importance of setting boundaries, so that children feel secure, Reynir says, Children are “always testing how much they can get away with. ... [It is] simply in their nature and because of that we must have clear boundaries” to enhance their security. He says that if they “do not get this supervision and these clear boundaries, they just feel bad” and they become “insecure” and do not know how to “behave themselves.”

The fathers also indicate that children “need warmth and affection too, to feel security” (Lárus). Another father, Niels, says: “It is of course a part of caring that they [the children] feel they are secure.” Love and care is the next theme that will be discussed.

In short, the fathers emphasize the security of their children. They want the child to feel physical security, through, for example, appropriate housing, food, and clothing. They also want the child to feel emotional security, through such actions as being there for the child, providing stability, setting boundaries for the child, and treating the child with affection.
3.1.2 Affection: Love and care

Another theme in the fathers’ values is love and care. Children need “love and care” from their parents just as “a flower needs water and sunlight,” says Baldur, one of the fathers. Niels believes that love and care are “basic needs” and says that the children do not “thrive” without it. “We waste away if we do not get love and affection ... and we die, in a way,” says another father, Tómas. Still another, Dagur, believes “that if people don’t know that someone cares for them they don’t develop in a normal way.” “To be shown warmth and care” is “necessary for well-being and [to] feel that you are worth something,” says Ýmir. Children become “withdrawn and bitter” if they do not get love and care, says Unnar. Love is “an inclusive word for ... all the good stuff” says Arnaldur; he adds that with love we get “better people.”

Many fathers indicate that the parental love and care make a difference for the children’s attitudes and their relationships with other people. The fathers hope that showing their children love and care “will repay itself” (Baldur) and that they will become “better human beings” (Ýmir) and through it “learn to interact better with other people” (Ýmir) and “be good to others” (Reynir). Reynir says that this matters so that “everyone can feel comfortable around you” and “so that society can function” as a whole. By showing his children love and care he also hopes that they will be “better prepared to bring up their children” in the future. Vigfús, who has struggled with alcoholism, shares his own childhood experience:

> If they [children] are shown love and care, then they show others love and care. From my own experience, I did not get much of it [as I was growing up]; there was a lot of violence, so I was more like the tough one, showed this [he shows his fist] if someone came too close. So I think it’s very important to show them love and care.

In short, the fathers emphasize affection. They speak about love and care as “basic needs” and say the child would not “thrive” without it.

3.1.3 Honesty

The fathers say they place great value on honesty, although they define honesty in different ways. Tómas, who has recently admitted to himself and others that he is homosexual, says that honesty is “somehow not to pretend, and be sincere, not lying.” He says honesty is “important” to him and that he “value[s] it highly.” He says it “really important” that parents should also be honest with their children. He says he went through “a great deal of mental distress” when he realized he would have to “break up his family,” because he was “lying and [had] been doing
it for a long time and as the mental anguish becomes greater the children naturally feel it.” He continued, “When you tell them the truth and tell them the right things, they sort of perceive what is going on and understand it in their own way, depending on their age. Then you get so much from them and such great understanding.” Children need “honesty from us also. I think it is hugely important. I have simply experienced it for myself,” he says.

Within the theme honesty I discovered three subthemes: truthfulness; being upright and trustworthy; and being candid.

**Being truthful**
The fathers say that honesty means being neither “deceitful and false” (Reynir) nor “treacherous or false” (Lárus); it relates to “truthfulness” (Lárus). Some of the fathers say that, regarding their children, they emphasize that “lying is not worth it, it is for the best to tell the truth as it is” (Flóki), and say they should just talk about “things and not hide them” (Baldur). One father, Þröstur, sees it as very important that his 14-year-old son learns to admit his mistakes, for example when he breaks something, and that he not blame others for his mistakes.

**Being upright and trustworthy**
Honesty is a matter of being “upright in the things you do, whether it is toward yourself or others,” says Lárus. Vigfús adds that honesty also involves keeping one’s word. Several fathers associate honesty with trust, and say that you “can trust” (Reynir & Baldur) honest people and it makes “relationships” easier if “everyone knows where they stand” (Ýmir). Árni, the father of a 13-year-old daughter, has emphasized that his daughter should be “honest with her girlfriends, not lying if she goes to another friend’s place. … If you want to play with someone today, then you just play with her … even though another friend does not want to play with her.” He says he has emphasized to her that she should “just be herself” and “not hide anything.” Flóki, who has a 16-year-old son, says that he has taught him that “it is best not to steal” or “cheat” because “it will always come back to bite you.”

**Being candid**
Some fathers value people who are “direct and straightforward” (Vigfús) and “candid” (Guðni & Pálmi). Hannes says he finds this “an excellent quality” because “if someone does not like something about you, then you just get to know it.” Then, if that person is “not talking about you to someone else,” but is instead being “candid with you,” they are being “forthright,” a quality he values.

In short, the fathers emphasize honesty. They value truthfulness, and people who are upright and trustworthy and candid.
3.1.4 Respect

Respect is another important theme in the fathers’ discussions about raising their children. When the fathers talk about respect they make three points in particular. They say that 1) parents should respect their children; 2) children should respect their parents; and 3) children should respect themselves and others. Those subthemes will now be discussed.

Parents’ respect for their children

Some fathers point out the importance of parents respecting their children and their opinions. Níels says: “Children are individuals, [and] you have to respect them as such. Otherwise you are sending them mixed messages ... [that] adults are in the right, not children.” He says: “Kids can be more right than adults ... you have to respect what they have to say, and that they have their own opinions and desires and all that.” Another father, Dagur, points out the influence of age and development in this context: “As [my son] grows older, the more one respects his opinions.”

The fathers want to respect their children as they are. For example, two fathers of daughters mention sexual orientation when talking about tolerance and respect: I hope that she does well in life “whether she chooses … a male or a female partner” (Össur).

One of the fathers, Hannes, discusses the advantage of showing “respect to the children.” He says that if parents do this, “you are more likely to get them to a good place in life.”

Children’s respect for their parents

Fewer fathers indicate that it is important for children to respect their parents than that parents should respect their children. Kári, one of the fathers that do so, says that children should respect their parents because “the parents are making a great effort for their children.” He continues: “I think they should show a bit of respect for what their Dad and their Mom are doing so they can have a good life and have everything they need.” Þröstur is of the same view, saying that it is important to be good to your parents and be thankful for them because without them one “would not exist.” There is especially much to be thankful for regarding your mother, because she is the one who gave birth to you, he says.

Children’s respect for themselves and others

One father, Ýmir, mentions the importance of children respecting themselves and others. He says children “need you to teach them how to respect themselves and others” because it is “important both to be able to stand up for
your rights in the vicissitudes of life, and also important so you don’t trample on other people and do them damage.”

Tómas reflects on respect, tolerance for diversity, and harsh judgements: “One is often judgemental in order to hide something in oneself, or that is my experience, anyway. … Outwardly, I often had very strong opinions about gays and lesbians” before I came out of the “closet” myself. I didn’t say “explicitly you deserve to die or anything like that, but I had opinions about many” homosexuals. “I used it – as a form of concealment. ... Hiding, because you don’t want the truth to be known, or have someone notice it.” This experience has influenced Tómas as a father, and he says he has “tried to instil” in his daughter that she should not “judge people” but rejoice in diversity. Tolerance is important “because we are so tremendously diverse and have different needs,” he adds.

Baldur looks to the future and hopes that if he shows his children respect then that value of respect may be “passed on” when they “do the same for their own children.”

In short, the fathers emphasize respect. They say that parents should respect their children and vice versa, that children should respect their parents. They also emphasize that the children respect themselves and others.

3.1.5 Trust
The fathers also mention trust when discussing their emphases in child-rearing. I discovered three subthemes within the theme of trust, based on the fathers’ focus: 1) being a reliable member of society; and ensuring 2) that parents can trust their children; and 3) that children can trust their parents.

Being reliable members of society
The fathers discuss the importance of trust in society in general. Asked what kind of person he wants his child to be, Hannes says, “a good citizen that everyone can trust.” Some of the fathers placed emphasis on the importance of being able to trust people around you, “whether it is in the family or at work or in any other environment” (Baldur). “I don’t want people around me that I can’t trust. I tend to push them away,” says Tómas. He explains what he means by trustworthy: Someone you can confide in “about something you need to talk about,” someone who is “there for you even though” he “may not necessarily agree” with you. “If you could not trust anyone ... it would be impossible to live,” says Reynir, and Baldur says, Without trust “things just don’t work.”
Findings: What do Fathers have to say about Parenting?

Parents trusting their children

Some of the fathers place emphasis on trusting their children “and at the same time they should show that they are trustworthy” (Dagur): “It’s very important to be able to rely on what the children tell you,” that they are not “telling you one thing” and then “someone else comes and tells you that it is not like that” but just “quite, quite different” (Hannes). Níels says that “honesty and trust” are “inseparable.”

Children trusting their parents

Some fathers place emphasis on children being able to trust their parents. Árni sees it as important that his daughter can trust him, and gives this example: “If she tells you something in confidence, you don’t go blabbing about it.” Hannes says it is important that children can confide in their parents about things that are happening in their life, and can “talk about it” without “everything [going] absolutely crazy,” because then there is a risk that the children will start to do things “behind their parents’ backs.”

In short, the fathers emphasize trust: to be a reliable member of society. They also emphasize trust between parents and children: both that parents can trust their children and that children can trust their parents.

3.1.6 The value of family

The fathers also put emphasis on their family, and value it greatly. From the theme value of family three subthemes emerged: belonging, life-fulfilment, and social customs.

Belonging

Some fathers say that they like to feel they belong to a family: it is good to “have a home” and feel that “you are not alone” (Níels). Lárus says that family provides “security, a sort of safe feeling.” He went through a divorce, and says it was “very difficult because those ideas about the nuclear family collapsed like a house of cards.”

Some of the fathers also highlight the importance of all family members feeling that they belong, and being happy in the family. For example, one of Lárus’ goals is “that the family should embody good feelings,” and that the children “be happy in [and] with the family.” A young father, Vigfús, thinks it is important to put emphasis on “support ... solidarity, being united ... that there isn’t ... one person living” in one room and “another person in a different room,” that they function as “one family.” His emphasis on this matter probably relates to the fact that his 16-year-old son “spends a lot of
time in [his] room, ... pretty much all the time.” In his room he generally has headphones on, so he hears little of what goes on elsewhere in the house.

**Life fulfilment**

Parenting means a lot to the fathers, and several of them mention that it is fulfilling. “I feel like a very rich man to have these children,” says Lárus. “There is a certain sense of life fulfilment in having become a parent and watching the children “grow up,” says Ýmir, who adds that “It contributes to your happiness to see it happen. ... It gives one the feeling that one is complete.” Similarly, other fathers remarked that life would be “empty” (Ýmir & Flóki) without the children, and that they “give so much back” (Baldur). The parenting role “gives life ... value” (Pálmi). “I just think that this is what life is all about” (Lárus).

The parenting role is “more important” than work and career, says Ýmir, who is highly educated and has a good job. Others think the same way. Óssur says, I think it is “wonderful” to be a parent and it is “somehow the main thing to have these children and bring them up.” And Vigfús says, “Because when all is said and done family is all you have.”

Some of the fathers also talk about parenting giving them a “role” and “purpose” in life (Óssur), and they also feel that it is good for them to have someone else to take care of, other than themselves: “If you weren’t a parent, you wouldn’t really have anything to think about but yourself” (Hannes). As a parent you “are maybe spending your time on something other than yourself” (Flóki). There “is always something happening [as a parent], you have something to think about” (Flóki). One father (Markús) says that the parenting role can help “pass the time,” especially if “the kids share your interests.”

**Social customs**

Many of the fathers talk about becoming a father as a “natural step”: “I think it would be much stranger if I had sat down and thought: I’m not going to have any children” (Pálmi).

Some of the fathers talk about social pressure, that fatherhood is “something you’re supposed to do.” That is, “You’re supposed to have children” (Pálmi). Tómas, who is homosexual, says that it was “definitely” a dream of his to become a father “and [that dream] really, completely prevented me from expressing who I really am.” That “intense desire to have children” was “actually the reason I intended to hide all my life” that I was “gay.” I wanted to “fit into society.”
Kári points out the social value of family: By being a parent you are able “to make a positive impact on society [by] bringing up responsible, honest and decent people.”

In short, the fathers put emphasis on their family, and value it greatly. They like to feel that they belong to a family and find that it fulfilling. They also talk about fatherhood as a social custom.

The fathers’ values have now been discussed. In the next section I discuss my findings about the fathers’ goals.

3.2 The Fathers’ Goals for their Children

Of course the same goals [do not apply to everybody, as one child is strong] in this field and [another] in another [field]. (Arnaldur, a father of two children who has also taken part in bringing up five stepchildren)

In this section I discuss the category of father’s parenting goals, one of the major categories addressed in this study (cf. Figure 3). In analyzing the data, I bore this question in mind when seeking to identify parenting goals: What do the fathers seek to teach/foster/nurture or bring out in their children? Where a father expressed special pride or happiness with a particular quality in a child, or something he/she had done, I classified it as emphasis on a certain goal. Some of the matters about which the fathers had concerns were also classified as goals.

The well-being of their children is a leitmotif running through the fathers’ parenting goals: They want their children to do well, especially in relation to their happiness and success. The goal of well-being is integral to the five themes of fathers’ goals for their children, which are: 1) to be at peace with oneself and life; 2) to have interpersonal skills; 3) to follow rules and customs; 4) to have a healthy lifestyle; and 5) to be self-reliant. In Table 3 I present the themes, subthemes and sub-subthemes of the goals, and in the following section I discuss these emergent themes.

A table in Appendix 4 shows the themes and subthemes of goals for each of the 23 fathers. It also shows the total number of fathers who emphasize each goal, along with the number of fathers of boys versus fathers of girls who emphasize each goal.

3.2.1 Be at peace with oneself and one’s life

As the fathers discussed their parenting goals, one theme that emerged was being at peace with self and life. This theme includes two subthemes: 1) to be self-confident and at peace with oneself; and 2) to be happy and content with life.
Table 3 The Fathers’ Goals: Main Theme, Themes, Subthemes and Sub-subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main theme</th>
<th>Qualities fathers seek to instil/foster/nurture or bring out in their children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-being</strong></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be at peace with oneself and one’s life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have interpersonal skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Follow rules and customs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Live a healthy lifestyle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop self-reliance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subthemes and sub-subthemes</strong></td>
<td><strong>•Self-confident and at peace with oneself</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•Be yourself</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Stand up for yourself</td>
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<td>•Be able to form opinions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Happy and content with life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•General joie de vivre, getting something out of life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•Be able to cope with adversity</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>•Social skills</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Kindness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Follow family rules and customs</td>
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<td>•On when to come home</td>
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<td>•On family mealtimes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•On keeping the home clean and tidy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Follow society’s rules and customs</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>•Use computer/TV in moderate and sensible way</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Get enough sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•Get regular exercise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Avoid smoking/alcohol/drugs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Self-reliant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Diligent, hard-working</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Education-seeking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Financially independent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Responsible</td>
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</table>

**Self-confident and at peace with oneself**

The fathers emphasize that they hope their children will accept themselves and be confident. Lárus, like other fathers, wants his son to be “happy with himself.” He says, “We all need to be self-confident in order to feel well,” so it is important that the child “gains ... self-confidence.” Reynir explains what he means by saying that he wants his son to be “an individual who is at peace with himself and ... content with what he does.” He continues, “It’s not that I want him to win a Nobel Prize, or anything like that, or be president of Iceland or whatever. Just that he should be satisfied with what he does, and feel good.”

Some of the fathers feel that their children could be more self-confident, and more content. Ýmir says: “This lack of confidence” in my daughter “is a constant presence,” and “it can be restricting to feel that you can never do well enough. You need to have a bit of carelessness, too, so ... it won’t be too hard [to do] the things you are going to do.” Niels’ son’s lack of confidence can be seen in the fact that he does not want to “participate in [sport] competitions ... [or] play at recitals. He is somehow terribly scared of criticism ... some kind of fear,” says Niels, who attributes the lack of confidence to his son not being at peace with himself. He says the boy has had difficulty “being happy, cheerful and at ease with himself.” His desire is that his son should be “happy with himself” and “at peace with himself.” In that way Niels believes that his son can become “immune to the disturbances in his environment” and gain mental peace, so that he can “be at peace inside his body.”

An exploration of the fathers’ parenting foci reveals three factors closely connected with the children being self-confident and accepting themselves.
These sub-subthemes are that their children: 1) be themselves; 2) stand up for themselves; and 3) be able to form their own opinions.

**Be yourself**

The fathers emphasize that the children be themselves: “Of course I just want him to be himself” (Lárus). Pálmi hopes his daughter “is simply herself.”

Some of the fathers talk about the impact that *being yourself* has on their children’s self-confidence. Árni says it is good to have the courage to “be yourself” because “then you are maybe confident and don’t have to pretend to be something other than you are.” He especially likes his daughter’s trait of daring to be “herself” and going into town “just [in] boots” if she feels like it. Eiður has a similar point of view, and says he is proud that his daughter “doesn’t care at all how people may look at her” and “she clowns around if she feels like it.”

Other fathers relate *being yourself* with *being content with oneself*. Tómas, who wants his daughter to be content with herself, finds it hard to say how she will become content. But asked how he himself is content, he replies: “I’m naturally most content if I get [to] be myself.” Tómas feels it is important that everyone not be expected to be the same: “I really like people to hold on to their character [because] that is a part of yourself. If someone is eccentric, or has some striking traits, I think it is very important not to destroy that.” Níels takes a similar view. He says it is important to “compare yourself with yourself, not others.” He says he “constantly” needs to be “correcting ... [his children’s] misapprehensions,” for instance “bad ideas” about their body image from music videos and commercials:

> If you never see how normal people look ... and the only view you have is blonde bombshells ... or someone who spends seven hours a day in the gym and is then photoshopped [then] ... you don’t have premises for any normal ideas about yourself.

**To stand up for oneself**

The fathers emphasize their desire that their children stand up for themselves, thus displaying self-confidence. Some see this is a one-sided phenomenon, while others see it as reciprocal. Lárus and Dagur are examples of the former: Lárus says he worried when his son was younger about his “lack of resolve in personal interaction – he was under-confident and timid.” But he says that this has improved, and that his son now “makes sure to stand up for himself.” Dagur says that in bringing up his son he has emphasized that he not let anyone “ride roughshod over him,” and says he should answer back “if he is
provoked.” He says it is important for a person’s “independence” and “self-image” to know “where the boundaries lie, what you will put up with in life.” He says: “My life experience, from my earliest childhood, is that you don’t let anyone ride over you roughshod.”

Others emphasize reciprocity: Ýmir says he want his daughter to “be able to fight back against anyone who encroaches on her territory.” He says it is “important not to let people trample on you,” adding, “but at the same time, I absolutely don’t think you should trample over others.” Reynir is of the same view. He says that children need to be “determined and have self-esteem and all that,” but he points out the flaws in “teaching children to grab what they want, no matter how they do it, whether [or not] they trample on somebody else.” He says that “there must be some kind of middle path, so life doesn’t become one continuous battle, and you need to carry your shotgun wherever” you go.

Dagur also feels that children should be self-confident in their relationships with their parents, and stand up for themselves against them. He stresses that he is not bringing up his children to “be obedient” to him “forever. I am bringing them up to be independent,” he says. You have “to try to break free and object,” which is a “part of growing up,” says Dagur. He continues, “When they have started to say no, including saying it to the people who brought them up, then they have become independent” and then his goal has been achieved.

**Be able to form their own opinions**

As a part of being a self-confident person, some of the fathers emphasize that their children should be able to form their own opinions and make independent decisions. Ýmir hopes that his daughter “can make her own decisions, yes, is able to plan her life the way she wants it.” Dagur says that people should take responsibility for their own lives and make decisions about the direction they want to take in life, “not just drifting” and always following the “stream.” Some, like Dagur and Níels, emphasize that the children learn to “consider and evaluate things” and think “logically” before they make a decision. It is “better to familiarize oneself with the subject and not just make some assumption,” says Flóki, who mentions bullying as an example: “people shouldn’t judge” others without “getting to know the person for themselves.”

