

MEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDBIRTH: IMPLICATIONS FOR PATERNAL IDENTITY

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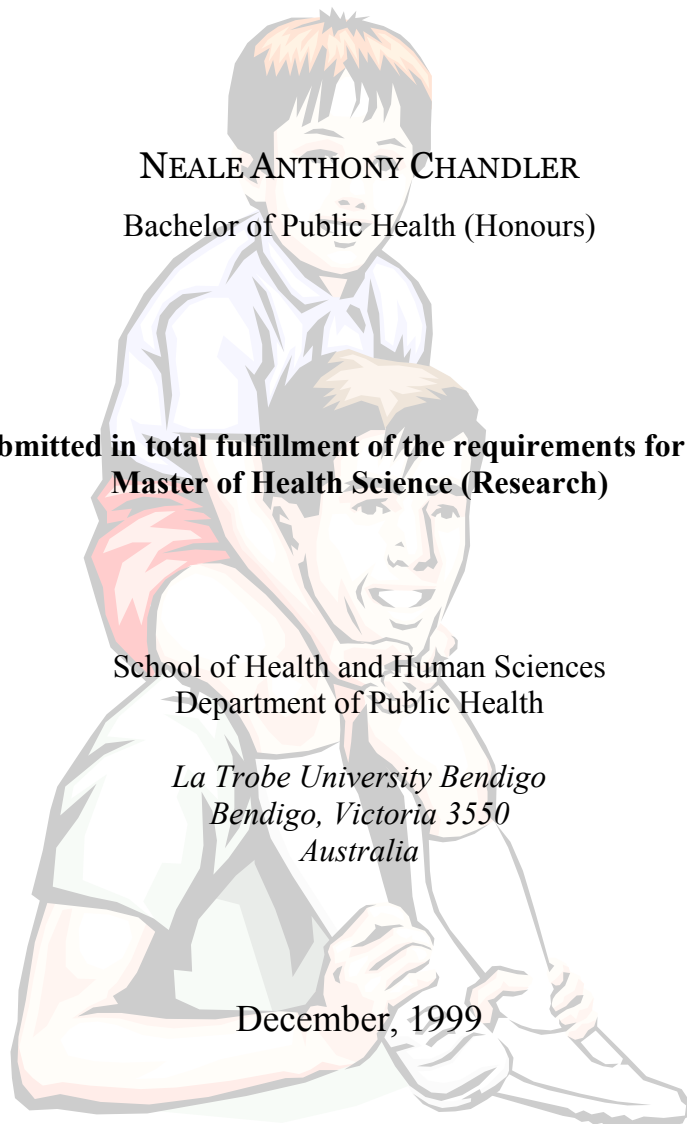
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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis presented by me for another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant University Ethics Committee.

NEALE CHANDLER

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Research Summary

This research analyses the first paternal experience of childbirth and its affects on how men experience themselves as fathers. The study adopts a moral and philosophical standpoint, to ensure that the experiences of other key stakeholders in the childbirth realm are considered. This recognises that childbirth is women's business, and how, as a male researcher, I have the potential to impose my views from a position of social dominance.

Qualitative data were collected from twenty four participants who described their experiences of childbirth, in five focus groups. Participants were men whose first experience of childbirth occurred from as recently as one month to five years ago. Twelve participants were then involved in individual interviews to discuss, in depth, their experiences of fathering. An interview was also conducted with a midwife to illuminate her experiences of men and childbirth.

Using interpretive interactionism as the chosen method for data analysis, I have identified the first paternal experience of childbirth as an epiphany in its major form. Epiphanies of which there are four types; the major, the cumulative, the minor illuminative and the relived, are those experiences that have the potential to transform and even radically alter peoples lives, and how they define themselves and their relations with others (Denzin,1989b:15). Data were phenomenologically analysed and six primary childbirth and fathering themes have been identified.

Men's first experience of childbirth entails emotions that range from fear and anger to awe and amazement. The reason that this life experience constitutes an epiphany for men, is that it affects how they experience themselves as fathers. The memory of their partner's labour and birth pain is significant in how men construct their paternal identity. Important to men is the ability to biologically sire a child, and in particular a son, the need to create the child in men's own likeness and responsibility for financial provision and discipline of the child.

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