

Human Communication. A Publication of the Pacific and Asian Communication Association. Vol. 15, No. 4, pp.241 - 259.

Turning Points of Closeness in the Father/Daughter Relationship

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Abstract

While historically under-studied in comparison to other family relationships, the father-daughter relationship is an important dyad within the family system and has been associated with a number of significant psycho-social developmental outcomes for women as they grow from young girls to young adults. Of particular importance is the quality of the emotional connection shared by fathers and daughters, especially in terms of perceptions of closeness. The goal of the current study was to examine both fathers' and daughters' perceptions of closeness in their relationship and the events that have affected the strength of those relational bonds as the daughter was growing up. Using turning point analysis, 43 fathers and 43 daughters (not related) participated in the study. Daughters reported 129 turning points of closeness from which six primary categories of change emerged. Fathers reported a total of 134 turning points resulting in six additional categories of change. Fathers and daughters found considerable agreement concerning events affecting their perceptions of closeness, while traditionally masculine forms of creating and maintaining closeness emerged as an important component of this unique family dyad.

Key Words: fathers, daughters, father/daughter relationships, closeness, turning-points

Over the last three decades, a substantial and growing body of literature has conclusively demonstrated that fathers make significant contributions to the developmental processes of their children. After decades of believing that fathers were subordinate to mothers, or even insignificant in the lives of their children, as we have advanced into the new century, the extant research in this area has substantially challenged this assumption. Positive and effective fathering has been found to result in a host of significant outcomes associated with the social, emotional, cognitive, developmental, behavioral, and even spiritual growth processes of children (Allgood, Beckert, & Peterson, 2012; Holmes & Huston, 2010; Lamb, 2004).

However, despite the increasingly loud chorus of family scholars advancing the argument that fathers really do play a significant role in the process of raising children, fathering has been studied to a lesser degree than mothering, perhaps due to the perception that mothers play a more influential role in the parenting process (Dienhart, 2001). For example, studies continue to report that, compared to fathers, mothers spend significantly more time with their infants and young children (Day & Lamb, 2004; Jacobs & Kelley, 2006) and with their adolescent children (Phares, Fields, & Kamboukos, 2009). Children continue to report feeling closer to their mothers than their fathers, knowing their mothers much better than their fathers (Nielsen, 2001), and have even reported disclosing highly personal information to their mothers more so than to their fathers (Mathews, Derlega, & Morrow, 2006). Male and female children have been found to have more positive affect and less negative affect directed toward their mother as compared to their father (Phares, Renk, Duhig, Fields, & Sly, 2009). Others continue to frame fathers as inferior, subordinant, or secondary to mothers with dad simply perceived as a “playmate” for his children, a role perceived to be much less important than the maternal nurturing/caretaker role of the mother (Flanders, et al., 2010; Paquette, 2004; Paquette & Bigras, 2010; also see Roggman, 2004, for a commentary on this perspective on fathering).

And yet despite this line of argument, the overwhelming conclusion of the extant fathering literature of the past 30 years is that fathers do, in fact, make significant and unique contributions to their children. Moreover, Rohner and Veneziano (2001) argued that “much of the evidence of the past decade suggests that the variability of children’s behavior is more closely associated with the type of father one has than the type of mother” (p. 398). This may be especially true for the father/daughter relationship. A relatively small, but growing body of research convincingly argues that a father has an enormous influence over a host of important psycho-social outcomes in the life of his daughter, so much so, that “daughters who are dissatisfied with their communication interaction with their fathers are more likely to be involved with bad peer relationships, have unpleasant romantic endeavors, and make poor or life-threatening decisions compared to daughters who are satisfied with their communication interactions with their fathers” (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008, p. 23). Thus, from this perspective, the father/daughter relationship warrants additional scholarly attention and for a number of compelling reasons.

Closeness and the Father/Daughter Relationship

First, higher quality father/daughter relationships are associated with more positive academic achievement outcomes for girls (Lee, Kushner, & Cho, 2007). In a study of African-American adolescent and young adult women, Hanson (2007) found that increased perceived closeness with fathers was associated with higher grades while Cooper (2009) reported that father/daughter relationship quality was significantly related to girl’s academic engagement. Furthermore, fathers appear to have substantial influence over the career choice and career success of their daughters. In her investigation of father's attitude regarding women's non-

traditional work roles and his daughter's career choice, Williams (1996) found that the quality of a father's interaction with his daughter influenced her career choice, especially in areas such as engineering, science, and business.