**Happy and content with life**

The fathers emphasize that their children should be happy and content with life. Lárus hopes his son becomes a “happy individual”; a person who is “content” and Reynir hopes his is “satisfied with his life and existence.” He should be happy with “his situation, family [and] education and be able to look back and be contented with his life” (Unnar). Ýmir says, “I don’t really
have other plans” for my daughter’s future than “for her to be a happy human being and live a life she is pleased with.”

The fathers define happiness in different ways, but the main theme is satisfaction. Happiness consists in “feeling good where you are and with who you are” (Lárus); a happy individual is one “who is happy with his/her existence and what he/she in his immediate environment,” an individual “who has vitality and drive, and the will to get things done” (Eiður).

According to the fathers the key to happiness is to be content, both with oneself and with life. But they also say that what bestows happiness is joie de vivre in general, and getting something out of life. Some point out how important it is that children are able to face up to difficulties and traumas, and that a certain amount of adversity contributes to the healthy maturation of the individual. Hence these two sub-subthemes will be discussed here: 1) general joie de vivre, getting something out of life; and 2) being able to cope with adversity.

**General joie de vivre and getting something out of life**

The fathers’ goal is that their children be happy and get something out of life. A few of them emphasize that “you celebrate the coming of each day” (Ýmir), and live “in the present” and “don’t have to worry about tomorrow” (Pálmi). Others look more toward their children’s future when they talk about joy and getting something out of life.

The former emphasize joie de vivre from early childhood: Illugi says that a characteristic of good upbringing is that the child “enjoys life” and can “do what” he/she “wants.” He takes “football and sports” as an example: he says that his sons “enjoy sports sessions ... so they must feel good when they are training”; Vigfús believes that soccer brings his son joy and therefore hopes that he “does well in soccer” because “he enjoys it so much.” Tómas says he wants to “kind of follow it up, if there is something they [the children] think is especially fun or if they are good at something in particular” or “if they have an interest, such as sports or music or whatever.” Flóki likes it when he feels the “joy” in his son’s character because then he senses that “he is content and feels good.”

The other group of fathers look more toward their children’s future when they emphasize joy and getting something out of life: Dagur says he wants his son “to have an enjoyable and rewarding life.” He hopes that his son “gets something out of life,” “that he gets something meaningful out of this earthly life, [something] he is content with.” He hopes that, when all is said and done, his son will feel he has “done enjoyable things.” Several fathers see it as important that their children “find their own path in life” and do “what he wants” (Níels) to do and become. Árni says he hopes his daughter “will be able to do what she wants. Her dream is
to be” a baker, “and she has said so since she was a little girl. Of course it would be nice if she could fulfil that dream,” he says. “You feel better if you can do what you have an interest in,” because, he asks, “don’t you feel better in life if you are satisfied,” rather than being “embittered and always envying the next person?” He continues, “If you want to be a doctor and just end up filleting fish, then maybe you’ll never be content,” and he adds, “Anyway, in my own case. I always wanted to be something with sports and I feel that I am very ... content in my work,” which is in that field.

Able to cope with adversity
While the fathers emphasize joy and getting something out of life, some also mention the importance of their children knowing how to deal with difficulties, and being aware that life is not always a bed of roses. Hannes says, “People shouldn’t bring their child up so that they are being protected from something bad. I think they have to know about that too.” They need to “know what the dangers are” for example regarding “drugs and so on.” Tómas says: “My main goal [is] to try to deliver ... individuals into society” who are “ready to face up to life as it is, including everything that happens in life.” He hopes they will be able to face “happiness and sorrow” and “face up to the adversity as well, which will certainly come ... life isn’t always a barrel of fun.” Dagur says there is some truth in the saying that “if you never face any problems in life then you don’t mature either.” Reynir says that a good upbringing includes the children “having challenges to deal with.” He quotes his mother:

And my mom always told me that ups and downs are best for children. So it’s not really a good idea to wrap our children in cotton wool. Maybe they need to have a taste of the difficulties – not that you intentionally produce them; they always come along anyway.

In short, the fathers emphasize that their children be at peace with themselves and with life. They want them to be self-confident and happy.

3.2.2 Have interpersonal skills
The them of Interpersonal skills comes up when the fathers discuss their parenting goals. Subthemes are social skills and kindness.

Social skills
The fathers emphasize the importance of their children having good social skills. Dagur says that “peer relationships are extremely” important especially “at this age,” and says he is well aware of how important it is for his son “to get to be with his pals.” Pálmi says that it is “healthy for every person to have good friends.”
Some of the fathers’ emphasis on social skills can be seen in their worries: Þröstur speaks of his concern that his son has few friends: “No one phones him, no one talks to him. Nobody comes round to see him.” Ýmir says he “worries that” his daughter isn’t sufficiently “socially skilled and, sort of, competent”: “She has some difficulties in bonding properly, I feel. She has sort of relatively few friends, and they tend not to last.” Niels, on the other hand, says he is proud of his son because he is so “socially perceptive,” and is “tremendously sensitive to how everybody around him is feeling.”

Ýmir speaks of his emphasis on interpersonal relations: he emphasizes “keeping an eye on whether someone is being put down or whatever, within the group, or anything like that. So you’re not taking part in some game of making people unhappy.” You should “not cause other people pain and preferably” be “of some use. ... You should at least try to show people sort of appropriate respect and warmth” and “try not to do damage.” He says he tries to “instil” into his “children not to be impolite unnecessarily.”

The fathers mention the importance of politeness and good manners. Most of those who mention politeness touch on it only briefly, but a few clearly stress politeness. Jónas says that politeness is “in fact to treat others the way you want everyone to treat you.” Unnar says it is “the lubricant in human interaction, [which] costs nothing and repays itself in the end.” He puts emphasis on teaching his children “manners” because he believes “it will be useful to them in the future.” They have to “be able to be around other people without clashing too much ... I just think people are looked down upon, if they don’t know how to behave.” Reynir says: “It’s best to be polite ... because that way people feel comfortable around you ... sort of so that society can function.” He adds that people should “behave well ... treat other people well” and try not to “trample on” others. Markús says, “You want others to treat you in a polite way and then you do the same to others. ... You feel better if people are nice, are polite.”

For other fathers, the emphasis on politeness is seen mostly inside the walls of the home. Ýmir says that his daughter is “rather too abrasive” for “his taste, sometimes when she loses her temper.” Then she says “all kinds of rude things ... and is abusive to her mother at times. ... It’s the rudeness to her mother that gets on my nerves,” he says. Then he adds, “But that’s how it is, every age has its own charm.” He says that he and his wife “[have] sometimes been trying to establish a rule that everyone in the family is polite to one another.” Pröstur also worries that his son is not polite and considerate enough to his mother: “It should be enough” for his mother to ask him once to do something, and then he should “just do it straight away.” He wants his son to respect his mother and show it in action.
Kindness

The fathers place an emphasis on kindness, on being benevolent and amiable. Eiður says that the main goal of parenting is “to make a good human being,” which he describes as one who has “formed her own view of life that can harmonise with society,” meanwhile being “able to achieve fulfilment.” Such a person is constantly working “on herself, striving to be better today than yesterday.”

Other fathers agree that the main goal of parenting is to “make a good person”: an individual who is “honest” and “consistent” (Baldur), an individual of great “integrity” who is “honest” and treats “everybody well” (Vigfús). Hannes says it is the parents’ “responsibility that this individual [the child] becomes a good person when he grows up” and that is something that parents must “think about always.”

The fathers mention some examples of possible ways to show kindness: I want my daughter to be “good,” i.e. be able to “give something good of herself” and able, for example, to “help and assist if someone needs help,” says Árni. Ýmir wants his daughter to be able to show “people warmth” and be “sensitive around people.” Vigfús says: “I just think it’s very important that he [his son] be good to others.” One can, for example, show goodness, he says, “by taking the initiative of talking to people you don’t know, taking an interest, doing something unselfish for others [and] being there for others.”

Some of the fathers say they put an emphasis on “kindness” because “it is rewarding both for the giver and the receiver” (Ýmir). Lárus thinks kindness is a quality that helps the child “in daily life and [in] associating with others.” Baldur says, “I think you will be much happier if you show that kind of personal charm rather than ... being presumptuous and domineering and aggressive,” and he adds, “Then maybe you can bring more people up to your level ... add to positiveness.” He also says it is a “good provision for life’s journey” that he hopes his children “pass ... on to their own children.”

In short, the fathers emphasize the importance of interpersonal skills. They want their child to have good social skills and place emphasis on kindness.

3.2.3 Follow rules and customs

To follow rules and customs is another theme in these fathers’ parenting goals. The subthemes are to follow: 1) the family’s rules and customs, and 2) society’s rules and customs.
Findings: What do Fathers have to say about Parenting?

Follow the family’s rules and customs
The fathers emphasize that the children follow the family’s rules and customs. Yet some fathers say they do not have any special house rules: “No, not really” (Kári); and “No, I don’t think so ... no, no” (Össur). But most of the fathers realized, when I asked them more about it, that they do have various rules and customs in the house that they want the children to follow. Other fathers are more aware of the rules, and answer: “Yes, yes, there are all kind of rules” (Pálmi); and “There are a lot of rules, of course” (Baldur).

Three sub-subthemes were revealed when I examined the families’ rules and customs. They apply to 1) when to come home; 2) family mealtimes; and 3) keeping the home clean and tidy. I discuss these sub-subthemes here. Below, in the section on Healthy lifestyle (which is one of the fathers’ themes), I discuss more of the fathers’ rules, including those about sleep, computer usage, television watching, etc.

Rules about when to come home
Rules on curfew will be discussed here, although the subject overlaps with the discussion of rules of society, below. Several fathers say they follow the official rules for children’s curfews laid down in the Child Protection Act 80/2002, Article 92. Tómas calls them the rules that “are laid down and published.” They speak about them as follows. “We have tried to comply with them, as we are supposed to” (Arnaldur). “This winter he was supposed to be home by 10 p.m. and now it’s 11.30” in the summer (Lárus). When there “is school, well, we try to make it a rule just to follow the official curfew rules” (Reynir). “We have followed the curfew pretty strictly up until this age, when he’ll be free” (Ýmir). Flóki, on the other hand, has a more relaxed approach to the rules, saying: “Yes, yes, we pretty much stuck to these rules – maybe not absolutely to the letter.”

Some fathers emphasize ensuring that their children tell them what they are doing. He is “supposed to let us know” if he “is out late” (Baldur). “We [the couple] expect our children to tell us where they are going and we expect them to come home at an agreed time” (Pálmi). “We want to know what people are doing and if they are not coming, or coming home late. ...We want to know where people are, that they’re safe” (Ýmir).

Rules on family mealtimes
Several fathers have rules about family mealtimes, such as Ýmir: “We eat together or let [each other] know if someone is not going to be in for dinner.” Arnaldur explains further: “We [the family] try to eat together in the evening, and dinner is at a certain time, and if you can’t make it you just have to let
“[us] know in advance.” When I ask why they have this house rule he answers, so that “we sit down all together, at least once a day,” and he adds, “I just think it’s very important, because people are all over the place, and if it weren’t for this there wouldn’t be any communication” except “on the phone [or] Facebook, [and] parents don’t want that.”

**Rules on keeping the home clean and tidy**

There are various rules about keeping the home clean and tidy, according to the fathers. The rules can be divided into two groups: those that apply to daily tidying, and those on assisting with household chores. Examples of the former are Vigfús’ rules: he wants his son to clean up after himself: He is, for example, “not allowed to come in wearing his [outdoor] shoes,” which is generally frowned upon in Iceland. Further, he is supposed to clean “up after himself” clear away “crumbs and all that,” put “away dishes and glasses” and load “the [dish]washer.” Tómas says his daughter is just supposed to “put away her dishes, make her bed, have her clothes in the right places, and so on.”

Ýmir gives an example of rules regarding the children’s participation in chores: There are “certain duties” in the house; the sisters “are supposed to take care of their own [room], vacuum or clean their rooms and dust [the furniture and] take turns doing the bathroom upstairs and downstairs once a week.” Baldur says his rules are that “each child has his/her own day in the kitchen and so on, and cleaning.” At Unnar’s house the children are supposed to put dirty laundry in “the laundry basket, ... take laundry down from the clothesline and fold it and put it away.”

The fathers give three kinds of reasons for these rules. The first concerns tidiness and cleanliness in the home: So that “the house will look like a home” (Tómas); “You want things to be clean around your house” (Arnaldur). The second reason is collective responsibility: “Naturally everybody needs to participate in keeping things nice if we are to be able to live together” (Unnar); “Try to divide the responsibility among everybody” (Unnar). The third reason is educational value: It is “good for them to learn this” (Baldur).

**Follow society’s rules and customs**

Several fathers put emphasis on teaching their children the difference between right and wrong, so that they know “what is right and what is wrong” (Dagur), so that they can “follow all of the laws and rules” of society (Niels). They need to know “how you are supposed to live when you grow up,” says Þröstur.

The fathers see it as their task to prepare the children so that they will follow the rules of society. Lárus says that “it might not be particularly
promising” if the parents didn’t put emphasis on “guidance” in parenting and “the individual didn’t grasp what is wrong and what is right.” Ýmir points out the importance of parents preparing their children, so that it doesn’t come as “a huge surprise when they’re out on their own, that you can’t behave like a spoiled brat.” He believes that it is the parents’ role to deliver “a person who can follow society’s rules.” This is important, so that they are “more capable in interaction with other people,” Niels has a similar view, saying that it is important to show respect “for the collective decisions” of the society “so [that] we can live together and feel good about it.”

In short, the fathers emphasize having the children follow rules and customs. They want them to follow the family’s rules and customs about curfews and family mealtimes, and about keeping the home clean and tidy. The fathers also want their children to follow the rules and customs of society.

3.2.4 Live a healthy lifestyle

Healthy lifestyle is a theme that emerges from the fathers’ discussion of their parenting goals. “Naturally the most important thing” is that the children “are healthy, … that they aren’t getting into any trouble” (Markús). This theme has four subthemes: 1) use computer and television in moderation and sensibly; 2) get enough sleep; 3) get regular exercise; and 4) avoid smoking/alcohol/drugs. I discuss each of these in turn below.

Use computer and television in moderation and sensibly

The fathers want their children to use their computer and television in moderation and sensibly, but it is clear that in some homes conflict arises over children’s computer usage, both with boys and girls. Lárus’s son “thinks he doesn’t spend enough time on the computer, and I think he spends too much time on” it. “Sometimes there are conflicts because of this” and they can “get quite loud at times” (Ýmir). Some of the fathers say they have had to set rules to limit use of computers and other screens.

The fathers worry about their children’s use of computers and television. On the one hand they are concerned about the children spending long periods in front of the computer screen. The fathers’ perception of “a lot” of computer time varies. Unnar says that his son spends “surely about two, three hours a day” on the computer, while other fathers say their sons spend far longer there. Lárus says his son can “just get wrapped up in a computer game for a whole day, or more.” “Sometimes he doesn’t want to eat – he just sits at the computer” says Pröstur, adding, “It’s too much, it’s not good for him.” Other fathers agree. “I think,” says Lárus, that “it’s not good for him. ... He gets
moody if he spends too long on the computer. If someone speaks to him or anything, he’s just irritated by the interruption.” He adds, “I am just scared about so much use of computer games.”

On the other hand the fathers worry about what the children are doing on the computer and/or about the range of material they have access to on the web, although Baldur points out that “children use the computer a lot in school” and for “homework.” “There is just so much on the worldwide web” that we want to limit their access to, says Tómas, adding, “It can almost be like a weapon, there is so much that goes on there.” Vigfús mentions children’s access to “porn” on the Internet. Ýmir says he has “worries” about “this kind of social networks that form in connection to Facebook and such, where you know only a small fraction of the kids, and you don’t know what is going on.” Eiður mentions “talking behind people’s backs and so on” on “Facebook.” Kári says:

[I don’t think it is right that] 15, 16 year old girls [are] taking pictures of themselves in their warpaint and putting them on Facebook. ... I feel these girls are almost putting themselves up for sale in those pictures – dressed like that, and so on. ... I think a lot of it is inappropriate. Then some guys reply, saying they’re Júlli Jóns and they’re only 18 ... and then it turns out to be a 30-year-old pervert.”

Get enough sleep
Children’s sleeping patterns are a matter of concern to some fathers, and many attribute this to the children’s computer use. Þröstur says, “Sometimes he [his son] can’t sleep. ... I think he is maybe too hyperactive because of Cartoon Network, PlayStation or the computer.” Ýmir says he and his wife have often had cause to discuss with their daughters that they “don’t want them to be on the computer at night.” Lárus also says that being up and about at night has been a problem in the home, due to computer use. At one time, he says, his son had “great difficulty in getting to sleep” at night and tended to want “to stay up at night, and sleep late during the day.” A “friend” of the son with whom he has been playing “computer games” had been calling him on the phone “at 2:30 am” which is “quite something for a 13-year-old, with everybody” in the household “having to get up for work and school.” Dagur says he doesn’t want his son “staying up all night ... hanging over the television or on the computer all night.” He “would prefer him to wake up in the morning.”

Get regular exercise
The fathers believe that physical exercise is healthy and a good way to a better life, so they emphasize the importance of physical exercise: “We naturally
need to exercise” (Niels); I have “great faith in” sports (Tomas). Ymir says he “tries to drag” his daughter along with him “mountain walking ... or on longer hikes.” He continues, “There is something about” nature “that gives me some kind of peace and joy” that he would like his daughter “to experience.” And he has “absolute faith in how healthy it is.” Tomas says he does not care what sport his son does, as long as he pursues one. Similarly, Tomas emphasizes that his daughter pursues the sport that “she has an interest in.”

Two fathers (Niels and Pröstur) connect physical robustness to manliness, and thus emphasize physical exercise for their sons. Pröstur says: “He’s a boy, he has to be strong” and have “vigour” and be “quick.”

Avoid smoking/alcohol/drugs

The fathers mention their worries about, and/or their desire to keep their children from smoking, drinking or using other mind-altering substances. Dagur, for example, says that he is “totally against smoking” and regards “drugs and smoking” as equally bad. Ymir, father of a 16-year-old girl, says: “We have of course not permitted drinking by youngsters of 14 or 15 ... we’ve dealt with it” if we “have suspected anything of the sort.” Vígfríður shares his personal experience: “I myself got out of control ... started drinking at 12 years old and all that, and I don’t want my children ... to go the same way [as I did], but [will] try to break ... this vicious circle ... My parents always drank a lot ... [I want to] stop this cycle.” Unnar expresses his worries that his son will get into “teenage drinking or whatever.” He says he is at “a difficult age” and the effect of “peer” pressure is “much more than [the effect of] being a role model as a parent.” Hannes says that it is the parent’s responsibility to ensure that children “do not go off the rails, or anything like that.” He says that parents need “to put a huge emphasis on that, all the time.”

In short, the fathers emphasize a healthy lifestyle. They want the child to use the computer and television in moderation and sensibly; to get enough sleep and exercise; and avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

3.2.5 Develop self-reliance

When the fathers discuss their parenting goals another theme that arises is self-reliance. That entails the child being able to take full responsibility for him/herself in the future, and being an independent individual. “Most animals in the animal kingdom bring up their progeny to a certain degree and then kick them out of the nest,” says Dagur. He adds that the parent’s biggest role is to “bring them up” which includes making the children “independent” enough to be able to look after themselves in all situations.
This theme includes five subthemes: 1) self-reliance; 2) diligence and hard work; 3) the pursuit of education; 4) financial independence; and 5) responsibility.