Another line of research on the outcomes of father/daughter relationship closeness has focused on the association with risk behaviors (e.g., Harris-Peterson, 2007) and psychological functioning, particularly in regard to mental health and depression issues (Thompson & Berenbaum, 2009). For example, Coley (2003) found that more alienating and conflictive father/daughter relationships were related to increased depressive symptoms in adolescent girls. Moreover, research focused on the father/daughter relationship has found an association between the quality of the paternal relationship and a daughter's perception of her body image (Elliot, 2010) and between a daughter's perception of closeness in her relationship with her parents and eating disorder symptomology (Gutzwiller-Jurman, 2000). These results and others like them, all indicate that a daughter's motivation for thinness and subsequent eating disorders were directly related to her perception of closeness and care giving in the relationship with her father.

One of the most studied aspects of the father/daughter relationship is the father's influence over his daughter's choice of mate, her ultimate ability to have a healthy relationship with her husband, and her overall sexual and social confidence (Kieffer, 2004; 2008; Mackey & Coney, 2000; Scheffler & Naus, 1999). Williamson (2004) argued that a father's role is very important to his daughter's psychosexual development, noting that in order to acquire proper gender identity, a daughter has a need for a healthy erotic element in the relationship with her father. Research on sexual imprinting in human mate selection has found that an individual's choice of mate is based partially on similarity and familiarity (Berezkei, Gyuris, & Koves, 2002). Fathers are a daughter's first encounter with males; therefore, a woman's initial identification for what a man should resemble is based on her father's example (Secunda, 1992). Studies have found that while mothers are more likely to communicate with daughters about sex and sexuality (e.g., Wyckoff, et al., 2008), Secunda (1992) argued that compared to mothers, fathers have the more profound impact on a woman's sexual and romantic choices and relationship outcomes (see also, Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008).

Other research into father/daughter relational quality focuses on the outcomes of parental divorce and/or separation. Several decades of research consistently reports that the father/daughter relationship is far more damaged by parental divorce than is the father/son relationship (Nielsen, 2011). For example, divorce is significantly associated with poorer relational quality with parents (Amato & Keith, 1991; Booth & Amato, 1994) particularly as contact between noncustodial fathers and children almost always decline over time (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Mitchell, Booth, and King (2009) reported that compared to daughters, sons felt significantly closer to their non-residential fathers and were more likely than daughters to play sports, go the movies, and spend the night with their fathers.

Overall, these findings create a compelling argument for further investigating the quality of the father/daughter relationship, particularly in terms of psychological closeness. Clearly, the nature of closeness in the father/daughter relationship has a significant and lasting influence on the psycho-social development of daughters; however, the very essence of closeness itself is typified by the fluid and changeable role it plays across the lifespan of any personal relationship. Thus, understanding how fathers and daughters perceive changes in closeness within their relationships becomes a critical factor for understanding the influence it has on this unique family dyad.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to offer a more in-depth understanding of

father/daughter closeness. Through the use of an inductive method of data collection, we offer a qualitative analysis of transitional moments of change in perceptions of closeness within the father/daughter relationship. In order to achieve this objective, we use an interpretive grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that allows us to enter the discovery process grounded in the emergent data of the study itself (Charmaz, 2000, 2006). Our goal is to provide a unique representation and explanation of events that affect, challenge, and influence closeness within the father/daughter relationship (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The effectiveness of this methodology is anchored in the strength of its analytic ability to theorize how, through interpersonal interaction, meanings and experiences are socially constructed (Charmaz, 2006). After a brief review of the literature on interpersonal closeness, the method, results, and discussion from the current study will be presented.