**Be self-reliant**

The fathers put emphasis on their children being able to look after themselves when they leave home: Dagur says that the main goal of parenting is “to graduate a independent individual that can take care of him/herself.” When Pálmi is asked what he means by the child being able to look after him/herself as an adult individual, he answers: “That you are ... self-supporting and ... [can] do more or less what you want, and don’t need to rely much on others.” Hannes, asked why he emphasizes that the child be able to manage on his/her own, says, “Well, I wouldn’t want to rely on other people for everything, ask others about anything I wanted to do. You wouldn’t be a free person that way.”

Some fathers list practical skills like cooking as part of children’s being able to take care of themselves. Vigfús hopes that when his son leaves home he can take care of himself, that he “maybe he’ll eat something other than cornflakes, if he is home alone. ... [That he] can maybe cook himself some noodles.” Pálmi hopes that later on his daughter “will know how to make herself ... porridge.”

Kári thinks that young people today are not independent enough, and talks about how that may impact the child’s ability to take care of him/herself in the future. He says, “I think [my children] aren’t independent enough,” and says that it is the same with the young “men who are working” for him. He says he has to “ask them [to] sweep the floor ... ask them [to] clean the machines,” and literally “ask them to do everything.” He thinks young people are too used to being led “sort of step by step,” and says, “There is always dad and mom, or the preschool teachers, or the teacher or someone [who] always tells everybody what to do. ... Then there are computers ... so these kids have been programmed this way” and they have stopped “doing things on their own initiative.”

**Be diligent and hard-working**

The fathers see it as an important quality to be diligent and hard-working, and they want their children to adopt such values. Ýmir says that diligence is “the key to achieving something ... to do things and finish them, or start something or achieve something. It’s admirable when you see that in people: diligence and enterprise.”

Some fathers talk about diligence and hard work as a key to success, whether at work or in school. Pröstur thinks it is most important to be “hard-
working, ... strong” and have the “stamina” to make it in life. If you have this, he says, “then you can do everything you want.” He says he is not qualified in the profession he works in, but, because he is “enormously hard-working” and diligent he is “like a boss at work.” He says of his son, “I want him to be like me.” Ýmir says that diligence “makes up for so much,” given the example of his daughter’s “insecurity” in her studies. He says she is “organized and hard-working,” and “before exams she” gets herself organized “with written to-do lists” that “help her, so she always sails through.”

Árni places an emphasis on being “organized” and “punctual.” He says it is good to be organized, for example “if your job is also a career,” because then “maybe you need to plan the day. There are many projects that need to be resolved.” One also needs to know how to “organize yourself” so that you can always arrive at the right time because “people that always arrive late will never be popular.”

Other fathers talk about the importance of making a habit of being industrious early in life, and tend to cite their own experience. Kári “pretty much insisted” that his daughter get a job as soon as she was old enough. She “got a job” at a supermarket “the day she turned 15 years old. ... It just does these kids good to have something to do, rather than hanging around somewhere and making trouble. ... It just does them good to have a reasonable amount to do, whether it’s sports or something else,” he says. Similarly, Arnaldur says: “Of course it’s just good for everybody to work.” And Dagur says: “I can’t have [my son] hanging around somewhere and doing nothing.” When the interview took place the son had not yet found a summer job: “If he doesn’t get a decent job this summer I’ll hire him to do some work” and get him to “sort out the garden” and do some fencing work in the country, he says. He says that he himself has “worked since” he “was eight years old,” when he went to “a farm” and at 16 he went to sea. Hannes had a similar experience: at 14 he left “home” to “work, ... was there in a fisherman’s hostel all winter [and] took care” of himself. He says, “The trouble with these poor children living in urban areas is that of course they don’t learn to work properly, unfortunately. ... Everybody needs ... to learn to work. ... Of course it’s hugely important to have some skills when people are starting out in life, so they can manage by themselves.”

**Pursue an education**

The fathers’ emphasis on their children pursuing an education is clear, and they have great faith in education. Among other things, they say that education is “the foundation in life” (Únnar) and “the key to a good future” (Árni), and that studies are “an investment in the future” (Dagur).
To get an education is a clear theme when the fathers discuss their parenting goals, while their reasons for this vary. Some fathers talk about education as an important preparation for life: “You study, in order to prepare yourself for life,” says Dagur. Unnar agrees, saying that the main goal of parenting is “to prepare them for life.” He says he does so by “educating them and teaching them, so that they can take care of themselves and get work.” Arnaldur says, “I think that an individual who studies” will be “better prepared to go into life.” He thinks that “a person who has dropped out of compulsory schooling or doesn’t go on to [secondary] school will have a more difficult start in life.” There are “so many temptations ... in life,” for example “alcohol,” he says. “I think,” he adds, “that individuals who don’t stay in education more often become victims to temptations of some sort.” So he says it is best for children to go to secondary school, because it means they can make a later “start in life” and “on the labour market.”

The fathers’ most common argument for the importance of education is that education enhances employment security and job opportunities, and improves the prospects of a good salary. Their faith in this aspect of education is very clear: I want my son to get an education because of “work and salary [and] future security” (Vigfús); “I believe and know that [education] is the foundation for secure employment, and to be more successful in supporting yourself and your family” (Lárus); “It’s education that gives you more possibilities in life regarding employment [and] higher salary” (Flóki); education “gives you more opportunities in the labour market ... and just opens so many windows” and you get “a better job and better wages” (Jónas).

Some fathers discuss other factors when listing the reasons for getting an education, and believe it is a key to ongoing education, happiness, maturity, and broadmindedness. Árni says that studying well in compulsory school is “a key factor” in making it through “secondary school and learning something.” He says it is “really essential to finish at least secondary school,” because with a “secondary school diploma all doors are open” for you, and “you can then go to university.” Ýmir makes a connection between education and happiness: He says he hopes that his daughter becomes “a happy person” and so he has “urged” her “to get an education.” He says that education gives “more opportunities,” so education increases her chances of happiness. Óskar and Óssur talk about education being a source of maturity and broadmindedness: Óskar says that university is “a good school to learn methods.” The study provides “discipline” and “practice in seeking out knowledge [and] applying knowledge.” There you “exercise [your] mind” and “broaden your horizons.” Óssur says that it is “good for everybody to study something,” that study “always helps. The longer you study the more” the study “matures and molds.
you.” And “the broader your mind, the better read you are, the better prepared you are to get on with your life.”

**Be financially independent**

The fathers emphasize having their children become financially independent, so they can stand on their own two feet. Kári says that his main parenting goal is:

> To make sure that these kids of mine can take care of themselves when they are grown up. That I won’t have them on my back till the day I die. ... [That] I won’t have to be paying everything for them all my life. ... I simply want to bring them up so that they can just [earn their own living].

Speaking in stronger terms than the other fathers, he says he is sick and tired of “paying the bills” and asks: “Aren’t you at some point supposed to get your own life?” He wants his life to “be about something else than just” going “to work,” getting “paid” and “paying this, and that” and then waiting “for the next payday.” He looks forward to the time when his children will be financially independent and he no longer has to support them.

Some fathers mention their hopes about their children’s future earnings, and often link it to independence: Vigfús hopes that his son will not have to be in “some low-income job”; Illugi hopes that his sons have a good enough “livelihood ... so that they get their own homes ... and then have their own children and give them the things in their life that they think they need”; Dagur hopes that his son will have “the income that” he wants “to have and [can] do what” he “wants.” He feels that economic independence is important so that “[you] can be your own master, be independent [and] not dependent on others.” Dagur attributes his opinions to his family’s tradition of supporting oneself at a young age: “Everybody in my family has always had to make their own way very young.” Össur says, “It’s no secret that financial independence is, of course, a big part of success in life.”

One father (Guðni) touches on “the gender wage differential,” and says that women in general “don’t get paid anything in this society.” So he says he “would support” his daughter in becoming “a business person” and founding “her own business” if she has “an interest in that.” He feels that is the only way for her as a woman “to earn as much as if she were a man.”

**Be responsible**

Some of the fathers emphasize that their children learn to take responsibility, and be trustworthy: I want my son to “be responsible” and “not try to avoid
responsibility” because “I think people are meant to be like that, so you can trust him and that he will be self-reliant,” says Unnar. Dagur thinks it is very important that the child learns to handle the responsibility entailed by the gradually-increasing freedom the parents grant. He understands that the children’s responsibility needs to be in keeping with their age and development, so it increases slowly as the child gets older and more mature. His ultimate goal is that the child takes full responsibility for his/her life, and leaves home.

Þröstur, who is of Asian origin but has lived in Iceland for about twenty years, also places great emphasis on responsibility. He wants his son to be able to “think for the future.” He emphasizes that his son should get a good job in the future, not only because of his responsibility to support himself, but also because of his responsibility to support others, such as his parents. I will not always “be young and strong and well,” he says. “I always think, when my children grow up, they will be able to take over.” He says he was brought up with this way of thinking, and used to hear his mother say: “When the kids have grown up, then maybe you can help me when I am old.” He himself moved to Iceland as a young man in order to find work and send money back home to his parents, “To help my dad.” Yet he says he was not very responsible himself when he moved to Iceland: I was “always partying ... drunk every weekend, ... because I just wasn’t thinking: ... Yes, just partying and just having fun, I never thought about the future [back then].”

In short, the fathers emphasize self-reliance. They want the child to be self-reliant, diligent and hard-working, to pursue an education, and to become financially independent, and responsible.

Here I have discussed the fathers’ main parenting goals. In the next section I address their principal practices for achieving those goals.

3.3 The Fathers’ Parenting Practices

[It is important, to] adopt [the parenting practices that] you think are right [and have] been the most effective. (Baldur)

Of course you have to work on it [parenting] all the time. ... [It’s] not one day or one year that ... [you devote] to that. It is simply all of [your] time that goes into it. (Hannes)

In this section I discuss the themes that emerged when the fathers discussed their parenting practices. Father’s parenting practices is one of the four categories that are examined in this study (cf. Figure 3).
Providing children with security, love and care is the leitmotif or overarching theme in the fathers’ parenting practices. Security, love and care are enmeshed with the six themes of parenting practice, which are: 1) to be there for the child; 2) to be a role model; 3) to give feedback; 4) to inform the child; 5) to give the child freedom; and 6) to maintain discipline, i.e. to establish boundaries and rules. The themes and the subthemes of parenting practice are shown in Table 4. I explore these themes here, and in the following section I discuss the fathers’ relations with their children, together with their emphasis on spending time together, which is undeniably one key way of achieving their goals.

Table 4 Fathers’ Parenting Practices: Main Theme, Themes and Subthemes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main theme</th>
<th>The practices the fathers say they use to attain their parenting goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide security, love, and care</td>
<td>Be there for the child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>•Take an interest, keep up, and be supportive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Listen and have conversations about anything and everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subthemes</td>
<td>•Encourage</td>
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In Appendix 5 the themes and subthemes of parenting practices are shown in a table, listing the emphases of each of the 23 fathers. That table also shows the total number of fathers who emphasize each practice, along with the number of fathers of boys versus fathers of girls who emphasize each practice.

3.3.1 Provide security, love and care

My analysis of what the fathers say about their parenting practice revealed that security, love and care is an overarching theme, which is enmeshed with their other practices. The fathers want to provide their children with security, love and care, and apply different approaches to achieve that. Ýmir says that a good upbringing provides “care and warmth and security ... [it is important] that people know what they’re getting.” He says he tries to achieve his goals by “cherishing the family [and] providing security for them.” He emphasizes that the “home is a safe haven ... that it is comfortable to be there.” Reynir says, like other fathers, that children who receive “love and care” become “more self-confident and feel better.” Some fathers say they display “care and warmth” (Baldur) by “hugging” them (Markús). Others mention “saying nice things to them and praising them and [thus] showing them affection” (Pálmi); showing them “understanding” (Baldur); or “saying prayers with them at
night” (Markús). They feel this is important because “people need to feel that they are loved” (Pálmi) and because “We all need ... touch and affection and care and love” (Tómas).

As mentioned above, the fathers’ emphasis on providing their children with security, love and care is enmeshed with their other parenting practices, an overarching theme. I now discuss the six themes that emerged when the fathers discussed their parenting practice.

### 3.3.2 Be there for the child

All of the fathers place emphasis on being there for their children, and this emerged as a very clear theme when I analyzed their parenting practices. They feel that by being there for their children they are providing them with security, love and care.

*Being there*, in the fathers’ view, means both physical and mental closeness: To “be near my kids, be home in the evenings instead of always being out and about and doing all sort of things” (Reynir). It means not to “push the children away” from you, to be “available. ... If the children seek you out that’s OK, drop whatever you were going to do, if it was something else, and give the child the benefit of taking priority,” says Reynir. Dagur says, “What I can do is to try to be there when I’m needed.”

Some fathers admit that they have not always been there for their children. Níels says: I have “not always been there for them ... I used to drink way too much and was a total mess. [I] wasn’t there for anyone.” Today he says it is “hugely important” to him “to have the opportunity to be there” for his son. He says he tries to be a parent “who is supportive and strengthens him, and is there for him.” Vigfús tries to do likewise. He says he wants to “participate in parenting” and “be there” for his children, as he missed out on that in his own upbringing. He feels that “drunkenness” and parenting make a bad combination. Jónas too feels he has not always been there for his child, as he divorced the mother of his son when the boy was only a few years old. He says he became a father “at a rather young age and ... wasn’t quite grown-up enough. ... I don’t say irresponsibility but less sense of responsibility.” He looks back on his own behaviour and says: “There are various things you would have wanted to do differently. ... I put myself in first place, more than him [his son], I didn’t give him enough priority in so many ways. ... For instance, I might put off a Saturday with him because I had to play in a match.” And he didn’t make good use of “the few days I got with him. ... It was like that for too long.” It is clear that these fathers want to be there for their children today, and that they regret the times when they were not.
Pálmi points out that “time” is fundamental to being “there for” the children, while some fathers say that they would like to spend more time with their child: I “would want to be able to devote more time to them” (Tómas); “We naturally do far too little together, really” (Hannes); It “should be more often” that we discuss things (Markús). They gave several reasons why they do not spend more time with the children. One is place of residence as some of the children do not live with their fathers. Others are the fact that the parents are divorced, the father’s long work hours, and the reality of fathers working away from home. Flóki, a fisherman, says:

[At sea you feel] a bit that you are missing out on your children, especially when they were growing up, when they were younger. ... [It's different now because] you’re always in touch. When I’m at sea I call home every day ... so you don’t feel like you are missing out. ... [The seaman’s life] has [also] changed enormously. ... I spend more time at home now than I used to. ... [Back then] you were at sea more, and had less time off, and sometimes there were longer fishing trips ... things were more unpredictable, but now it’s quite easy.

The fathers feel that they are there for their children if they take an interest, keep up with what they are doing, and are supportive; and also if they find time to listen to them and have conversations with them about anything and everything. I address these two subthemes below.

Take an interest, keep up, and be supportive
For these fathers, being there for their children entails taking an interest in them, keeping up with what they are doing, and being supportive. Children feel good if “they sense that ... you’re in touch with what they’re doing,” which includes “talking to them about what they are doing, and what they have been doing, and how this and that is going.” They also need to feel that the parents are ready to “assist” them, says Árni. Vigfús is of the same view, saying that it is important to “to show an interest in their studies, school [and] how they’re feeling. ... The child ... [needs] to see that you’re interested in him/her ... that you care about him/her and what he/she is doing.” Unnar feels that by spending “time assisting” his son, “showing an interest in him ... [and] what he’s doing at school ... getting to know his pals and trying to be to some extent involved in what he is doing,” he is more likely to achieve his parenting goals than otherwise.

It is clear that the fathers show their children a variety of support; one example is financial support. Dagur says he gives his children financial security: “Of course you help them. We subsidize our children in their
education, as much as we can.” Illugi says, he pays “the fee for his sports programme,” or buys “new training shoes or clothes for school or something.”

It is not uncommon for the fathers to provide support for their children by driving them and picking them up: I “drive her to work ... or [if she] needs to gets some place” (Markús); I “sometimes run them to practices and matches” (Árni).

Some fathers talk about supporting the children’s afterschool activities, for example by “encouraging and standing by” them in their hobbies (Tómas). Ærni feels that children whose parents “back them up,” i.e. “attend games and matches with them” last “longer in sports and do better than the others that are just on their own, with no one watching. ... Kids always make a bigger effort if the parents are watching.” Vigfús agrees, feeling it is important to show interest in the children’s hobbies by “going with them [to] practices [and] soccer games.” Also by “asking [his son]: ... Who are you competing against in football, and how did you do in the match?” He says, however, that he has “not done it nearly enough.” Tómas is also conscious of this, and says he “backed them up ... (you know) as far as I was able.” He thinks afterschool activities have “a preventive value, absolutely ... against drugs and all sorts of things.” Reynir says he supports his son’s musical training by “encouraging him to practice,” and also by sitting “at the piano and playing the accompaniment.”

The fathers support their children’s education in various ways. Several say they do so by taking an interest in their studies, and asking, for example, “How’s it going? What are you studying?” Unnar also says he keeps up with his son’s studies by going to “parents’ meetings” where he gets to know “what the teacher thinks about what he [his son] is doing.” Baldur says he helps his daughter choose her courses “to the extent that she wants.” Some fathers say they help their children with their homework. Unnar, a single father, says he “always [assists] when he [his son] gets stuck,” which is “a bit most evenings.” Baldur says he assists his daughter “if there is something she needs assistance with,” for example “before exams [and with] assignments and essays.” More commonly, however, fathers say they provide little or no help with homework.

Some fathers who emphasize that their children should pursue an education say they would have appreciated more support and encouragement around studying from their own parents. One of them, Óskar, says, “At least in my memory ... [my] parents ... weren’t much involved in my studies and education, and maybe [there was] not much encouragement regarding studying.” Pálmi says: “Now in retrospect ... a bit more supervision” of my studies would have been good. It “might have been all right, now and then, to
point out [to me] that it would be wise to study something at times, and not always just be outside playing.”

**Listen and have conversations about anything and everything**

To these fathers, being there for the child does not just entail taking an interest in them, keeping up with what they are doing, and being supportive, as discussed above, but also listening to them and having conversations with them. Being there, says Arnaldur, means “that you can listen to your child. If he/she needs something, whether it is at eight o’clock in the morning or at seven at night or in the middle of the day, [you] are just ready to listen.” Hannes emphasizes that the child can “always come and talk to you about anything and everything. ... It’s a huge thing for the kids that you” understand them, he says, adding: Then you know “how the child is feeling. ... You have to make sure they feel good, and understand them and talk to them ... [it is] a major thing.” He adds: “I [want] my daughter to be able to come to me and talk to me whenever, about anything at all [because] then I know how she’s feeling. ... Dad and mom must always there for them at this age, at least until they are 18, 20 years old.”

The fathers also emphasize having conversations with their children about life and its meaning. Arnaldur says:

> I often sit down with her [his daughter] and ask her how she’s doing, and how things are with her friends and ask about the friends, what they are doing. ... We try to talk a lot and think and speculate what life will bring, and just all kinds of things ... about what she’s doing, what I’m doing and just what’s going on in society ... [about] what’s in the news, what she’s thinking about doing and wants to be ... [and] what happened when I was young.

The fathers point out the advantage of conversations between the parents and the child, which they feel bring them closer to their children. Arnaldur feels conversations are important because they are the parent’s way to “have a good relationship with their child, [and conversation] establishes trust and friendship between parents and children.” Tómas says that conversations “always bring parent and child closer together ... and create a deeper bond and a better understanding of each other.” Baldur points out that with conversation you get “a better view of each other’s world.” Hannes explains it further and says he “profits a lot” by talking with his daughter: I get to “hear about the attitudes of 15-year-old teenagers today [and] hear all kinds of things from her that you maybe haven’t heard before. There are all sorts of things going on today that weren’t when I was 15 years old.”
Not all of the fathers see conversation in this light: some place more weight on admonition and guidance rather than actual conversation, when they sit down with their children. Pálmí says: “I think the way it is when we sit down to talk matters over, then it is me telling her like what I think might be improved, rather than her coming to me with some particular issues.” Lárus says: “I’m sure they [the discussions] are probably too often about me admonishing him or giving him guidance.” If we get “to chat together without one or other getting annoyed ... there are certainly a lot of advantages” because “then maybe we get a clearer understanding of what we are talking about.” Árni believes the biggest advantage of conversation is “to inform children and give them guidance.”

While some fathers say they talk about feelings with their children, most say they do little of this. Guðni explains: “Maybe I’m scared of going out on that path, I don’t know. I am just not good at that stuff.” Össur also says he does not discuss feelings much with his daughter, but says: “But I tell her, and both of them [his daughters] how much I love them and all that. ... But ... I am ... not using it much. ... It’s just not my style.”

In short, the fathers place emphasis on being there for the child. They want to take an interest in them, keep up with what they are doing, and be supportive. They also want to listen to them and have conversation with them.

### 3.3.3 Be a role model

The theme of being a role model emerges when the fathers discuss the practices they use to achieve their parenting goals. They say they try to be a role model for their children in various ways. The behaviors they try to model for their children include warmth, honesty, respect, trust, thrift, good interaction with others, politeness, diligence and responsibility.

The fathers feel it is important to be a good role model for their children. “You learn to do what you see done,” says Kári. Níels agrees, saying that the parent’s responsibility is great because the children “just learn what” they do: “They are always trying to be like us.” Lárus is more cautious is his assertions, saying that it is “not universal” that “a child learns from what he/she sees done.” Still, Reynir says that being a role model is “practically the answer” to every question about what practices he uses to achieve his parenting goals. He says he “tries through his behaviour, to the extent you have been able to, to be a role model [for his son] and show [him] how you would want him to be.” Baldur gives an example of how he tries to set his daughter a good “example” in interaction with others, “by her seeing me do
the right thing when I am talking to others”; that “she doesn’t see me shouting at the neighbours, or a dog, or anything.”

In spite of the fathers’ emphasis on being a good role model, some mention how hard it can be to be one: The “toughest” thing about the parenting role is to be a “proper role model” (Reynir); it is difficult because “you are not perfect yourself” (Dagur). “You [are] a fallible human being” (Ýmir and Níels), “with all your faults [and] you would rather not pass them on” (Níels). Jónas gives an example: “There are some things you do ... that he [his son] sees ... things you would rather not do, but do anyway,” such as taking “mouth tobacco.” Unnar says there is sometimes a “conflict” between what he says and does; for example, he sends the children “out to play,” but never goes out himself. Reynir says: “I maybe have some expectations of how my children will be and are and behave, and that kind of thing, but maybe I’m not too good at behaving that way myself.” For example he thinks “it is hard to inculcate “hard work and diligence” into his son because he is not a “good role model” himself: “I don’t think I’m all that hard-working or diligent myself.” Níels says that as his son is now “16, and old enough to understand,” and he can “now say to him”: “I hope you will be better than your father in every field. If you see that I have some wrong opinions, or that I am dishonest in something, or anything, then you naturally shouldn’t be that way.” He refers to children’s development, adding. “But you can’t say that to the kids before they understand it. Until then you just have to try to do your best.”

Baldur talks more about being a role model, and says: “Of course it’s challenging to [be a parent], you always have to be on your toes and be careful in relation to them. ... [It is] challenging to always set a good example. [You have to be careful] what you say and do.” He says, “there are four recording devices on around you,” referring to his four children, and “they play back what you said or did.” He adds, “Naturally you need to sort yourself out. ... If you have any bad habits, swearing or something like that, [you have] to give it up and watch your language, be careful what you say and how you behave in everyday life.” Baldur says his parents were not good models in this respect: I saw “my parents do things that I would never let my children see me do.” For example, “I often saw my parents drink a lot. ... [That] was most difficult for me when I was a teenager. I thought my parents were drunks, even though they maybe weren’t worse than a lot of others. But because I [saw it, it] ... was, like, right in front of me,” so he felt it was bad. He says that as a young man he was determined “[not] to let my children see me drunk.” He says, “I just decided it right away ... I [was] just really clear on it.”
In short, the fathers want to be role models for their children, and some talked about how hard it can be to be one.

3.3.4 Give feedback

When I analyzed the fathers’ practices for achieving their parenting goals, giving feedback emerged as a theme. The subthemes are to encourage and to praise. It is not uncommon for the fathers to say they use encouragement to achieve their goals, while fewer say they use praise for that purpose. All those who say they praise their children also say they encourage them.

Encourage

The fathers seem to use encouragement to achieve various goals, the most common being that they encourage their children to work hard at their studies. For example, Árni says he encourages his daughter to “be hard-working and try hard and attend to her studies.” Others say they encourage their children to exercise (Þröstur), mix with other children (Niels and Þröstur), learn to play a musical instrument (Reynir), show initiative (Guðni), and be self-reliant (Kári).

Some fathers say they encourage their children to enhance their self-confidence. Reynir says that children need “encouragement” from their parents so that “they have more faith in themselves, like self-confidence in what they [are] doing, and they maybe find their talents and make the most of them.” Lárus says, “Yes, you often try to cheer him up if he’s a bit miserable about something, or grumpy. I often notice that he likes that.” Vigfús says that when his son is “complaining that he hasn’t learned” what he was meant to learn or “is useless,” he tries to encourage him and “tell him that he just needs to do his best.” Ýmir says that “even though I am always trying to cheer her [his daughter] up” because “I just often think that [what she is doing] is absolutely brilliant, she always says herself that it is awful.” Pálmi says he always “tries to be encouraging to” his daughter’s “ideas, to allow her to shine. ... Even if you maybe don’t think the” idea “is that good initially, “they can be pretty good when it comes to the test.”

Praise

The fathers feel that praise is important to the children. Unnar says, “I think that all their lives” the children “are seeking recognition” from their parents “and trying to do well and receive praise in return.” He says, “kids that don’t get praise or attention” from their parents “try to do something naughty or act up in order to get attention.” Lárus says, “You need to tell them if they are doing something wrong” and you also have “to tell them if they do something right,” but “sometimes you forget to tell them when they are doing the right thing.” Flóki agrees: “People often forget to praise” the children. “I think
praise needs to be given as often as criticism.” Lárus believes “that praise” can entail a certain “supervision.” Similarly, Unnar says that by praising children you can encourage them to “acquire” a certain “behaviour.”

When asked for examples of what they praise their children for, they say, “I often praise her” for “diligence ... and have often told her how important I think that is for her” (Ýmir); I encourage my son to study by “praising him, like now he just had a test, he did excellently, just great, good grades” (Lárus); I “praise him after matches if he has tried hard” (Óskar).

In short, the fathers emphasize giving their child feedback. They seem to use encouragement to achieve various goals and also feel that praise is important to the children.

3.3.5 Inform the child

To inform was one of three themes that emerged when the fathers discussed their parenting practice: almost all of them say they try to inform their children and guide them in order to achieve their parenting goals. They say, “We [the parents] are teachers, of course” (Lárus); you try to “give them guidance about what you think is good, and talk about what not to do” (Arnaldur).

The fathers mentioned various matters about which they try to inform and guide their children. One area is being able to take care of themselves: “[I] have told him that he simply has to put the noodles in the water” and “taught him how to load the washing machine” and “showed him how to vacuum” (Vigfús). Another is that drugs are harmful: “We talk a lot about drugs and smoking and things like that” with her, “and have her watch everything on television that is connected to that kind of repulsiveness ... with us,” so she understands what lies “ahead if she gets into that” (Hannes). A third is being careful: “I have ... shown her ... [that] on the dock you shouldn’t look down a lot ... [and what to do] if you fall into the sea” (Árni). A fourth is exercise and masculinity: Þróstur’s son takes lessons in tae kwondo, and Þróstur says that he sometimes “plays with him like that.” He also suggests that his son should go out to play with other boys, because he thinks that is good for the “body.” He wants to teach him “what a boy is supposed to be like, teach him what a real man is like.”

A fifth area is “manners” and “behaviour” (Óskar), and a sixth is interaction with others: If I “have thought he [his son] is being unfair or pushy then I have tried to tell him about it” (Reynir). Another is honesty: “For a while there was a bit of trouble with this group of boys” that his son is a part of, and “he had not been telling us [the parents] the truth about certain things
and what they had been up to,” says Lárus. He says they got the son to attend “a family meeting ... in the living room” where the “matter was discussed.” There they “urged him not to get into the habit of lying ... not to be going behind your backs, not lie about things [or] say they are different from what they are. ... We discussed this a lot and I think it has improved,” he says.

Another is tolerance. “I very often stop” my daughter if, “for example, she says, That person is fat or this one [is] boring and this one is ugly. I ... discuss with her that we are all different and variable, and some people have difficulty with this, and others with that. ... Then I say ... just think” how “boring it would be if everybody was the same” (Tómas).

Some fathers place emphasis on freedom and trust when they talk about informing and guiding their children. Arnaldur says, “I just emphasize to them what is bad and what is good, and then you just have to trust them.” Pálmi says he is careful “not to preach ... too much” to the children, and wants to “give [them] a reasonable degree of freedom, ... to let the children flourish, [because] you believe they are bright people.” I discuss this theme of giving children freedom further below.

Some of the fathers refer to their own upbringing when they mention the importance of informing and guiding their children. Vigfús says he feels he missed out on receiving “guidance” when he was growing up: “So I want to try to guide them [his children] as well as I can,” and “direct him [his son] on to a different track than I took,” he says. Markús talks in a similar vein, saying that it “would have been good” if his parents “had explained to him more about alcohol and that sort of thing ... the consequences, maybe, and about drug use.”

In short, the fathers say they inform their children and guide them in order to achieve their parenting goals.

### 3.3.6 Give the child freedom

*Freedom* is a theme fathers mention when they talk about raising their children. Some emphasize freedom of action in their parenting; for example, some want to have few rules and be hands-off: I am “not much for having many rules” (Tómas); “I think [that] this is a very liberal household” (Flóki). Ýmir says, when parenting is discussed, that “I haven’t tried to direct people much” and Guðni says that it has worked out best for him “to interfere as little as I can” in the upbringing of his children. Some of them define a good upbringing as “a bit sort of free” (Árni) or “on the more liberal side” (Óssur).

Some fathers connect freedom of action with trust, and thus try to encourage autonomy in their children. This is seen in Niels’ relationship with
his son. Níels says he can trust his son to handle the freedom he gives him because, even though the son is often on the computer, he has not found any reason to implement rules regarding computer usage: “As long as he does everything he is supposed to do, [I] don’t mind whether he on the computer often, or less often; it’s just up to him.” Árni also believes that freedom of action in parenting should be based on trust: “You maybe don’t need to be right with them, following them around all the time. Just trust them.” Árni’s reasoning for freedom of action is that children are less likely to go behind their parents’ backs if they have a lot of freedom of action. He says that “the kids” who need to follow a lot of rules “are more likely to sneak around to fool around or try [all sorts of things] because” they do not have the freedom to “try anything.”

Some fathers emphasize freedom of action in the hope that their children will be independent and self-reliant. Niels says “he is conscious about not being overprotective” of his children; he tries “to let them just do everything they can think of, but still in such a way that you can intervene ... if necessary.” He gives an example from when his children were small and started to crawl. Then, he says, he helped them practice going up and down the stairs for “a whole weekend.” After that they could “just go up and down as they wanted.” Guðni wants his children “to be self-reliant” because he believes “that it does them good” and that it is “good [for] them to gain a little independence.”

One reason some fathers gave for having few rules and being hands-off is that they do not want to mold the child too much; that is they want to foster their autonomy. When Arnaldur talks about what kind of a person he wants his daughter to become, he places emphasis on her becoming “just the person she wants to be,” and adds, “It is at least not a part of my job as a parent to make some individual the way I want him/her to be.” Other fathers agree. For example Tómas says, “I don’t really want to fix it precisely. I think she needs to find out for herself” what kind of individual she wants to be. Dagur and Niels say freedom is important for the child’s development. It is important because with freedom the child can take new and unknown paths: “Then you can just go where you want to go” (Niels). Guðni says, “I just want them to find their own paths. I am not pressing or pushing [them] to go this way rather than some other.”

Pálmi explains his point of view: “Once I read a great sentence: That you ... [should] always believe that your children are more sensible and clever than yourself.” He tells why this sentence had an impact on him:
... often you ... think [that] ... you are so incredibly perfect that it is best to **mold** the children to be like yourself [he laughs]. But that may not be a very good idea. ... That’s why you shouldn’t give them ... too many restrictions ... [and] not be forcing ... on the children ... too much of your ... own ideas ... opinions and attitudes. [On the contrary one should] allow them ... to flourish ... to find their own way a little ... [and] find themselves a little, on their own terms. ... That they can, in fact, choose their own paths ... that they can get an education, or work at the job they want, and can more or less do what they want ... that it’s not other people who control [the individual] too much. [Because] that would not bring joy for [the individual].

In short, the fathers emphasize freedom of action in raising their children and thus try to encourage their autonomy and independence.

### 3.3.7 Discipline: Set boundaries and rules

Another theme that emerges when the fathers discuss their practice connected to their parenting goals is maintaining discipline and setting boundaries and rules. The fathers clearly emphasized rules, but they varied in how whether or not they followed up on the rules. Ýmir says, “There have to be rules and there need to be boundaries” in parenting. Dagur adds that “appropriate discipline” is one of the things that really matters in a good upbringing. Hannes points out that that children can differ in many ways and that their character undeniably influences the upbringing: “I have a ... quiet daughter. ... So naturally it has been no strain on me. ... Of course it’s something else entirely ... to bring up a child who is disobedient” or a child like “my hyperactive nephew. ... It is a totally different world of parenting.”

The fathers mentioned several reasons why parents should set boundaries and rules for their children; here I discuss four of them. The first reason boundaries and rules are important is that the children do not yet know the boundaries for themselves. Children “just obviously” need “consistency” and “discipline” from their parents, “because they ... don’t know their boundaries yet. ... They are just learning, so we as the parents need to make the framework” (Tómas). Second, they need to understand that life is not always a bed of roses: “Appropriate rules and a framework” are “absolutely necessary ... so that he/she can be successful in growing up. ... Because life is like that, it doesn’t always give you everything on a platter,” and children need to realise that (Ýmir). Third, boundaries have preventive value, for example regarding teenage drinking. Vigfús said he hopes that by having a certain “framework” like “rules” about “curfew and all that [for instance that our son lets us know] where he is going,” I provide my son with supervision, and that has preventive value: “The later he gets into drinking and
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[into] this bad company, the better.” The fourth is to ensure that the parents maintain the children’s respect: “If [the children] are just allowed to do whatever they want, whenever and however they want, I think they just don’t have any respect for you” (Kári).

Niels talks about rules and clear instructions and the importance of being a good role model to his children. He believes that one characteristic of a good upbringing is to “not be making rules if you can’t follow them and comply with them yourself.” He says, “It is better just to have one rule, and you have to follow that rule, and everybody follows the rules, rather than having a gazillion rules and no one follows any of them.” He says that “sometimes” he feels he “needs to make some rule” but then he realizes he “does not have the energy to enforce it.” He explains:

For instance, if I would make the rule that it is forbidden to eat in the living room. I have often wanted to, but I sometimes eat in the living room myself. Their mother eats in the living room. And I don’t feel able to ensure that we don’t do it. So I can’t insist that they [the children] comply, because then it always gives the wrong message; [that] some people have to follow the rules and others don’t. That’s not good.

“So if I am going to bring” my son “up at all,” Niels adds, “I first need to take a look at” myself. It is “part of the responsibility of being a parent,” he says.

Pálmi explains how the house rules in his home originated, and how they evolve as the child gets older: The rules “are just made by the parents, completely undemocratically, I think. ... It’s just something that happens, because initially the ... rules are made when the children are young and they have nothing to say about [them].” He then mentions examples such as children letting the parents know where they are going, being home at a certain time and keeping their room reasonably tidy: “I think parents can simply just set rules, and don’t need to debate them a whole lot. ... Then of course the time comes [when] the children get older, and then the rules just gradually change. The same rules don’t apply for example” for “a six-year-old” child and “a 15-year-old. ... Then maybe some rules are relaxed, and others become stricter instead.”

Methods of discipline

The fathers talk about using various methods to maintain discipline. These examples can be divided into seven groups: a) debate; b) remind and follow up; c) nag and grumble; d) get angry, argue and scold; e) give orders and
threaten; f) punish; and g) do nothing or concede. They provided many examples of these practices.

Some of the fathers seem to apply mostly one method, or a few, while others seem to apply many methods according to the circumstances. Tómas, one of the latter, says that “it varies a great deal” which method he chooses when he tries to get his daughter to follow the rules about tidiness: “Sometimes I nag a bit, sometimes I make” her “do it, ... sometimes I give her a telling-off, sometimes I leave [it], sometimes I just give in, and sometimes I don’t do anything, or sometimes I just do it myself.” When asked how he decides on his approach, he answers: “It depends on the time you have, or what you are going to do.”

Debate

Some fathers say they use debate to solve disagreements with their child: “We may disagree ... [then] we discuss [that] ... and then we come to some conclusion” (Pálmi). Baldur calls this “negotiations.” Níels explains the “debating” process this way:

[When my son and I] don’t have the same opinion on the matter, then we naturally start discussing it, and one of us ends up agreeing with the other’s view. ... It is usually the one who comes up with the best arguments that wins. ... [Now] he is getting to be grown up ... and takes a pretty good and level-headed view of things, and bases his decisions on something. ... [So] increasingly, when he comes up with a good argument, you just say okay, you’re right. Naturally. [But] when he was a kid he naturally didn’t stand a chance. What’s more, he wasn’t supposed to, he was a kid.

Níels says that good upbringing is “based on discussion and mutual respect for each other’s opinions and a healthy molding of opinions.” He says, for example, that he himself is “much more ready to comply with something that he is told if” he “is told about it and has it explained, as between equals,” rather than “if someone says you must do it this way. Then I won’t do it that way.” Eiður takes a similar view. He says it is important “to guide the child forward [but] not drag him/her along. [It is all right] to direct people initially, but still [the individual] needs to have his own will.” Níels says that if the son had trouble following the house rules he would “ask [him] what he saw needed to be done, so that he could follow the rules. And if there was some sense in it then you would naturally try to compromise.” On the other hand, “if there weren’t any sense in it then you would try to convince him that there wasn’t any sense in it.”
Remind and follow up

Several fathers mention that they follow up the house rules by reminding their children about them. When Baldur is asked how he responds if his children do not follow the rules, he says, I “just remind them if they are forgetting.” He takes the example of the rule that each child has his/her kitchen day, and is in charge of cleaning up the kitchen. This had come up just the night before. He just asked his daughter whether she was going to clean up the kitchen. She said she had forgotten that “it was her day” and went to clean up. “It’s never really an issue,” he says. Vigfús says he tells his son when he thinks he needs to be more tidy, and he says his son obeys most of the time: “He often listens to me.” For instance, he fetches “dishes from his room and tidies up,” he says. Lárus says he also needs to remind his son to clear up after himself: “I ask him to go into the kitchen and clear up after himself.” He says his son does “it maybe a bit reluctantly, like a lot of kids.” Unnar says he calls his son if he is not home for dinner as planned, and just tells “him to come home and eat. ... He usually comes, you don’t often need to call him, really,” he says. Ýmir, who wants his children “to be home at a certain time,” says, ”my wife and I keep an eye on it ... and [we] follow up quite strictly by phone calls, if anything seems not right. ... Yes, we check up on them and pick them up, or just make them [their daughters] come home.”

Nagging and grumbling

In some cases the fathers’ observations develop into nagging and grumbling. Þröstur, for example, says he needs to remind his son many times to come and help to clean up after dinner, but the son “still doesn’t do” it. Unnar says he needs to “go on about” the tidiness rules “regularly” and “hassle him and urge [him] so” that the things are done. Pálmi says he starts “nagging ... if [his daughter] has been told something [she] should do and she doesn’t do it. Then you just tell her: ... Didn’t I ask you to ... bla bla bla.”