Interpersonal Closeness

Prager noted, “intimate relationships are built on intimate interactions” (2000, p. 230). Therefore, one way to theoretically conceptualize relational closeness is by associating it with experiences of relating with significant others that are both developmental and interactional (Fehr, 2004). Other scholars have described these interaction patterns of intimate behavior to include self-disclosure, emotional expressiveness, unconditional support, and physical (nonsexual) affection (Monsour, 1992), while Reis and his colleagues have defined intimacy in more emotionally-laden terms, arguing that perceptions of closeness are grounded in feelings of being understood, validated, and cared for (Reis, 1998; Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988). These definitions support the conceptualization of relational closeness as not simply an emotion or feeling, rather as a lived experience grounded in social interaction. Relational partners learn to experience what it means to be close and develop insight into the interaction patterns that either enhance or decrease perceptions of closeness within the lived experience of the relationship. In other words, how we interact with relational partners is truly consequential to our perceptions of closeness.

For example, Wood and Inman (1993) argued that men build closeness in their same-sex friendships through activity (i.e., closeness in the doing), while women often experience closeness in their same-sex friendships through talk and self-disclosure (i.e., closeness in the dialogue). Thus, while both men and women experience closeness in their same-sex friendships, how they develop it and the type of interaction patterns that promote same-sex friendship closeness are different, grounded in gendered and patterned expectations linked to masculine and/or feminine interaction styles (Fehr, 2004; Inman, 1996; Swain, 1989). Other scholars have argued that effective conflict strategies promote feelings of investment, commitment, and closeness within marriage (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), that providing social or emotional support to a friend during a pivotal moment enhances perceptions of closeness within the friendship (Burlison, 2003), or that the expression of verbal and nonverbal affection promotes stronger perceptions of closeness in all types of personal relationships (Floyd, 2006). These socially constructed, thus shared moments of interpersonal interaction become experiences with the potential to change perceptions of closeness; therefore, they become significant moments of analysis for how change in closeness is negotiated within personal relationships. As such, the meaning of closeness is developed by and then embedded within emotions, interactions, and lived experiences. In sum, the types of experiences that are most likely to contribute to perceptions of closeness and intimate behavior between two people are those that involve shared and significant moments of interpersonal interaction.

One way to better understand this perspective in the context of father/daughter closeness

is to explore perceived origins and experiences of change in closeness within the interaction patterns shared between father and daughter. By investigating specific moments of change in closeness, more insight may be gained regarding the maintenance of closeness in the relationship itself and the potential mechanisms that influence perceived levels of change in closeness between father and daughter. A methodology that lends itself effectively to this type of experience-grounded investigation is turning-point analysis.

Turning Points Analysis

Turning point analysis is a methodological approach employed to investigate the dynamic and fluid processes by which relationships develop and change over time (Baxter & Bullis, 1996). By pin-pointing significant moments that affect the quality of the relationship, turning point studies allow scholars to investigate specific instances in the lifetime of the relationship in which a change in closeness occurred. This particular methodological approach is useful because not only do these studies allow researchers to capture critical moments that influence closeness in relationships, they also show how levels of closeness in relationships change over time. In fact, Baxter and Bullis (1996) claim that “turning points are the substance of change . . . growth and decay” (p. 470). These studies are conducted by examining perceptions of events that cause a relationship to dramatically change or shift directions in important ways. Moreover, turning point analysis helps researchers to be able to identify developmental patterns that cause members of a dyad to look at their relationship differently (Graham, 1997).

Participants in a study are asked to recall memorable or dramatic events or experiences that significantly changed their perceptions of closeness in the relationship under investigation. The dramatic moments may either be times when the relationship was strengthened and closeness was increased, or a time when closeness decreased and the relationship became weaker. The idea that individuals attend to particular events revolves around the issues of interruption and change; more specifically, events become significant when either expectations or anticipated outcomes are violated either positively or negatively (Jett & George, 2003). Such discrepancies are made obvious because they interrupt, for good or bad, the natural development of the relationship. Additionally, they make those involved in the relationship search for explanations for the turning points that in some way changed the quality of the relationship itself (Baxter, Braithwaite, & Nicholson, 1999; Baxter & Erbert, 1999).