Lárus reflects on his own behaviour: “Maybe [I don’t] always [go] about it the right way when I put out my point of view,” because I am “a bit of what they call a nag.” He says he nags, for instance, about his son “not clearing up after himself well enough.” He also says he “nags about him being on the computer, or on it too much.” About the nagging, he says, “It becomes, in your own ears, kind of like pointless, but it’s not always easy to deal with it.” He says his son “doesn’t like being criticized too much, and ... sometimes things get stormy between us lads.”
Get angry, argue, and scold

Lárus is not the only father who reports that interaction can get “stormy.” Tómas says, “Yes, yes, we sometimes argue. We do. It is all right. Sometimes it’s necessary: [We’re both] ... headstrong.” He admits that sometimes doors are slammed. Árni says he thinks it is “tedious to have to be scolding” the children but it’s just part of” the parenting job. He adds that his daughter “doesn’t maybe always understand, even though you explain to her that you are not trying to be nasty, that you are maybe [he chuckles] trying to give her guidance.” Vigfús says he feels that he “always needs” to make a “fuss” when he is “telling” his son “something,” even though he knows “it doesn’t work at all.” He says, “It’s somehow a fixed part of me,” and points out that he was brought up “that way”: “If I did something, there was always shouting and violence.”

Generally the fathers do not think this is a successful approach. Þröstur thinks it does little good to get angry and “shout,” because his son is no more likely to obey. Hannes feels that if a parent is “scolding about everyone and everything,” it becomes like a broken “record that no one really listens to.” Hannes adds, “If I look at the people around me,” I have “found that those parents do the worst” and are “the least ... successful” who have brought up their child “with anger and nagging and noise and shouting.” Baldur agrees:

[Of course you] always want to make your point, [and the children are not supposed to] trample over their parents or get away with some things just by [getting angry. Then you need to] ... get them to calm down a little and then discuss this ... because I don’t think you can have a sensible discussion with an angry teenager. [I have] at least...never found a way to do it yet. ...It has naturally happened that you raise your voice ... and shout ... but I never think that is good, and I think it does very little good.

Orders and threats

Some fathers say they issue orders or threats in order to induce the child to follow the rules. When asked how he and his son resolve disagreements, Unnar answers, “I suppose it is just the High Court, it is just dad that decides, if you want to do it that way. ... When you give up debating and try to bring the teenager to his senses, then you naturally just need to go ahead” and say that “this is the way the things are going to be.” He gives an example: if his son wants to wear dirty clothes because they are so “comfortable” instead of changing his clothes, “then maybe you end up” saying: If that’s the way it is, then you are just not coming with us. Maybe it’s something that works in the end.” Ýmir says that it is sometimes “hinted that the pocket money will not be” paid to them “in full” if they don’t do their chores “around the house.”
Óskar says, “Sometimes he [the son] is just told to do things and obey ... we want him to obey us.” Sometimes you need to go to him a few times: “We go again, ask him to turn down [the music], tell him to turn it down, order him to turn it down ... and sometimes [we] have to threaten him. ... We have threatened to take away his computer, for example, if we think he spends too much time [on it], and we have done it ... confiscated his stereo, the iPad.” Kári’s account implies more determination than with other fathers:

Even though ... these kids ... are almost grown up they’re still minors, and they’re just supposed to obey their dad and mom and it shouldn’t be necessary to have any arguments or negotiations. Dad and mom say: ... We are going now, you are still under age, and you’re coming with us. ... [There] should simply be no discussion about it.

**Punishment**

Generally the fathers say they do not use punishment as a way to achieve their goals: I “just can’t recall that I have ... ever grounded” my son “or anything like that” (Reynir); “Well, I don’t think it is the right way,” to punish (Hannes). But some fathers say they have used punishment to achieve their parenting goals. The punishments can be divided into three groups: temporary withdrawal of privileges, psychological punishment, and physical punishment. Baldur says he has temporarily withdrawn his children’s privileges: he and his wife have “taken away their [daughters’] computers for a short time, ... from one day up to a week,” for example if they have thought [their] “computer use” was “excessive.” He says, “Often it’s also relating to exams ... or when we think they are not concentrating enough on school.” Ýmir says he has also taken away his daughter’s privileges temporarily, but makes it clear that that he and his wife have not often needed to do so:

It has happened about two or three times in her lifetime that we’ve imposed a computer ban or something like that [and] ... one time she wasn’t allowed to go out in the evening for a fortnight. [We have done this when] she has been going too far with some things that you don’t want her to be getting up to. [For example,] last summer she went away with a girlfriend [but] they had got hold of some alcohol. [It] was just supposed to be some innocent overnight stay somewhere [but it ended up that the daughter] ... just got ill. I actually think that was the biggest punishment, that they were grounded for a fortnight. [And she] ... wasn’t allowed to have any Facebook communication during that time, either.
Two fathers seem to have used psychological punishment. One of them, Þröstur, speaks of becoming “angry” that the son does not obey him, and “if he hasn’t apologized,” he tells his son to “Go into the bathroom [and] think about what you have done.” He asks his son to stay there until he has thought about what he has done, has stopped crying and can say he is sorry. Vigfúss says he “sometimes ... like, ignores” his son for some time when his lack of tidiness gets “on his nerves,” and their relationship “sometimes” becomes “very distant and tense.”

Markús is the only father who says he has used physical punishment. He says it has “happened” that he has spanked his children, but “I usually don’t do it to the kids, maybe more in the old days. ... Usually you try to avoid it.” Even though Markús says he has spanked his children, he feels “it is not [right] to use violence toward the kids. I’ve seen that and what not to do. ... [Because] maybe [it] doesn’t give the result that you intended.” Markús says that he was “sometimes spanked” as a child.

Some fathers want it to make it clear that they do not use physical punishment. Þröstur, for example, points out that he has never hit his son: “I never touch [him] ... not even a finger. Nothing. ... Because I know it is forbidden to do that to children.” Vigfúss also says that he never uses “violence. Not like that” in bringing up his son; he was subjected to considerable violence by his foster-father.

Some fathers talk about their horror of physical punishment, and refer to their childhood. About his own upbringing, Ýmir says: “It was just the way it was in those days, you got beaten if you were disobedient. ...We [his wife and he] have not used this kind of spanking or anything ourselves.” Because “I just don’t believe that physical injuries do any good to anyone. ... [As a child] I was completely disgusted by such parenting methods, and always have been.” When asked why he is disgusted by this, he answers: “I suppose I was scared [as a child] of being hurt and also of this threat. ... I think you shouldn’t threaten children or other people ... intentionally.” An incident from his childhood “has weighed on” Lárus. He had a “pal” whose “mother tended to kick them, the children, when she was in a bad mood.” He says: “I decided I would never do that.” Dagur has a similar story to tell: as a child he saw “children being hit” and that “weighs” on him. “At least, you don’t do things like that,” he says. “That makes for a damaged individual,” he says, adding, “Which turned out to be true,” as he kept tabs on those children when

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4 Child protection Act no. 80/2002, Article 1
they were grown up. “They had psychological damage, and maybe physical too, but mostly psychological.” He adds:

Even though [as a parent] you are far from being without temper, and far from being perfect, fallible, and you make lots of mistakes in life, at any rate you have to [make an effort] not to damage, you try to get these people on in their lives as undamaged individuals.

Doing nothing or giving in

Some fathers say they do little or nothing to enforce the family’s rules, or say they have given in, or given up enforcing their rules. Reynir, one of them, says, “I don’t know if I can say [that] anything special happens” if his son does not follow the rules. “I actually don’t really do much ... I don’t enforce the rules much.” Ýmir gives a similar account, and both men point to their wives. Vigfús, who also says he does not always enforce his rules, explains: If his son “doesn’t take his shoes off when he comes in, I don’t always say anything, I’ll just allow him to come in wearing his shoes.” In some cases the fathers say that they end up doing whatever they were trying to get the child to do. Þröstur says, for example, that “sometimes” he chooses to clean up after dinner himself, when his methods of getting his son to do it do not work. Then he thinks, “I may as well just do [it myself] and then [it is] just done,” rather than go through the hassle of trying to get him to do it, he says. Markús gives an example of a time when he gave in:

Sometimes I give in. ... [For example about] contact lenses one time: [My wife and I] were not quite ready to give her contacts when she asked for them. ... [Because] we thought she was too young. [We] had heard from some ophthalmologist that she ought to be at least 16, but then her girlfriends got them, and so on. So in the end [we] gave in.

Inaction and/or giving way emerge clearly when the fathers discuss their children’s computer usage. Flóki says his son “has been pretty much been free regarding computer games with age limits. ... He has ... always” been allowed to play computer games that are intended for older people “and I don’t see that it has done him any harm. ... Of course we observed” the age restriction on computer games “at first” but he “gave that up a long time ago,” or from the time he was about 12 years old. Óskar says that his wife and he have had rules about their son’s computer usage, but “now that’s over:”

We allowed him a certain amount of time [a couple of years ago] ... so that he had just a certain amount of time on the computer. At that time we only had a computer in the hall in the common area, but now
he has had a computer in his room for two years, a laptop. [Then we] stopped monitoring. ... I guess we gave up in relation to that.

Óskar says his wife and he have “naturally” also “emphasized that he [their son] doesn’t get up to any mischief or rudeness on the computer,” and he adds, “But we haven’t monitored that at all.” Similarly, Ýmir says:

>We’ve discussed that we do not want [our daughter to] ... be [on the computer] at night, and so on, but we haven’t really been very strict about monitoring that. ... [The same applies to Facebook]: She was allowed to continue on Facebook as long as ... she *friend*ed me, as they say. ... I went on Facebook just to have access to her page. ... But then we haven’t been interfering that much. ... She ... has had some freedom [and] has her own computer.

Dagur strongly emphasizes that in parenting you have to know when to give freedom and when to set boundaries. Using an image from horsemanship, he says: “If you know anything about horses, you know that if you always hold rigidly on to the reins then you ruin the horse. You can’t always hang onto the reins. You have to hold on tight at some points, but then you always have to relax as well.”

In short, the fathers want to maintain discipline and set boundaries and rules to achieve their parenting goals. But the boundaries are not always clear and the major variations were in whether or not the fathers said they followed up on the rules.

Having discussed the fathers’ main parenting practices, I now summarize key points in the previous sections on fathers’ values, goals and practices.

### 3.4 Three main themes in the fathers’ values, goals and practices

The essence of the fathers’ values, goals and practices is the well-being of the child; to attain this they seek to provide the child with *love and care, security and boundaries*, and *freedom*. These are the overarching themes in the data. These themes are visible in the fathers’ values, goals and practices, as Table 5 shows. Each of these values, goals and practices sometimes falls under more than one of the overarching themes and in some cases is located more strongly in one category than another. These themes function on a continuum and can flow between the three overarching themes, as indicated by the shading in the table.
Having discussed the main themes in the fathers’ values, goals and practices, I now turn to the fathers’ lived experiences, and how they relate to their views on parenting.

### 3.5 The Fathers’ Lived Experiences

I think you are the product of your lived experience. (Ýmir)

In this section I discuss the category the fathers’ lived experiences. This is one of the four categories examined in this study (cf. Figure 3). My discussion of the fathers’ lived experiences of parenting involves three themes: 1) freedom of action/detachment in the father’s own upbringing; 2) the father’s relationships with their own parents in childhood; and 3) the role that these fathers’ wives (or their children’s mothers) play in parenting. Table 6 presents the themes, subthemes and sub-subthemes of the fathers’ lived experiences of parenting. In the following section I discuss these emergent themes, together
with the lessons the fathers say they have learned from their lived experiences, the kind of relations they want to have with their children, and their own role models.

**Table 6 The Fathers’ Lived Experiences: Themes, Subthemes and Sub-subthemes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes and sub-subthemes</th>
<th>The fathers’ lived experiences of parenting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Freedom of action/detachment in the fathers’ own upbringing | •Relations with father  
  -Lack of time  
  -Regrets  
  •Relations with mother  
  -Physical intimacy  
  -Emotional closeness | Fathers’ relationships with their own parents in childhood |
| Role of their wives/the children’s mothers | •Discipline  
  •Emotional closeness | |

### 3.5.1 Freedom of action/detachment in the fathers’ own upbringing

The theme *freedom of action/detachment* emerges when the fathers speak of their own childhood. They provide multiple examples of the freedom of action, or hands-off parenting, they experienced as boys, and discuss the advantage of that freedom. In the section below on *Lessons the fathers have learned; role models*, I examine the fathers’ emphasis on their own children’s freedom in light of their experience.

Tómas described very well the freedom of action or hands-off parenting some of these fathers experienced in their childhood:

> You weren’t kept on a lead. You got to play all you wanted. ... It was almost ... [that] you went ... out in the morning and only came home in the evening. ... You got to hang around a bit. ... Yes, down on the dock and at the rubbish dump setting fire to ... junk. Which was naturally a lot of fun at that age [he laughs]. ... Then we fished off the dock ... [and] rode our bikes and messed around.

Össur says there were “not many rules” in his childhood home; his mother was alone with the children for a long time, and often out at work:

> You were left to your own devices, and just did everything that you wanted to do. ... I naturally just started at an early age, wandering all over town on my own. ... You [were] ... lucky not to get yourself killed. [I] almost did, one time [when I] ran out in front of a car. ... [But] we had a lot of fun.
Findings: What do Fathers have to say about Parenting?

Flóki says: “The upbringing [I got] was, I think, just that I brought myself up. ... There really wasn’t anyone keeping an eye on you, I was allowed to be [out] as long as I wanted in the evening, and could just virtually do whatever I wanted.” He says his mother would allow him to do everything, if he asked: “I remember, for instance, that all of my friends were envious about my mom, because I was allowed to do so many things they weren’t allowed to do.” He says that when his pals got together they always gathered at his house, in his room, where they started smoking and drinking: “She [his mother] went to the liquor store for me when I was only 13 ... and that seemed really cool back then,” he says.

When Jónas was 17 his parents divorced: “I was practically left behind, I was left behind in my childhood home,” he says. His mother moved out and then “I lived with dad [but] ... then he met a woman and moved in with her.” I lived “alone ... for a year. ... There were naturally non-stop parties, my friends staying all night, a blast, great fun. ... Back then you just said: cool, man, dad’s moving out and, hey, you guys there’s a party this weekend. I’ll be alone here.” He says that as a consequence of that he “dropped out of ... school” and his “[sports] career” ground to “a halt.” He says, however, that “thank goodness I came through it without any disasters. I didn’t get into drugs or drinking or anything like that.”

As boys, many of the fathers had spent the long summer holidays, year after year, on farms in the country – often with people with whom they had no family tie. “All the kids got out of town if they could. There was no one in town. The town just emptied,” says Dagur, adding that there was “a certain freedom” in the country. There I “got to know what it was like not to be under your parents’ wing, I also had to manage by myself. In the country I had to prove myself ... and had to deal with all sorts of stuff ... that I’m not going to tell you about.” At a young age Arnaldur got to “drive a tractor” in the country, which is something he “wouldn’t allow children to do today.” Some fathers, like Össur, had good memories of their time in the country: he “found [him]self in a very good home,” where he spent 10 or 12 summers. Others are less content, such as Unnar: “I was ... sent to the country when I was five years old until I was 15,” always to strangers. “I think I was in five different places. ... It was a matter of course in those days,” but “no doubt people’s children would be taken away from them if they did that today.”

The fathers think that apparently their parents were not greatly concerned about them while they were away: “I don’t think they ever worried about me, really,” says Óskar, who had a “lot of freedom of action” as a child, and just wandered “all over town.” Hannes says:
I … was brought up [in the country] as one of a very large family. We naturally just took care of one another. … [We] went out in the morning and [came] home in the evening, and there was no one taking care of you. Mom just always said, *I don’t worry about them. They just always come home, and they never hurt themselves.* She was right, that was just the way it was.

Similarly, Kári recalls when he and his pals went “up the mountain skiing … and then just skied all the way home. There was no one looking out for [us] even though it was dark by then.” He says that the parents’ attitude was: “The boys are sure to come home some time this evening.” Árni tells a similar story of growing up “with the sea and the dock nearby. … You were allowed to go and fish, and you were allowed to play on the seashore,” he says. “You learned [what to be careful of]. … They told you … [but they were] not constantly keeping an eye on you … [they] just trusted us.”

In the opinion of some of the fathers the advantage of this freedom of action and hands-off parenting is that they learned to take responsibility and to be trusted. Kári says: “I think that it is in many ways a great advantage to have so much freedom of action. … You were just trusted.” Árni too feels that the “trust” that he received taught him “to respect it … [because] if you went and did something silly then maybe you wouldn’t be allowed to do it again.” Arnaldur says of his freedom of action in childhood: This “at least just made me stronger. … You had to take responsibility for yourself. … I think it’s just good for everybody to be somewhat responsible for what they do … but I think it’s not good for small individuals to … be responsible for everything.” When Guðni is asked about the positive suspects of his upbringing, he says:

I would say you got quite a lot of independence. … [There was] no one at home but us [brothers]. … [We] were home alone, just the two of us, from a very young age – five and seven [years old]. So we could not be relying on anyone doing anything for us. … We just coped on our own. … It works out fine, at least it did [in our case]. You just become more independent because of that.

Óskar also believes “freedom of action” is one of the major advantages of his upbringing - and the “independence” that came with it. On the other hand some fathers, such as Össur, are not sure “whether” the great “freedom of action” they had in childhood should be deemed “an advantage.”

In short, these fathers experienced considerable freedom of action, which could also be called detachment or hands-off parenting. They say the advantage of it was that they learned to take responsibility and to be trusted.
3.5.2 The fathers’ relations with their own parents in childhood

*Fathers’ relations with their own parents in childhood* emerges as a theme when the fathers describe their life experience. “You don’t choose your parents, but there are quite a lot of things that are functions of what you are like” (Dagur). The theme has two subthemes: the fathers’ relationships with their own fathers, and with their mothers.

**Fathers’ relations with their own fathers**

The father’s accounts of relations with their own fathers revealed two subthemes: lack of time and sense of regret.

**Lack of time**

Clearly these fathers feel they had little time with their own fathers, who played little part in their upbringing. My father “wasn’t around us [children] all that much ... [for instance] he didn’t brush our teeth for us, that was seen more as Mom’s job” (Reynir). Many fathers say that their fathers worked a lot and or were often away for work. Flóki says:

Dad was the breadwinner and he worked at the freezing plant from dawn to dark. ... He wasn’t home much, and in my childhood memory it’s as if I scarcely remember him. ... In those days it was very common to work until ten o’clock [and that’s what he did].

**Regrets**

A recurrent theme in the fathers’ accounts of their childhood relations with their own fathers is a sense of having missed out. First, these fathers regret that they were not able to get to know their own fathers better as boys. Flóki and Dagur have an especially poignant feeling of regret, as they have lost their fathers, and thus any opportunity to get to know them better. Dagur says:

I think my biggest regret is how rarely he was at home ... but that was the way back then. ... [But when I look] in the rear-view mirror ... then I can see how little time he really had, and how nice it would have been to have more time with him. Especially in retrospect, because he died so young. ... So by the time ... we could start talking to each other as two grown-ups, he had so little time left.

The feeling of regret is also clear in Vigfús’ constant longing to find his biological father. Vigfús, who experienced severe abuse at the hands of his foster father, says:
I was always trying to find [my biological father] ... I was always wondering where he was ... and why he didn’t come. ... Even today I still [think about him]. Only two days ago, I lay in bed and cried. ... There is just a void. ... There is just something missing, really what’s missing is just a hug.

Second, the fathers regret that they did not have a closer relationship with their own fathers. Many of them say that their fathers had little to do with them, and that there was a distance between them. Illugi, for example, has no memory of his father saying he loved him. Össur says of his foster father: It “wasn’t [an] ... affectionate ... relationship. ... He has a certain coolness, a certain distance, and always has. He’s just that type.” Össur says that his biological father disappeared after his parents divorced, and had nothing to do with them: “I don’t think it’s right to leave kids behind [without] ... bringing them up, and have nothing to do with them. They’re your children.” Some of the fathers had been afraid of their own fathers. Pröstur says that his father sometimes “scolded” him. He says he was frightened when his father “got angry. ... Then I was afraid he” would “hit me or something” but he “never did.” My father just talked to me, but he “looked at me in a way that frightened me.”

The fathers’ sense of regret is also seen in their feeling that their fathers did not show them much physical intimacy or touch them. They regret not being hugged by their fathers, or being able to snuggle up to them and feel warmth. Reynir says that as a child and a teenager he “didn’t really” think it was “appropriate” to lean up against his father, for example when they were sitting on the sofa watching the television, as his children do with him. “I think I would find it rather hard to hug my dad today,” he adds. Jónas says: “There was some gentleness” missing in his father’s touch. Illugi says he does not remember his father “hugging” him.

The fathers also regret not being able to go to their fathers with their problems or thoughts. They would have liked for it to be natural for them to chat with them and talk things over. Jónas says, “You didn’t really sit down with him and discuss things, it was more like this: things were discussed with you.” Illugi would have wanted “to have been able to talk to [his father] about problems, or whatever,” and adds, “If you had any problems, you really had nowhere to turn” to discuss it. Reynir says:

He was always working, although he’d talk to us now and then – that was, like, on Saturdays and Sundays. Other than that, he was out in the garage a lot, [and] I wasn’t interested in being there, it wasn’t my place. ... You’d go to your mom more, with problems and so on. It would have
been good, really, to be able to go to your dad about things, but I was never comfortable with it, it didn’t seem right. ... There was just this distance, so to speak. Anyway, somehow you didn’t establish a bond with him. ... Dad and I were never really close.

Some of these men mention that they would have liked their fathers to be friends with them. Illugi feels that if his father had talked to him more, he would have felt he was more of a friend, and “not just some mechanical parent.”

Despite these regrets and lack of time together, some fathers cheerfully recall happy times with their fathers. Unnar, for instance, remembers fishing trips. Pröstur remembers playing with his father, Flóki played chess with his father, and Jónas mentions fishing trips, football, and time he spent with his father in the country at his grandparents’ home.

**Fathers’ relations with their mothers**

As the fathers talk about their relations with their mothers, the subtheme of closeness is highly visible. The fathers generally feel that their mothers were there for them. Two sub-subthemes emerged: physical intimacy and emotional closeness. I discuss these here, and compare them with the fathers’ descriptions of their own fathers. In general the fathers discussed their relationships with their mothers in contrast with their fathers.

**Physical intimacy**

The fathers feel that their mothers were there for them when they were boys: “You had access to your mom when you needed her” (Unnar); it was “always nice and warm in the kitchen corner” with Mom (Kári). The fathers’ mothers were homemakers and took care of the children, while some also worked part-time. Meanwhile, the fathers were out at work, often working long hours. That applied, for example, to Reynir’s family; he says, “Mom ... didn’t work long hours [in her job]. ... I always felt that Mom was more there to take care of us” children more than my father. As a father, he tries to “do it kind of like she did it ... be there for them.”

**Emotional closeness**

The fathers’ mothers seem to have been closer to them than their fathers, and to have shown them more warmth. Lárus, who says his father “didn’t talk much about feelings,” says, “Mom, on the other hand, was more that way. ... I got a lot of warmth and a lot of backup ... especially from my mother. ... She dealt with everything in a gentle way. ... Dad was naturally there less.” Jónas
compares his parents, and says that even though his father had been able to
give him “a certain warmth,” he “was nothing like Mom.” Reynir says, “You
would go to your Mom more, with problems,” than your father. Eiður says of
his mother, “There’s simply a unique love that radiates from her. ... She has a
special talent for displaying strong affection. My father was maybe brought up
in a stricter environment, when it comes to showing your emotions.” Hannes
compares his parents:

Mother naturally brought us up more than dad. ... She ... got
involved. ... [My father thought] that ... just thought it much better to
let [things] go by, and not get involved. But Mom was of course such
an incredibly close friend to us [children]. Incredibly. So there was a
big difference. Incredibly much. They were both really good to us
kids, of course, but she was much more of a pal. ... [And] old Dad ...
would sometimes have favourites ... but Mom never did that.

Össur says:

Mom was a single parent for a long time. ... [She] worked a lot, so
she wasn’t home much. ... [She] was very affectionate and kind. ...
She was naturally, somehow, what you always care about in life. ...
[But she] was strict ... you obeyed her, you were never uppity with
mom. She was a very good woman but you never gave her any
cheek, you didn’t get away with any cheek. ... I don’t think I am that
different from her in many ways. ... I am affectionate like her, I
think, ... [but] she was much tougher than I [am] ... but she had to be ...
to keep things going. ... [On the other hand I] had less to do with
my dad. He’s still alive, actually ... but he was never really there for
me, [and] never has been.

Though most of the fathers felt they had a mother who was there for them,
not all did. Two of the fathers, in contrast with the rest, were neglected as
boys. Vigfús says his mother was a great “alcoholic,” as was his foster father,
who was very abusive to both of them. When asked whether he got hugs from
his mother he answers, “I just don’t remember,” but she did bring him “food
... gave me something to eat” when his foster father had gone “out
somewhere,” having said that the boy was to have no dinner. The other father
who was neglected as a boy is Flóki, whose father was seldom around at
home. He says: “Mom was just at home - an alcoholic, and unfit to work.”
She had been drinking “for as long as I can remember. In my memory it was ...
... at least five days a week, and it wasn’t just liquor and so on, but surgical
spirit and everything, food essences, you name it. ... I think it was really bad.
... I’d really had enough of it.” Once he found his mother after she had cut her wrists: “I think that kind of upbringing leaves its mark on you.” Flóki says he is striving to give his son “a different kind of upbringing than” he had himself.

In short, these fathers would have liked to get to know their fathers better as boys, and have a closer emotional relationship with them. They would also have liked more physical closeness, and would have liked to be able to discuss all sorts of things with them and have conversations with them. These are all factors the fathers feel were lacking when they were growing up. But when they talk about their relations with their mothers, closeness is highly visible. They feel that their mothers were there for them when they were boys. Their mothers seem to have been closer to them than their fathers, and showed them more warmth.

3.5.3 The role of the children’s mothers/the fathers’ wives in parenting

Another important theme that emerges in these fathers’ accounts is the role that their wives, or the mothers of their children, play in parenting. The subthemes are discipline and emotional closeness.

When the fathers discuss the role played by their wives/the children’s mothers, they usually do so by comparison with themselves. Some of them say that they play a considerably smaller role than the mothers: “I’m not involved much ... I don’t bring them up, my wife has to deal with all of that. ... I think her [his daughter’s] upbringing has been successful, but I give her mother the credit, because of course she spends much, much, much more time with her than I do” (Guðni); Others say that they have played a big part in parenting. The mother of Kári’s children worked shifts, which influenced his role: “You’ve been at home with these kids in the evening and at weekends and all sorts of times, cooking dinner and doing the dishes and wiping bottoms and doing everything. [Things] that you didn’t see “your dad” do. Other fathers say the mother deals with certain things, in which they have little involvement: “Her [i.e. the daughter’s] mom is more supportive” about certain things. And she is “good at helping [her] with homework,” which Össur says he is not. And it is not uncommon for fathers to say that discipline and a certain closeness are more the mother’s responsibility.

**Discipline**

Some fathers say that the mother takes more responsibility for setting boundaries and rules than they do, as well as enforcing the rules: “When you get down to it I don’t enforce the rules much, it is more her, ... his mother” (Reynir); “Those things have been more on the mother’s plate” (Ýmir). Jónas,
who does not live with his son but has visitation every other weekend, says, I
do not “face those problems much ... [for example if] ... some discipline issues
need to be tackled, or ... something comes up ... at school ... or something. ... 
Of course I’m not involved in that as much” as the mother. Össur says: I
“have permitted myself to be a little bit more, like, the good guy. ... [So]
maybe it has been more up to the mom to manage and control. ... It’s just a
fact that” my wife is “much more determined in ... these parenting matters ...
than I am.” She is the one who says: “This is how it should be.” When asked
why, he answers that it “has just somehow developed that way with us. ... She
is utterly trustworthy and she is decisive and sensible and ... she won’t give an
inch, if needed. ... and I find it easy, too.”

Emotional closeness

Some of the fathers say that their children tends to turn to their mothers more,
at least regarding certain things. Guðni says, “Of course their relationship [the
mother’s and daughter’s] is much, much closer [than] mine and ... [my
daughter’s], there’s no question. ... If there are some problems [that come up]
then ... [she] goes to her mother first, [but] if she’s not around she’ll, like, come to me.” The explanation he gives is that his daughter “has always been
able to turn to [her mother]. ... I’ve been working ever since she was born. ...
Her mother has of course just been at home with her since she was born.”
Lárus says his son too “prefers to go to his mother with things.” For example
when he is “feeling sensitive ... he’s more likely to go to Mom.” The boy is
“sometimes ... withdrawn ... maybe more to me than his mom,” he adds.
Reynir says: My son “maybe doesn’t come to me so much with his problems.
Maybe he goes to his mom more with that, I don’t know.” While Hannes talks
to his daughter a lot, and says she sometimes talks to him about things she
does not want her mom to know about, he says she talks “to her mom much
more” than him. They talk “an awful lot about ... what they themselves call
‘boy stuff,’ that I have no idea about ... [and] I don’t get involved. ... They
can’t talk about those things with me.” He adds: “She naturally has crushes on
boys and is often wondering what she should do about those things. ... If she
confides in her mom about it, that’s just great.” Össur says his daughter’s
mother “is much better ... than I am ... in all ... discussions” and talking about
feelings with her. Guðni, who says he does not discuss feelings with his
daughter, says, “She can talk to her mother” about that kind of thing.

This indicates that, while the fathers feel they generally they take good
care of their children, the mothers often play a larger role with respect to
discipline and closeness. Unnar differs from the rest of the group in being a
single father. The mother of his children lives abroad, and has played little or
no part in parenting them in recent years: “Of course I’ve been on my own with them. ... You’ve more or less been both mom and dad. They haven’t been able to turn to their mom much in recent years.” Unnar worries about this, and adds, “It will probably make its mark on them in the long term. ... They’ll probably have some feeling of being rejected. No matter how much you try to make up for it, it’s just too much.”

In short, when the fathers talk about the role of their wives, or the children’s mothers, some say that the women take more responsibility for setting boundaries and rules than they do, as well as enforcing the rules. Some of them also say that the child tends to turn to her more, at least for certain things.

Having discussed the fathers’ lived experiences of parenting, and the related themes, I now examine the lessons they have learned and the emphases they say they have in their relations with their children, along with the fathers’ role models.

3.5.4 Lessons the fathers have learned, and role models

In this section I consider the lessons the fathers have learned from their lived experiences, and the kind of relationship they would like to have with their children, along with their role models. The fathers say they apply their experience of their own upbringing, and see the influence it has on them as parents: “Of course you’ve got the example of the way you were brought up ... [and] your parents as a norm. ... No doubt there are lots of people who either want to do as they did, or not to copy the way they were brought up” (Unnar). Illugi says he tries “to hold on to what’s good and change what’s bad,” and Dagur says, “I am just a product of the people who brought me up, plus hopefully a trace of my own judgement and instinct.”

Freedom of action and changing times

Overall, the fathers were happy about the freedom of action they had as boys, but they do not want to allow their children as much freedom. Even though they use words like “incredible fun” (Tómas), “brilliant” (Jónas), and “fantastic” (Óssur) about the freedom they had, the same fathers say, they would never allow children to do that today. Tómas continues, “I would freak out if I knew a child of mine was somewhere at the scrap heap setting fire to old car wrecks and things. I just would go crazy, I think.” Óssur says, I would “never allow my children that much freedom of action. ... You keep an eye on the kids more.” He gives an example: you don’t just “let out” young children “to go out and ride their bikes all over.” And Flóki hopes he doesn’t bring up his children up “in any way” as he was brought up. Jónas, who lived alone
after his parents divorced, says, “When you take stock ... you see that it ... [was] not all right. [I feel] a certain rejection. ... If I got into that situation with ... [my son], I wouldn’t leave him like that. I would try to make as good an environment for him as I could...make him a home where he would feel good, and he would be welcome.” Other fathers agree, saying that they do not want to give their children as much freedom of action, nor allow them to do the same things they were permitted to do.

The fathers talk about how times have changed: Things are “totally different today from back then” (Össur); “I just don’t think it is possible to compare society forty years ago with today” (Unnar); “You were naturally in a whole other world then than today. Back then you didn’t need to take any particular care” (Hannes). In the past “there was less traffic and fewer distractions ... and no computers,” says Unnar, and Hannes points out that “drugs and things like that ... [are], of course, worse today than back then.” Arnaldur points out the difference between growing up in a small town or in a city. He himself “grew up in a village in the country, ... a community where only 250 people live. ... [There] everybody sees what everybody does, it’s just a one big family ... everybody looks after everybody.” In a big community, on the other hand, you might see “a kid riding a bike ... in Mosfellsbær ... [without knowing] that he lives [far away] in Breiðholt. ... If that had happened in my youth [the child] would just naturally have [been asked]: What are you doing here? ... [There] everybody knew everybody.” Dagur, who was brought up in Reykjavík over 50 years ago, says, “There was always someone keeping an eye on us kids”; his grandparents lived in the same building, and his mother was a homemaker, like most of the mothers in the neighbourhood. He remembers a lot of association among the families in the neighbourhood: “People looked out for each other. ... We kids never had just one mom. We had lots of moms.”

**Better than dad**

When the fathers discuss their lived experience, they are far more prone to compare themselves with their father than their mother. This is especially striking among fathers of boys. The fathers offer several lessons they say they learned from their own fathers.

In general terms, the fathers want to learn from their fathers’ experience, and a recurring theme of their accounts is the desire to do better than their fathers. They want to participate more fully in parenting their children, since many feel their fathers played little part in bringing them up. They want to have more of a relationship with their children in three ways. They want to be emotionally closer to them than their fathers were to them, to have more and
deeper conversations with their children than they had with their fathers, and
to spend time with their children. I discuss these principal motifs here, to
bring out how the fathers relate their experience of their own fathers’
parenting to the kind of fathers they are, or want to be.

*Emotional closeness*

The fathers emphasize emotional closeness in their relations with their
children. For example, Reynir says he did not have a close relationship with
his father, but he recounts how, since his children were born, he has placed an
emphasis on emotional closeness in his interaction with his children. He says
it took him by “surprise” to discover how much he enjoys the parenting role,
and how close he is to his children:

> When you started taking care of your children when they were
> young, and if you gave something of yourself to them, it was
> somehow repaid many times over, so you bonded, and some kind of
> a relationship developed. I used to think it was just a cliché,
> something everybody says so they [he laughs] look better but ...
> that’s how I experienced it. ... When you were changing the kids’
nappies [when they were babies] and making faces at them and baby-
talking as you did it, chatting to them and so on, you always got, like,
a response ... they [maybe] laughed or smiled. ... [That is how you
managed to] bond with your children, [it was] when you looked after
them [as babies] and talked to them at the same time and then was all
so natural ... then the bond has been made, and then it’s somehow
always natural to do it. ... Between ... me and the kids there has
always been this intimacy, and sort of a close bond.

Lárus says his father did not talk about feelings much, while he himself
emphasizes discussing feelings with his son: “If I sense that he feels bad then
I go talk to him [and thus show him] ... affection.” Jónas says he regularly
hugs his son to show him the warmth he did not experience from his father: “I
try to, like, hug him regularly, just all of a sudden you know, [maybe] it’s
nearly dinnertime and I’ll walk by him and just sort of pull him close and hug
him and cuddle him. ... I like it and [I] know he likes it, even though” he is
now a teen. Össur says, “I want to have more warmth and ... to have [my
children] feel more affection than [I got from my father]. ... I want to show
my children a different demeanour ... [I want to give them] love and warmth. I
think that is the continuing theme ... always the track you want to stay on.”
Conversation

The fathers also emphasize conversation with their children, and hence emotional closeness. Illugi says that no one talked to him much when he was a child and teenager, and so he is “trying to make up for what I did not have myself.” He continues, “I really enjoy talking to my children and telling them I love them and hugging them.” He says he is his children’s “confidant, and I could tell them everything and I think they could tell me everything, all their secrets.” Níels too regrets that he was not able to talk to his father about things that mattered to him, so he sits down regularly for a chat with his son. Hannes regrets that he was not talked to much as a boy: “You didn’t know much about anything outside our own concerns. ... You didn’t know much about the outside world, and when the grown-ups were listening [to the radio] about some momentous events in the world outside, they didn’t discuss it with you. They didn’t tell you everything.” Hence he places great emphasis on discussing everything with his daughter and “introducing her to life.” He says that maybe they “didn’t do it when she was a baby, but today we see her as a grown-up person, and she gets to hear what is going on today, and learn about it.” Vigfús feels it is important that children be allowed to express their views, “because of my personal experience – I didn’t get to say anything. Never my opinion. So I think it’s very important that everybody is equal, somehow.”

Spending time together

The fathers emphasize spending time with their children, mainly ‘doing something’ with them, especially leisure activities and/or exercise of some kind. Dagur, who wishes he had had more time with his father, has striven to find a hobby that he and his son both enjoy and can do together, in order to spend time together: “I needed something that the two of us had in common,” he says. He says his son started playing golf: “I hadn’t intended to play golf myself, but he started golfing so I thought I might as well start doing it too.” He saw it as an opportunity to spend more time with his son: “to be able to go on summer holiday together [and] play golf together.” Flóki, who did not see his father much as a boy, says he spends a lot of time with his son, doing carpentry and other hobbies: “We often go to a shooting range and shoot clay pigeons, and fire shotguns, and target shooting with a rifle, and we go angling a lot, and all kinds of things,” as well. We “go swimming and there are actually just innumerable things.” And we “are always pottering away at something,” in the garage, for example “making something out of wood. [It] started when he was little, then it was all about swords and knives and so on, made of wood, but as he’s grown older it’s changed to other things, maybe more useful ones.”
The fathers’ role models

It is interesting to consider the issue of fathers’ role models in light of the statements above. Most of these fathers say that they would have liked to spend more time with their fathers, to know them well, and to have a closer relationship. They also regret the lack of physical and emotional closeness with their fathers. Given all these statements, it is no surprise that very few fathers cite their own fathers as their role models in parenting, although two mention their grandfathers, and one mentions his father-in-law. Hence it may be said that it is uncommon for these fathers to have other fathers as their role model.

As I described above, these fathers want to do better than their own fathers; compared to their own fathers they want to take a larger part in bringing up their children, and have more of a relationship with their children, and they emphasize togetherness. They want to gain that emotional closeness by talking to their children, and physical closeness by either ‘just being’ together or by ‘doing something together.’

But who are these fathers’ role models? By far the most common pattern is that mothers are their role models: mostly their own mothers, and also their wives/the mothers of their children, and some sisters and grandmothers. As children, these men received both physical and emotional closeness from their mothers, certainly more than from their fathers.

The fathers receive support from their wives/the mothers of their children in their desire to be close to their children, but they say that the children’s mothers are still closer to the children. They say this about these women being role models: “I think she knows so much about it. And I also feel [that what] she is doing is right and ... I look to that” (Illugi); it has “absolutely been very useful to me, what I’ve learned from my ex [wife]” (Tómas). Baldur says of his wife:

I just think she is a good parent. ... Yes, you just see it in the children. They respect her and it simply works. ... I think she has taught me a lot, anyway, about ... patience and listening to the children. Something that I saw her do a lot. [I have] seen it yield results, and [I have] admired her patience. [I have] tried it myself and I think it [works].