Another benefit of turning point analysis is that it focuses on the communication aspect of relational closeness and development. Floyd & Parks (1995) argued that closeness is at the heart of most personal relationships and that it is an essential element in the development of relationships. Turning points analysis allows for complex examination of events that are full of relational meaning (Baxter and Bullis, 1996). Moreover, an understanding of how closeness changes over time allows a glimpse into the developmental processes across the life-span of a relationship and helps to identify the significant points of transition that affect relational closeness for better or worse. Since turning points expose why levels of closeness within a relationship change and how individuals perceive this change, Baxter and Pittman (2001) claimed that the analysis of turning points provides a “window into the relationship’s history of change” (p. 4).

Turning point analysis has been used in a variety of contexts, for example, to discover moments of change within romantic relationships (Baxter & Bullis, 1996; Baxter & Pittman, 2001), friendships (Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, Mazur, Villagran, 2003), parent-child relationships (Fisher, 2005; Golish, 2000), post-divorce relationships (Graham, 1997), and within blended families (Baxter, Braithwaite, & Nicholson, 1999). Turning point studies require a

certain recognition that relational closeness fluctuates over time, that there are major life events or turning points that generate these changes in perceived closeness, and that there are significant events which both parties often agree are important contributors to changes in closeness. This type of research is important to those interested in personal relationships because it establishes not only significant points of transition that affect relational closeness, but also because it gives insight into how closeness within a relationship strengthens or weakens over the course of time. However, while turning point analysis has been used in a wide variety of relational contexts, to date, no study has been published using turning point analysis to evaluate changes in closeness within the father/daughter relationship. Given the overwhelming research noting the importance of father/daughter closeness to a host of psycho-social outcomes, turning point methodology offers the promise of identifying significant moments of change in closeness between fathers and daughters and creates the potential for more understanding regarding the significant influences that fathers and daughters mutually share in each other's lives. Therefore, the analysis at hand seeks to explore the nature of perceived turning points of closeness between fathers and daughters by pursuing the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the turning points that daughters perceive affected the level of closeness in the relationship with their fathers?

RQ2: What are the turning points that fathers perceive affected the level of closeness in the relationship with their daughters?

Method

Participants

Using a snowball sampling technique, a total of 43 fathers and 43 daughters (not related) from a variety of backgrounds and occupations were recruited to participate in this turning point project. Each respondent had to meet two requirements in order to participate in the study. First, all daughters who participated had to be at least 22 years old in order to have had experienced enough various life events such as graduating from high school, leaving for college, and potential romantic involvement. Secondly, the fathers and daughters (biological/adoptive/step) who were the target of the survey response had to be living at the time of the study. Fathers ranged in age from 45 to 70 ($M = 57.9$, $SD = 7.03$). Eighty-eight percent of the fathers were Caucasian, 7% African American, and 5% were of Hispanic heritage. A majority of the fathers were well educated with 77% having at least attained a bachelor's degree. The daughters who were the target of the survey for fathers ranged in age from 22 to 49 ($M = 31.2$; $SD = 7.1$). All the fathers participating in the survey reported they were married and had an average of 2.5 children.

The daughter's descriptive data revealed that 77% were Caucasian, 12% African American, 7% Hispanic, and the remaining 4% Native American. The daughters were also well educated with 65% having at least attained a bachelor's degree. The daughters who participated ranged in ages from 22 to 58 ($M = 32.1$; $SD = 10.03$). The daughters reported that 35% were single, 51% married, and 14% divorced. Fifty-three percent of the daughters participating had biological children of their own with an average of one child each.

Procedure

After meeting criteria and consenting to participate in the study, fathers and daughters were informed in writing of their rights as a study participant and then asked to anonymously complete a pencil and paper survey. If fathers had more than one daughter they were asked to focus their answers based on the relationship with their oldest daughter; if a daughter had both a father and a step-father, she was asked to focus her responses on the father who was most responsible for raising her. After a brief description of the concept of a turning point, participants

were asked the following question and then were provided with a blank sheet of paper in order to write their responses. Specifically, the father's were asked:

Think for a few minutes about the turning points of your relationship with your daughter that effected closeness. Below, please describe those times and why or how they effected closeness in your relationship.

The daughters were asked the same question except their question asked them to respond with their fathers in mind. The surveys took respondents approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and were then returned to us through the mail in self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes.

Table 1: Turning Points of Closeness

Daughter	Father
1. Participating in activities together	1. Participating in activities together
2. Marriage of daughter	2. Marriage of daughter
3. Physical distance	3. Daughter begins dating
4. Daughter matures and develops friendship with father	4. Daughters claim independence
5. Daughter has children	5. Physical distance
6. Parents get a divorce	6. Developing outside friendships
7. Daughter begins dating	7. Beginning elementary school
8. Developing outside friendships	8. Daughter matures and develops friendship with father
9. Daughters claim independence	9. Working post-college (financial independence)
10. Adolescence	10. Daughter has children
11. Family crisis	11. High school graduation
12. Working post-college (financial independence)	12. Adolescence
13. Financial support issues	13. Divorce from mother
14. Beginning elementary school	14. Daughter makes poor decisions

Data Analysis

To identify the turning points within the father/daughter dyad, a grounded theory approach to analyzing participants' written descriptions was employed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). To construct an initial coding scheme, both authors of the current study acted as the two primary coders of the data. Independently, we conducted open coding on all of the written narratives, coding guided by the concept of thematic salience, i.e., recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984; Sieger & Stamp, 1994). Father's and daughter's reported turning points were kept in separate groups and each set of data underwent several rounds of narrowing

and refining as the categories emerged from the raw data. During this review, we identified segments of information (phrases or sentences) and placed them into categories by inductively giving labeled names to data. The formulation of categories followed a linear pattern whereby new categories were added when, and only when, the existing categories were insufficient to capture the ideas being offered in a narrative.

After constructing coding schemes independently, we met to combine our efforts into a single coding scheme for fathers and another scheme for daughters. This process involved axial coding, an approach wherein the instances of each code are compared to define the properties and characteristics of that code. Conceptually similar categories identified independently by the coders were combined and categories that were identified by only one of us were discussed until consensus was reached as to their utility. Throughout this process, the categories were analyzed using the “constant comparison” methodology as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), i.e., the categories were continually compared and contrasted and were adjusted as necessary to accommodate discrepant cases (see also, Creswell, 1998). The result of this iterative process was a scheme of 14 categories representing turning points of closeness for the father group and another scheme of 14 turning point themes for the daughter group (see Table 1).

Results

Daughter’s Perceived Turning Points

Research question one asked what turning points daughters perceived affected the level of closeness in their relationship with their fathers. Daughters reported a total of 129 turning points; the mean number of turning point experiences reported was 3.6. Some daughters mentioned only one turning point while others mentioned nine different events. Six major categories of daughter’s turning points were inductively derived using the data from the survey and are detailed below.

Participating in activities together. (N = 33) The most frequently mentioned turning point for daughters was when they participated in activities with their fathers including working together, church functions, extra-curricular activities, traveling together, and the most frequently mentioned activity that brought fathers and daughters closer was participating together in sporting activities. As one daughter explained, “Sports were the biggest deal that brought us together. Playing sports created a huge bond between my dad and me that connected us a lot” (D3). Sports gave daughters a chance to be their dad’s center of attention. “I used to love it when my dad would take off work to come coach my softball team” (D17); another daughter wrote, “It made me feel really important” (D12). Another daughter noted, “As sports became a bigger and bigger part of my life my father and I got closer and closer” (D32). A few daughters responded that working with their fathers increased closeness not only on an emotional level, but on a physical one as well. One daughter wrote, “Growing up I didn’t see much of my dad because he was at the office. Working together has positively impacted our relationship because now I know him on so many different levels” (D8). Several daughters revealed that they felt closer to their fathers when they vacationed together, especially if it was just the two of them. Another daughter wrote, “The first time I really talked with my dad I was six years old. We took a road trip together and talked about everything” (D40).