In short, while the fathers think the freedom of action/detachment they experienced as boys was “incredible fun,” and see various advantages in it, such as fostering self-reliance, few of them want to give their children as much freedom of action as they had themselves in their childhood, and they cite changing times.
The fathers also talk about how the society’s views about the welfare of children have changed, especially around the practice of sending young children to strangers to stay for the entire summer. Influences from values accepted in the community, along with laws and regulations and media, can also be seen on fathers’ lived experiences.

Closeness is the recurring theme in the fathers’ accounts of their lived experiences. They regretted not being close to their own fathers, but did found closeness with their mothers, and they see this same closeness in the relationships their own children have with their mothers.

In the fathers’ view, a good father is one who is emotionally close to his children and spends time with them, someone to whom the children can turn with their problems and thoughts. That is the kind of father they want to be.

The fathers tend to compare themselves with their fathers, but their own fathers, or other fathers, rarely serve as their role models. The fathers’ role models are mothers; their own mothers and/or their wives/the mothers of their children.

In this chapter I have presented my main findings of the study, examining the father’s view of parenting: their values, goals and practices. I have focused especially on the fathers’ lived experiences, interweaving those descriptions with my discussion of values, goals and practices, and devoting a separate section to its themes. Finally, I illustrated the lessons fathers have learned, and their role models.
4 Discussion

This study has two purposes. The first is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision: their values, goals, and practices, and how their lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision. Accordingly, the two research questions were: 1) What characterizes the fathers’ pedagogical vision on parenting and child-rearing (values, goals, and practices)? and 2) What characterizes the lived experiences that the fathers relate to their pedagogical vision? The second purpose is to modify and develop a model of teachers’ pedagogical vision in order to illustrate fathers’ pedagogical vision. In this chapter I draw these threads together.

In the first section I discuss the main findings concerning the first research question, placing them in relation to the work of the existing literature. In the second section, I discuss the second research question and then, in the third and final section, I modify and develop a model of fathers’ pedagogical vision.

4.1 The Fathers’ Pedagogical Vision

Here I highlight and discuss the three overarching themes that are highly visible in the fathers’ vision and throughout all of their perceived relationships with their children. These were: love and care, freedom, and security and boundaries. I also discuss these themes briefly in relation to what the literature suggests is optimal parenting practice for children’s well-being.

4.1.1 Love and care

Love and care is one of the values that almost all the fathers emphasize. It is highly visible throughout the data and can be seen in their values, goals, and parenting practices. They talk about love and care as “basic needs”; they say we “die in a way” if we do not receive them, and that they are “necessary for well-being.” In fact, the well-being of the child is the fathers’ main goal. They want their children to do well, and focus especially on their happiness and success in life. Their love and care and emphasis on the happiness and success of their children can be seen, for instance, in their determination that the children be self-confident and at peace with themselves, that they be happy and content with life, and that they get something out of life. It can also be seen in their insistence that their children have healthy lifestyles, become self-reliant in the future and able to take full responsibility for themselves, and become independent individuals. They emphasize those aspects because they
believe it is good for the child. Some of the fathers’ concerns also indicate their love and care; for example, they worry if their children have trouble making friends, and are proud if things go well. In addition, the fathers’ emphasis that the children be themselves (that is, not be too molded by the parents) shows a certain acceptance.

Love and care are also highly visible in the fathers’ parenting practices; giving security, love and care was the main theme they mentioned in that respect. All of them emphasize being there for their children. They say they show them warmth physically by hugging them, and psychologically by showing an interest in them, keeping up with what they are doing, and supporting them, as well as making time to listen to them and have conversations with them about anything and everything. They also show their children love and care by encouraging and complimenting them. They emphasize independence and freedom because they believe that is one characteristic of good parenting, and the same applies to discipline, boundaries and rules. They believe this emphasis is good for their children.

The fathers’ emphasis on love and care in their pedagogical vision is interesting because traditionally intimacy and caring have more often been attributed to women (Gilligan, 1982). For many years, researchers have pointed out the importance of love and care in upbringing (e.g., Baumrind, 1991a; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Icelandic parents seem to be aware of the importance of love and care, as they state that good parenting is characterised by love, care, and warmth (Þórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010). Clearly, times are changing: there seems to be social pressure on fathers to take a larger role in childcare (European Values Education, 2011; Gíslason, 2008b; Johansson & Klinth, 2008). They seem to be willing to take a larger role in family life (Gíslason, 2008a; Stefánsson, 2008b), and are spending more time caring for their children (Bianchi et al., 2006; Sullivan et al., 2009). Attitudes toward fatherhood have changed (Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Johansson & Klinth, 2008) and Europeans, for instance, have become more and more child-centred (Halman et al., 2011). It is likely because of those changes that love and care emerge so strongly in the data.

But we should remember that wanting to be loving and caring is not the same as being loving and caring. For instance, the fathers in this study want to spend more time with their children, and want more frequent and deeper dialogue with their children than their own fathers had had with them. For some of them, a lack of time is a hindrance, and some seem to use the time they have with their children only to warn and direct instead of having meaningful conversations. This finding is in accordance with other research
showing that Icelandic parents, especially fathers, only rarely sit down to talk to their children (Arnalds et al., 2012; Guðmundsdóttir et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2007).

The fathers also want to have relationships with their children that are closer emotionally than what they had with their own fathers. At the same time, most of them admit that they do not talk about emotions with their children. Other researchers have found that children find it easier to talk to their mothers than their fathers, especially when they feel bad or worried (Júlíusdóttir et al., 2008; UNICEF, 2007; World Health Organization, 2012). But the bottom line is that the fathers want to be loving and caring, and many of them seem to be.

4.1.2 Freedom
The second highly visible theme in the fathers’ pedagogical vision is freedom, which can be seen in all categories: the fathers’ values, goals, and practices. By freedom I mean the fathers’ emphasis on the child’s freedom of action (i.e., they do not want to have many rules or overprotect their children), autonomy (i.e., they do not want to mold the child too much; they want the child to be oneself and able to form opinions), and independence (i.e., they want the child to be self-reliant and able to take responsibility for oneself).

Their emphasis on freedom of action can be seen in their stress on not overprotecting their children. As Árni says, parents do not need to “be right with” them or follow them “around all the time.” Nor do they want to wrap their children in “cotton wool” (Reynir). Instead they want them to be able to cope with adversity and have some “challenges to deal with” (Reynir). This is in line with what Einarsdóttir (2006) says about parenting in Iceland: “historically, Icelandic children have often been left to their own devices throughout much of the day” (p. 163). She relates that to her findings on pedagogical practices in Icelandic preschools.

The fathers also want to have few rules and be hands-off. For instance, some of them answered ‘no’ when I asked whether they had any special house rules. Others said they did little or nothing to enforce the family’s rules. Their inaction and/or giving way was clear when they discussed the children’s computer usage. One father said, for instance, that his son had “always” been allowed to play computer games that are intended for older people (Flóki). Along similar lines, when discussing the official rules on children’s curfews, some said things like “we try” to stick to them. Similarly, other researchers have found that, although parental supervision of adolescents has been increasing in Iceland, only half of 9th and 10th graders say their parents have
rules on what they can do at home and outside of the home (Kristjánsson et al., 2012). Moreover, fewer than half of parents of 15- to 18-year-olds say they establish rules about the child’s Internet use (Arnalds et al., 2012). A certain percentage of parents find it difficult to maintain discipline (Arnalds et al., 2012; Þórarinsdóttir & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2010)

The fathers’ emphasis on the child’s autonomy can be seen in their insistence that they do not want to mold the children too much; they want them to be themselves. They want them “to hold on to their character” (Tómas) and be able to take new and unknown paths. Therefore they neither want to press or push them (Guðni) nor preach (Pálmi). They believe children are “bright” (Pálmi) and sometimes “more right than adults” (Niels). Though international studies state that parents generally want to transmit their personal values to their children (Tam & Lee, 2010), it is interesting and in line with the findings of this study that only 20 percent of Icelandic parents say they try to have a religious influence on their children (Björnsson & Pétursson, 1990).

These fathers focus highly on having their children be independent. As one says, the main goal of parenting is “to graduate an independent individual who can take care of him/herself” (Dagur). Their focus on independence can be seen, for example, in their emphasis on seeing the children become self-reliant, pursue education, and become financially independent, and responsible. The fathers emphasize working hard and making a habit of industry early in life, “so they can manage by themselves.” Their focus on independence can also be seen in their emphasis on children standing up for themselves and being able to form opinions. This is reflects the results from the European Values Study, which shows that 81% of Icelanders find it especially important that children learn independence at home; this is the second highest score in Europe (European Values Education, 2011). Economic security, which fosters skills and capabilities so that children can become economically self-sufficient adults, is also one of three universal parenting goals, according to LeVine (1974, 1988).

The fathers’ emphasis on freedom is closely related to their emphasis on trust. As one of the fathers said, “I just emphasize to them what is bad and what is good, and then you just have to trust them” (Arnaldur). This is similar to the preschool teachers who say that it is “important for children to have freedom to play undisturbed by adults”; they rationalize that by saying that children need to learn that they are “trusted” and need to be given “responsibility” (Einarsdóttir, 2006, p. 170).
Another important finding was that the fathers emphasize independence, individualism and self-reliance rather than collectivism and interdependence. Their emphasis on individualism can be seen in many places. One example I want to address is what they say about the importance of education. None of the fathers talk about education as being important for the community; none of them said they wanted their children to pursue an education so they can better support, serve, educate, or care for others, or so they can contribute to social or economic progress in the community. Instead, they emphasize that education is important to prepare “yourself” for life and for enabling them to “take care of themselves.” They want their children to pursue an education so they can enhance their employment security and job opportunities, and improve their prospects of a good salary: “To be more successful in supporting yourself and your family” (Lárus). Some fathers emphasize education because they believe it gives children more opportunities and increases their chances of happiness, but only two fathers talk about education being a source of maturity and broadmindedness.

In general they want their children to “have enjoyable and rewarding lives,” to live lives they are “pleased with,” to be “happy,” and “satisfied,” and do what they “want.” They place far more emphasis on their own children’s success and comfort than on their children’s obligation to others. This is in accordance with the shift toward more individualistic values in Europe (Halman et al., 2011): “Values oriented towards autonomy, privacy, self-actualization and personal happiness have become more important, and oust values that point at collective goals” (p. 35). This echoes what has been discussed previously about freedom of action, autonomy, and independence.

### 4.1.3 Security and boundaries

The third highly visible theme or thread in the fathers’ pedagogical vision is security and boundaries. It is actually two threads that are woven together: the fathers’ focus on their children’s security and having boundaries in their upbringing. Additionally, this thread, security and boundaries, is intermittently woven together with freedom and love and care. However, the theme of security and boundaries can be seen in all categories: the fathers’ values, goals, and parenting practices.

All of the fathers emphasize the value of security and believe it is key to a healthy childhood. They focus on emotional security and want to be there for the child; to “act as a refuge,” “backup,” and “anchor.” Among the fathers’ parenting goals, the emphasis on security or safety appears in their rules on curfews; some strongly emphasize that their children are required to let them
know what they are doing. This emphasis on their children’s safety also occurs in their worries about the children’s potential drug abuse. The theme of security in the fathers’ parenting practices can also be seen in their emphasis on being there for the child. The fathers believe that by being there for the child—keeping up with what they are doing and being supportive—they provide them with security.

To keep their children secure, the fathers want to have limits and “clear boundaries,” but the boundaries are not always clear. For instance, many fathers, as noted earlier, first answered ‘no’ when asked whether they had any special house rules. Almost all of them, however, emphasize that their children follow the family’s rules and customs; fewer emphasize that their children follow society’s rules and customs. The fathers say they set boundaries and rules to achieve their parenting goals, though not all of them enforce the rules. They use various methods to maintain discipline; some say they punish, while more say they do nothing or concede to the child’s wishes. The fathers imply that it is important for them to respect their children, but fewer imply that it is important for their children to respect their parents.

Those results are consistent with trends in the rest of Europe, where obedience is “losing ground as an important quality for children to acquire at home” and “independence is gaining ground” (Halman et al., 2011, p. 35). In Iceland, the emphasis on obedience is low (the second lowest in Europe), with only 13% of Icelanders believing that it is especially important for children to learn obedience at home. The father’s role as a disciplinarian has also been decreasing (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Some of the fathers in the study say that the mother takes more responsibility for setting boundaries and rules than they themselves do, a trend that many studies confirm (e.g., Lamb, 2012). Researchers have also found that fathers focus more on playing with and having fun with the children (Einarsdóttir & Pétursdóttir, 2004; Gíslason, 1997; Lamb, 2010a; Sommer, 1999). As one of the father in this study said, I “have permitted myself to be a little bit more, like, the good guy. ... [So] maybe it has been more up to the mom to manage and control.”

4.1.4 The fathers’ parenting style
To summarize the points made above, the fathers emphasize love and care and freedom (freedom of action, autonomy and independence) and security and boundaries.

It is interesting to compare these findings with what researchers have found to be the parenting practices most conducive to children’s growth and well-being: an authoritative parenting style focusing on 1) warmth/affection
(acceptance, support and involvement); 2) behavioural control (monitoring and limit setting); and 3) autonomy granting (encouragement of individual expression and decision making) (Baumrind, 1991a; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Palkovitz, 2007; Silk et al., 2003).

The fathers emphasize warmth and affection, though they do not always seem to be sure how to be loving and caring. They emphasize security and boundaries though their boundaries are not always clear, they want few rules and do not all of them, and some say they do nothing to maintain discipline or even concede. The fathers emphasize freedom of action, autonomy, and independence though some emphasize it more than others.

4.2 The Fathers’ Lived Experiences and Pedagogical Vision

It is clear from the data that the fathers’ lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision: their values, goals and parenting practices. The fathers themselves also seem to be aware of this. As one puts it, “I think you are the product of your lived experience” (Ýmir). As the fathers talk about their visions, they also refer to things they have read (Pálmi), been told (Hannes), observed in others (Árni), and learned through personal experience (Þröstur) and their own mistakes (Vigfús).

The different factors from the fathers’ lived experiences that affect their visions can be classified using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000b). As stated earlier this study focuses on microsystem factors with underlying aspects of macro- and chronosystem factors as they interweave with the fathers’ pedagogical vision. Before discussing the microsystem factors at play, it is also relevant to restate that the focus of this study is only on one immediate setting in which the father is engaged: the home (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000b). That means that the focus is on the child in question, and the mother of the child, and their relationship with the father. The focus is also on the father’s childhood home; i.e., his relationship with his parents as a child.

Effects from the child on the fathers’ pedagogical vision are clear in the data. As the fathers talk about their vision they refer to the child’s age (Pálmi) and maturity (Dagur), the child’s abilities and strengths (Arnaldur), and the child’s temperament (Hannes), and personality (Niels). This is congruent with conceptions of the impact that children have on parenting (Kuczynski, 2003); for example, the influence on parenting that the child’s characteristics (Karraker & Coleman, 2005), age (Bornstein, 2002b), or gender (Leaper, 2002) may have.
The fathers’ pedagogical vision is also affected by *their own mothers*, whom they found to ‘be there’ for them and who were emotionally close to them. They see their mothers as role models, and look at the *mothers of their children* as role models as well. They find both these sets of mothers to be women who are close to the children and have good parenting skills. *Their own fathers* affect their vision in a different way, as they named several things that were missing from their childhood relationships, which makes them want to be better fathers themselves. They want to be more involved in raising their children than their fathers were, and have closer relationships with their children. This is in line with the findings of other studies, as many men seem to have the experience of an absent or distant father (Abramovitch, 1997; Einarsdóttir, 1998; Gíslason, 1997; Johansson, 2004). In addition, the fathers’ experience of freedom of action/detachment in childhood is related to their views, as they want to give their children less freedom of action than they had as children. Generally speaking, the above findings in this study are congruent with the spirit of other studies, which indicates that one generation affects the next (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003); along with their values (Barni & Knafo, 2012; Jónsson & Ólafsson, 1991) and behaviour (Belsky, 1984; Noddings, 2002). The way we, as parents, raise our children is influenced by how we were raised (Capaldi et al., 2003); and parents influence each other and the way they parent (Belsky, 1984; Fincham & Hall, 2005).

In this study, the effects from microsystem factors have perhaps the most visible impact on the fathers’ pedagogical vision, but several macrosystem factors also have an impact on the fathers’ pedagogical vision. Here I will highlight and discuss laws and regulations, the values accepted in the community, the welfare system, and media, all of which influence the fathers’ vision.

**Icelandic laws and regulations** impact the fathers’ vision in various ways. One father (Þröstur), for example, says he never hit his son because he knows it is forbidden by Icelandic laws (Child Protection Act no. 80/2002, Article 1). Several fathers say their rules about when the child is supposed to come home at night are simply following the children’s curfew regulations in the Child Protection Act (Article 92). In addition, several fathers say that part of their role as parents is to prepare the child to follow the “laws and rules” of the society.

In democratic countries, like Iceland, laws and regulations reflect the *values accepted in the community*. It is accepted in Iceland today that fathers are involved in the upbringing of their children, and several laws exist to encourage fathers to be active in childcare (Act in Respect of Children no. 76/2003; Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men no. 10/2008; Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95/2000).
The values mentioned above may have affected the fathers in this study and their interest in parenting. Another example of values accepted in the community appears in the fathers’ emphasis on freedom when they talk about the upbringing of their children. This is reminiscent of the emphasis on freedom in Icelandic culture (e.g., Einarsdóttir, 2006).

The welfare system in Iceland seemed to impact the fathers’ pedagogical vision in a way. The fathers strongly emphasize education, but none of them talk about hindrances like the expense of education. This should not be surprising, as education and health care in Iceland are mostly financed through taxation rather than individuals’ savings, which frees parents from worrying about those matters. The fathers place emphasis on the physical security and health of their children, but it is not in their highest priority. Because Icelandic children have quite high levels of health and safety compared to other countries, and relatively low levels of risky behaviours (UNICEF, 2013a) the fathers might not place physical and health as priority.

The media also influence the fathers’ pedagogical vision. The fathers are worried about their children’s access to inappropriate content on the Internet. For example, Vigfús talks about Internet pornography, and Níels about the bad influence of music videos and commercials on children’s body images. This has affected their parenting as they set rules about Internet access and computer time and discuss these things with their children. The fathers’ worries are not surprising as other research shows that Icelandic teenagers find pornography to be ubiquitous, easy to access, and difficult to avoid on the Internet (Ólafsdóttir & Sigmarsson, 2006). Still, less than half of parents of teens aged 15 to 18 say they establish rules about the child’s Internet use (Arnalds et al., 2012).

In addition to micro- and macrosystem factors that impact the fathers’ pedagogical vision, chronosystem factors also have visible impacts in the frequent statement that times have changed. The fathers are aware of the evolving norms in parenting; they see that some elements of the way they were parented would not be accepted as good parenting today. Cities have grown, and people do not know each other as well as in small villages where everyone keeps an eye on each other (Arnaldur). Traffic has increased, which makes it more dangerous for children to wander around town. And values have changed, as Unnar points out: today it would not be seen as a good parenting to send 5-year-old children to the country to spend the whole summer with strangers, which “was a matter of course in those days.” Times have also changed regarding expectations about the role of the father; the community expects other things of fathers today than it expected of their fathers.
It is clear from the data that many factors impact the fathers’ pedagogical vision: factors from the micro-, macro-, and chronosystems, to use Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2000b) classification.

### 4.3 A Model of Fathers’ Pedagogical Vision

Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2007, 2010) of teachers’ and principals’ pedagogical vision was presented in chapter 1.5. For this study, I adapted the upper part of Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model to fathers’ pedagogical vision, as shown in Figure 3 and represented here. That vision is in the centre, surrounded by the father’s parenting values, goals and practices. Those elements become integrated into his vision, as the arrows in the picture show. They are also interrelated (cf. arrows in Figure 3). Underlying this is the father’s lived experience which influences, and is part of, the father’s values, goals and practices and therefore the father’s pedagogical vision.