Daughter gets married. (N = 22) The second most frequently reported turning point where daughters perceived a change in closeness with their fathers was when they married. Some daughters felt that marriage brought them closer together with their fathers, usually due to gaining the father’s approval of the new husband. However, numerous daughters felt that marriage decreased the level of closeness experienced with their fathers. One daughter wrote,

“The day I got married I knew things would change and he [my father] would no longer be my protector. I still felt close to him, but I knew that we would never be as emotionally intimate again” (D2). Marriage changes many aspects of the father/daughter relationship because at this time fathers must relinquish their roles as protectors and providers to someone else, i.e., the daughter’s new husband. Another daughter noted, “I now have my own family to care for and my husband has replaced the closeness I had with my dad” (D11).

Physical distance. (N = 17) The third most mentioned turning point for daughters was when they moved out of the house for the first time. For a majority of the daughters participating in the survey, this occurred when they left for college. A few daughters felt that moving out was a negative turning point because distance made it more difficult to communicate. “Moving away from home made me feel less close with my father,” wrote one daughter. “At home, we would do things together. Now all we have is the phone and neither one of us are very good at using that” (D14). Nevertheless, more daughters perceived moving away as a positive turning point in the relationship because their fathers started treating them like adults. One daughter explained, “Going to college and moving out of the house changed our relationship because I wasn’t living under his rules anymore. I still felt really close and experienced him as a major provider, advisor, and refuge, but now we were developing a friendship” (D27). Daughters claimed this was a time when they became close “again” with their fathers, alleging that they did not feel as close during high school. Many daughters believed a strain had been lifted off the relationship by moving out of the house and having their own space; accordingly, daughters perceived that their fathers were extra “supportive, understanding, and involved” at this stage in life.

Daughter matures and develops friendship with father. (N = 12) The daughters fourth most frequently cited turning point was when they realized their fathers were treating them like an adult and they were developing a more peer-like relationship. This was consistently viewed as a time when closeness and relationship satisfaction increased. One daughter wrote, “When I saw my dad more as a friend than a parental figure, I felt like I could discuss anything with him” (D9). Daughters perceived their father’s role changing from disciplinarian to advisor. “I was no longer nervous to approach my dad with a problem,” expressed one daughter. “During this time, I realized I could call on my dad for anything and he would be there for me” (D31). Daughters perceived no negative consequences during this period, only the privilege of now experiencing their fathers as friends.

Daughter has children. (N = 10) Daughters perceived that the birth of their own children dramatically changed the degree of closeness experienced with fathers. Daughters looked to their fathers for support and advice bringing them psychologically closer together. One daughter shared, “As grandchildren came along he seemed to talk more and share more about life” (D19). Grandchildren gave fathers and daughters the common bond of both being parents. This perhaps helped daughters to better understand or comprehend past decisions made by fathers thereby resulting in a better understanding of a father’s love. Another daughter wrote, “I have a daughter so I now have a better understanding of the role of parents and their children. Events of the past are forgiven as I am now also a parent” (D30). A daughter having a baby significantly changed her perspective allowing her to see the other side of parenting, thus providing knowledge and appreciation for the role her father played in her life.

Parents get a divorce. (N = 9) Daughters participating in the current project revealed a distinctly negative turning point associated with the issue of parental divorce. Daughters claimed they felt feelings of separation, especially from their fathers, and some reported that after the divorce was finalized they had no contact with their fathers for years. Divorce damaged the

daughters' perceived closeness not only because fathers were no longer as active in their lives, but also because it led to incidences like fathers moving out and eventually remarrying and creating new families. One daughter noted, "When I met my father's new wife I didn't like her. I didn't like any of my new step brothers and sisters either. This is when things with my father really changed. He had a new family. I wasn't in it. I didn't want to be" (D23). Often daughters felt like their fathers had not only divorced their mothers, but them as well. This caused confused emotions and a perceived decrease in the levels of closeness they felt with their fathers.