![Figure 3 Model of Pedagogical Vision](image)

Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model is useful for describing how values, goals and parenting practices get integrated in fathers’ pedagogical vision as that process has emerged from the data. The model also describes well the connections between values, goals and practices. Further, the layer construct of father’s lived experience is useful for describing the effects that microsystem factors (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2000b) have on the father’s pedagogical vision as it emerges in the data. That is, this model describes and embraces the microsystem factors at play in this study.
Discussion

However, I do not find that Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model strongly enough embraces the various macrosystem factors, like the values accepted in the community, the media, the law, or the welfare system. Nor do I find it to address chronosystem factors like historical changes over time visibly enough. I believe the macro- and chronosystem factors that have emerged from the data affect the fathers’ pedagogical vision in an important way and should therefore be illustrated more clearly in the model.

It could be argued that the layer father’s lived experience is sufficient, as all those factors overlap and influence one another, as examples from the data in the previous chapter show. That is, influences from one’s surroundings, like the effects of the media or values accepted in the community, become part of one’s lived experience. This is one reason why I suggest adding a new layer to the model.

I call the new layer the socio-cultural and historical context (cf. Figure 5). The socio-cultural part of the layer refers to the way that macro factors like laws, values accepted in the community, the welfare system, and media affect the fathers’ pedagogical vision. The historical part of the layer refers to chrono-factors: time and traditions that affect the fathers’ pedagogical view.
I believe that adding the new layer makes the model more clear and precise. Additionally, as it highlights the affects of macro- and chronofactors, it encourages us to step back and consider the big picture: the context in which the father lives. If we do not take the environment into account when studying a population, we risk generalizing from one population to another.

Another adjustment to Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2007, 2010) is changing the shape of the model from narrow to broad. That is done to emphasize that the socio-cultural and historical context layer is broader than the layer of the father’s lived experience and the former mentioned affects the latter. The new layer helps us make sense of the father’s lived experience.

The new layer, socio-cultural and historical context, influences all the other factors in the model; I am placing it beneath the other factors to emphasize that influence. The new layer influences the fathers’ lived experiences; their values, goals and practices; and therefore their pedagogical vision.

This is similar to Bronfenbrenner’s model (1979, 2000b), where the macrosystem (the fourth level of the ecological schema), influences all of the other levels, as it comprises the influence of the culture of which the person is a part. Visually, it surrounds the other levels (cf. Figure 1). The chronosystem (the fifth system of the ecological schema), also influences all the other levels, as it encompasses changes over time in the person’s environment and the characteristics of the person. Visually it can be shown by an arrow going through the other systems (cf. Figure 1).

The new layer, socio-cultural and historical context, to Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model (2007, 2010) is in line not only with Bronfenbrenner’s model (1979, 2000b), but also with social constructivism (e.g., Gergen, 2001; Schwandt, 2007; Shotter, 1993): Because the fathers’ view is constructed within their culture, and constructed in interactions with other individuals, it cannot be fully understood unless it is set in historical and social perspective.

Fathers do not live in a vacuum; their views and visions (values, goals and practices) are influenced by micro-, macro-, and chronosystem factors, along with their lived experiences and the socio-cultural and historical context they live in.

4.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study has several strengths. One is the specific focus on fathers, as through the years less attention has been given to fathers as caregivers than to mothers (Lamb, 1975, 2010b). Another strength lies in the use of qualitative methodology to provide deeper insight into the fathers’ thoughts and meanings than quantitative methods can provide. The study explores the actual lived experience of fathers, which few studies have done. The third strength of the study is its
findings, which convey a knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision—their values, goals, and practices—as well as how their lived experiences relate to that pedagogical vision. The fourth strength is that these findings generate a modified model of fathers’ pedagogical vision which can help us better understand fatherhood in context.

One limitation of the study is that the focus is mainly on one microsystem ecological factor (the home) that can influence parenting with underlying aspects of the macro- and chronosystem, and not on meso- or exosystem factors (Belsky, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Though factors such as the marital relationship, the father’s work, and his social circles may have a large impact on parenting, this study does not address them (Belsky, 1984). But as Bronfenbrenner has pointed out, “it is neither necessary nor possible to meet all the criteria for ecological research within a single investigation” (1979, p. 14). A further limitation is that data were collected only by interviewing the fathers; no data were gathered from their children or from observations of their social relationships.
5 Conclusion

In this final chapter I consider the contribution that the study makes to the educational field, and offer some recommendations for practice and further research.

5.1 Contribution to Research

This study had three aims: 1) to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of fathers’ pedagogical vision; their values, goals, and practices; 2) to understand how their lived experiences relate to their pedagogical vision; and 3) to modify and develop a model to understand their vision.

With the study I am contributing to research on fathers, who have historically received less attention than mothers. In particular, little research has focused on fathers’ actual lived experience; this study helps to begin to rectify this lack. Research on fathers is particularly important, as their role has changed markedly in recent decades. Moreover, it is relevant to understand fatherhood, as fathers are important for the well-being of their children. To study fatherhood in Iceland is important not only nationally but also internationally. Because of the ecological factors impacting fathers and the paternal role, we will never fully understand fatherhood unless we examine fathers in as many different socio-cultural contexts as possible.

Among the major findings of my study on fatherhood, with its focus on fathers’ pedagogical vision, is that the fathers place great emphasis on love and care. This is an interesting contribution to studies on fatherhood, both nationally and internationally, because in the past intimacy and caring has been more often attributed to women (Gilligan, 1982).

In addition, I have made a theoretical contribution to the literature on fathers by modifying and developing a model to understand their vision. I have integrated Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective and Aðalbjarnardóttir’s model of pedagogical vision. This model can be useful for better understanding fathers’ pedagogical vision to help us understand fatherhood in context: what influences their vision and how. It can also be useful in thematically analyzing fathers’ views and experiences as they raise their children.

5.2 Recommendations for Practice and Further Research

As I said in the prologue, I have a special interest in relating theory to practice; I think it is important for academics to contribute to public discourse in their professional roles. From the data it is clear that these fathers want to
be good fathers: they want to spend time with their children, to ‘be there’ for
them, to be emotionally close to them, to have conversations with them, to
show them love and care, and to set boundaries. Some of the fathers seem
better at these things than others. Some find it difficult to sit down and talk
with their children about anything and everything, or to talk about emotions.
Others struggle to find time to spend with their children, and still others to
enforce rules.

I believe that parent education could support fathers in finding ways to be
the fathers they want to be. It is not only important for the children that their
fathers care for them diligently; it is important for the whole community. The
findings of the study can be helpful in parent education. Also, parent
education that has core principles, like the National Parenting Educational
Network (NPEN) in the United States, could be beneficial for Icelandic
fathers. Its mission is to “strengthen families by providing relevant, effective
education [and to] support and encourage an optimal environment for the
healthy growth and development of parents and children” (NPEN, n.d.).

It is clear that parents’ pedagogical vision needs to be explored further.
Among the many areas of interest, as a next step I would like to study
mothers’ pedagogical vision. As stated earlier, I have already interviewed 24
mothers, most of them raising a child with a father who participated in this
study. To study the mothers’ pedagogical vision will be quite interesting in
itself, but it could be even more enlightening to compare it with the fathers’
vision. In addition, it would be interesting to further elaborate on the data
using contemporary sociological system approaches and looking more closely
at gender orders, hegemonic masculinity and femininity, power, and welfare
state regimes.

As previously mentioned, this study is part of a larger research project:
Civic awareness of young people in a democratic society (Borgaravitund ungs
fólks í Lýðveldið Ísland) at the Centre for Research into Challenges Facing
Children and Young People (Lífshættir barna og ungmenn), led by Sigrún
Aðalbjarnardóttir, my supervisor. Approximately 1,500 young people
participated in the large study. The 23 fathers participating in this study (as
well as the 24 mothers interviewed) are all parents of children in the large
study. It will be interesting to compare data from this study with other data
from the large project to gain a deeper understanding of parents’ pedagogical
vision. Furthermore, it would be interesting, based on the findings of this
study, to submit a questionnaire to a large sample of fathers to examine
whether the pedagogical vision that appeared here is applicable generally.
5.3 Closing Words

In the prologue I said that I strongly believe that fathers can be as good as mothers at caregiving, and cited a quote I encountered early in my study: “With the exception of lactation, there is no evidence that women are biologically predisposed to be better parents than men are: Social conventions, not biological imperatives, underlie the traditional division of parental responsibilities” (Lamb, 2002, p. 108). The findings of the study are consistent with this view.

The fathers place great emphasis on love and care and on the well-being of their children, and they are very interested in parenting. For example, it is noteworthy how motivated the fathers were to participate in the study. Every father I talked to agreed to participate in the study; this was surprising because several researchers have pointed out that it is often difficult to get fathers to participate (e.g., Ramey, 2002). Though the fathers seem to be interested in parenting, they did not describe their own fathers as interested. Nor did they experience their own father as ‘being there’ for them or involved in parenting in the ways they want to be. Social conventions are likely to have prevented fathers from adopting this caring role in the past, when paternal child care was not socially accepted or normal. Today it seems accepted and even expected in Icelandic communities that fathers take an active part in the care of their children, and fathers seem to be willing to do so.

The fathers’ interest, and their emphasis on love, care, and the well-being of their children, should be of interest to fathers in general, along with mothers, other educators, and those who work with parents. These findings should also serve as useful information for policy makers in parent education, and administrators and other professionals in this area, as the traditional view of gender roles does not include fathers as caregivers. Fathers in Iceland have been encouraged and supported in their parenting role by several laws: Act in Respect of Children no. 76/2003; Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men no. 10/2008; and Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95/2000. Authorities should continue to encourage and support fathers in their important role. Moreover, is it important to continue to search for new ways to support fathers, as the findings show that the fathers do not always know how to be the loving and caring fathers they want to be.
References


Act in Respect of Children no. 76 (2003).


Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave no. 95 (2000).


Child Protection Act no. 80 (2002).


The Compulsory School Act no. 91 (2008).


Lög um almannatryggingar nr. 50 (1946).


References


References


Appendices

Appendix A: The Interview Framework

Introduction: Confidentiality, anonymity. Wanting to explore the person’s ideas, no “right” or “wrong” answers.

Family
- Tell me something about your family. What people live in your home? How old are they, and what do they do?
- Do you have any other children (that you haven’t mentioned)? If so, how old are they?
- Has your daughter/son in question always lived with you?

Previous experience and interest – children and parenting
- What experience did you have of children before you were a father? (Did you babysit younger siblings or other children when you were younger? Have you looked after siblings’ children? Your partner’s children? Have you worked with children?)
- Did you like children before you were a father? Why? Why not?
- When you were younger, was fatherhood one of your dreams for the future?
- How did you feel when you knew you were going to be a father?

Parental role
- How do you feel about being a parent?
- What do you think is good about being a parent – what are the positive sides of parenthood?
- What do you find most difficult in the parental role?
- What do children need from their parents?
- How do parents know what children need?

The child
- How would you describe your child? (personality, strengths)
- What is it in your child’s character that you especially like? Why?
- What is it in your child’s character that you don’t like? Why?

Parenting practices and interaction
- How would you describe your relationship with the child in question?
- When you are together, what do you do?
- How often do you sit down with your child to talk things through? What do you talk about? Do you talk about feelings?
- What are the advantages of talking about things, in your view? And the disadvantages? Why?
- Does your child express his/her views readily? Do you think this is important? Why?
- If disagreements arise, how do you resolve them?
• Do you have any special rules in the home? How are they decided? Why is that method used?
• How does the child do with following the rules?
• Do you follow up on the child following the rules? How?
• What happens if the child doesn’t follow the rules? How do you deal with it?
• Has there been any turning point or trauma that you feel has had an impact on your parenting (e.g., moving home, child’s or parent’s illness, financial difficulties)?

Goals
• What do you think it is most important to emphasize in parenting? Why?
• What are your principal goals/objective/aims in parenting? Why?
• What do you think a “good upbringing” is?
• What kind of a person do you want your child to be?
• What expectations, hopes or future dreams do you have for your child?
• We’ve been discussing your goals in parenting. How have you tried to achieve those goals? Tell me more about it...

Values
• What values/virtues/qualities do you value most in others, i.e. people in society?
• Which of those values/virtues/qualities have you emphasized nurturing in your child?
• How have you sought to nurture them in your child?
• How do you think you’ve done? What has gone well, and what qualities do you find it hard to nurture?
• What values do you think it is important to foster in a democratic society like Iceland?

Lived experience and role models
• How would you describe the way you were brought up? What were the principal advantages? And what might have been better?
• How far have you raised your child the same way, and how far differently? Why?
• What do you think is the biggest influence on your ideas about parenting?
• Where did your principal ideas about parenting come from?
• What has proved most useful to you?
• Who is your principal role model as a parent? Why?
• Can you tell me about any event when you were younger, that is particularly memorable, when you thought: “I’m going to do that when I’m a father” or “I’ll take care not to do that when I’m a father”?

Education
• What is your highest educational qualification? Compulsory school certificate / upper secondary school / technical qualification / university degree / other professional qualification?

End
• Finally, is there anything you’d like to add?
• Thanks.
Appendix B: The Interview Framework in Icelandic

Inngangur: Trúnaður, nafn kemur ekki fram. Verið er að leita eftir hugmyndum viðkomandi, engin rétt eða röng svör.

Fjölskyldan
- Segðu mér aðeins frá fjölskyldunni. Hverjir búa saman á heimilinu? Aldur og störf?
- Áttu önnur börn (en þau sem þú hefur þegar nefnt) og ef svo er hvað eru þau gömul?
- Hefur umrædd dóttir þín/sonur þinn alltaf búað hjá þér?

Fyrri reynsla og áhugi á börnum og uppeldi
- Hver var reynsla þín af börnum áður en þú varðst faðir? (Gættirðu yngri systkina eða annarra barna þegar þú varst yngri? Gættirðu barna systkina þína? Börn maka? Hafðirðu starfað með börnum?)
- Hafðirðu gaman af börnum áður en þú varðst faðir? Af hverju, af hverju ekki?
- Þegar þú varst yngri, var það hluti af framtíðardraumum þínum að verða faðir?
- Hvernig leið þér þegar þú fékkst að vita að þú værir að verða faðir?

Foreldralutverkið
- Hvernig finnst þér að vera foreldri?
- Hvað finnst þér gott við að vera foreldri, hverjar eru jákvæðar hlíðar þess að vera foreldri?
- Hvað finnst þér ef það er erfiðast við foreldralutverkið?
- Hvers þarfnast börn frá foreldrum sínnum?
- Hvernig vita foreldrar hvers börnin þarfnast?

Barnið
- Hvernig myndir þú lýsa barni þínu? (Skapgerð, styrkleikleikar)
- Hvað er það í fari barns þíns sem þér líkar sérstaklega? Hvers vegna?
- Hvað er það í fari barns þíns sem þér líkar ekki? Hvers vegna?

Uppeldisaðferðir og samskipti
- Hvernig mundir þú lýsa sambandi þínu og umrædds barn þíns?
- Þegar þið erðu saman, hvað gerið þið?
- Hversu oft sest þú niður með barni þínu til að ræða málin? Um hvað snúast umræðurnar? Talið þið um tilfinningar?
- Hverjir eru kostir umræðna að þínu mati? En ókostir? Hvers vegna?
- Er barnið þitt füst til að fjá skoðun sínna? Finnst þér það mikilvægt? Hvers vegna?
- Ef upp koma ágreiningsmál, hvernig leysið þið þau?
- Eru einhverjar sérstakar reglu á heimilinu? Hvernig eru þær settar? Hvers vegna er sú leið valin?
Hvort gengur barninu að fylgja reglunum?
Fylgið þú því eftir að barnið fari eftir reglum? Hvornig?
Hvað gerist ef barnið fer ekki eftir reglunum? Hvornig tekur þú á því?
Geturðu nefnt einhverja vendipunkta eða áföll sem þú telur að hafi haft áhrif á förlænskutverkið (t.d. flutninga, veikindi barns eða foreldris, fjárhagsvanda)?

Markmið
Á hvað finnst þér mikilvægest að leggja áherslu í uppeldinu? Hver vegna?
Hvert er meginmarkmið þitt í uppeldinu? Hvers vegna?
Hvað finnst þér „gott uppeldi“ vera?
Hvernig einstaklingur viltu að barnið sé eða verði?
Hvaða væntingar, vonir eða framtíðardrauma hefur þú til handa barni þínu?
Nú hófum við rætt um uppeldis-markmið þín. Hvornig hefur þú reynt að ná fram þessum markmiðum þínnum? Segðu mér nánar frá því!

Gildi
Hvaða gildi/dygðir/mannkosti metur þú mest í fari annarra, þ.e. fólks í samfélaginu?
Hverra þessara gilda/dygða/mannkosta hefur þú lagt áherslu á að rækta hjá barni þínu?
Hvernig hefur þú reynt að rækta þetta með barni þínu?
Hvernig finnst þér hafa til tekist? Hvaða gengur vel og hvað finnst þér erfitt að rækta?
Hvaða gildi finnst þér mikilvægt að hlúa að í lýðræðissamfélagi eins og á Íslandi?

Lífsreynsla og fyrirmyndir
Hvernig mundir þú lýsa því uppeldi sem þú fékkst? Hverjir voru helstu kostir þess og hvað hefði betur mátt fara?
Að hvaða leyti hefur þú að hverjum þitt barn eins upp, að hvaða leyti ekki? Af hverjum?
Hvað hefur þú að hafi haft mest áhrif á hugmyndir þínar um uppeldi?
Hvaðan fékkstu helst hugmyndir þínar um uppeldi?
Hvaða hefur þú reynt þér best?
Hver er þín helsta fyrirmynd sem uppalandi? Af hverjum?
Geturðu nefnt atvik frá yngri árum eða æsku sem er þér eftirminnilegt, einhver samskipti þar sem þú hugsaðir „svona ætla ég að gera þegar ég verð módir/faðir ég að þegar ekki önnur fagmenntun/ hásörlapróf/ önnur fagmenntun?

Menntun
Hver er hæsta prófgráða sem þú hefur lokið? Grunnskólapróf/ stúdentspróf/ íðnmenntun/ háskólapróf/ önnur fagmenntun?

Lok
Er eithvað að lokum sem þú vilt bæta við?
Þakkir.
Appendix C: The Fathers’ Parenting Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values by which the fathers are guided in their upbringing</th>
<th>Fathers of boys</th>
<th>Fathers of girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Physical security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emotional security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection, Love and care</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The value of family</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants: 23 fathers (11 fathers of boys and 12 fathers of girls).
Qualities fathers seek to instil/foster/nurture or bring out in their children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Fathers of boys (11 fathers of boys and 12 fathers of girls).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Appendix D: The Fathers' Parenting Goals

**Qualities fathers seek to instil/foster/nurture or bring out in their children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Fathers of Boys</th>
<th>Fathers of Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At peace with self and life</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Be self-confident and at peace with oneself</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Be happy and content with life</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social skills</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Kindness</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow rules and customs...</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of society</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the family</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>-Family mealtimes</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>-When to come home</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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<td>-Keeping the home clean and tidy</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy lifestyle</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>-Get regular exercise</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>-Use computer/TV in moderate/sensible way</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>-Get enough sleep</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>-Avoid smoking/alcohol/drugs</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Be self-reliant</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>-Be financially independent</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Be diligent, hard-working</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>-Pursue an education</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>-Be responsible</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>5</td>
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The practices the fathers say they use to attain their parenting goals

|                                                   | D | F | I | J | L | N | Ó | R | U | V | P | A | Á | B | E | G | H | K | M | P | T | Y | Ô |
| Be there for the child                           | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 11 | 12 | 23 |
| - Take an interest, keep up, and be supportive  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 | 12 | 22 |
| - Listen and have conversations about anything and everything | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| Be a role model                                  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 7 | 10 | 17 |
| Give positive feedback                           | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| - Encourage                                      | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| - Praise                                         | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Provide information                              | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| Provide freedom                                  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 4 | 9 | 13 |
| Discipline: Set boundaries and rules            | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 9 | 7 | 16 |

Participants: 23 fathers (11 fathers of boys and 12 fathers of girls).