The six turning points of father/daughter closeness listed above were the most mentioned by daughters; however, daughters reported several other turning points once or twice that are worth noting: *Discovering an attraction to boys and beginning to date* (e.g., "I had a really bad boyfriend relationship that lasted for a few years. My dad didn't like him and that difference put a strain on our relationship" D42); *Developing friendships outside the family*, (e.g., "Starting in middle school I desired to spend more time with my friends instead of my family" D37); *Claiming independence*, (e.g., "I began rebelling by doing things I wasn't suppose to and trying to hide it all from my dad" D8); *Adolescence*, (e.g., "When I went through puberty I didn't want my dad to know much because I was embarrassed" D20); *Family crisis*, (e.g., "My dad and I became much closer when within the same year he became very sick and I was diagnosed with cancer" D1); *Working post-college*, i.e., financial independence, (e.g., "I felt like I had a better relationship with my dad when I got a job, because our conversations didn't have to focus on money anymore" D19); *Financial support issues*, (e.g., "In college my dad cut off all my financial support because he thought my grades were not suitable. Since that point all contact in our relationship has been inconsistent" D42); finally, *Beginning elementary school*, (e.g., "Dad and I communicated more. He would take me to school every morning and do my homework with me at night" D38).

Father's Perceived Turning Points

Research question two asked what turning points fathers perceived affected the level of closeness in the relationship with their daughters. Fathers reported a total of 134 turning points. The mean number of turning points reported was 3.6 with the number of events mentioned ranging from one to ten. As with daughters, six major categories of father's turning points were inductively derived from the data:

Participating in activities together. (N = 38) Fathers reported the most common turning points in their relationships with their daughters occurred when they joined in activities together. This included church functions, household and school projects, extra-curricular activities, traveling, learning to drive, and sports. One father noted, "Elementary school was a great time for us. I taught her how to read, write, calculate numbers... the list could go on and on. I enjoyed it, because I was always helping her with projects" (F3). Fathers seemed to believe that the more activities performed with their daughters the closer they would become. For example, one father learned how to sing so he could participate in the school talent show with his daughter. However, the most frequently mentioned activity fathers reported centered around sports. One father wrote, "We didn't spend much time together until she started playing sports" (F16). Another father stated, "Sports gave us a bond that she did not have with her mother or siblings. It was our time to be together" (F22). Participating in sports together allowed fathers and daughters a chance to connect without the distractions of other family members. Sports not only gave fathers and daughters something in common, but provided them with something to talk about as well, which apparently opened the lines for communication on other subjects.

Marriage of daughter. (N = 21) The second most frequent turning point where fathers

perceived a change in the level of closeness experienced with their daughters was when she married. Fathers viewed this as a time when they had to let go of the connection they had with their daughters to make room for the new man in her life. One father declared, "She became dependent on her husband instead of me, and I determined not to interfere to the point of driving a wedge between her husband and me" (F6). Some fathers thought that making plans for the wedding was a turning point because it was a reason to talk regularly to their daughters. One father wrote, "We, or I am actually involved in her wedding plans/reception plans and we talk at least every other day and sometimes twice. She is once again a daddy's girl" (F11). Fathers viewed the marriage of their daughters as a positive or negative turning point based on their approval of the new husband. Another father explained, "My daughter married a man I didn't think was good for her, but she did. This new man has parted us in ways I never thought possible" (F40). Yet other fathers who supported their daughter's partner choice claimed that the wedding was "the proudest day of my life." This father continued, "When my daughter married we became closer again because of the shared experiences and values" (F19).

Daughter begins dating. (N = 18) The third most noted turning point by fathers was when their daughters began dating. Dating is one of the first times a daughter will develop feelings for a man outside of her family. Fathers attempted to fiercely protect and worried constantly about their daughters during this time. As a whole, fathers felt the closeness with their daughters diminished as they began dating. One father said, "When she discovered boys, she desired to become more independent from me" (F14). Another father wrote, "When she began dating she communicated more with her mother about personal matters and less with me" (F33). Fathers in the study reported their realization that their "little girls" were growing into young women, and that they could not shelter them forever; as dating began, fathers were forced to begin the process of "letting go."

Daughter claims independence. (N = 12) Fathers revealed that when their daughters started to claim their independence it created a significant turning point in their relationships. This usually occurred when she was in middle school and continued throughout high school. Virtually all fathers perceived this as a negative turning point in their relationships. Fathers claimed that their daughters pulled away from them and they had no control over it. One father explained, "When she began seeking her own identity we became less close. I had no choice, she was going in her own direction and I knew I had to let her. It was part of growing up" (F29). Some fathers stated this was a time when it was hard to get along with their daughters due to the physical and emotional changes being experienced and the father's own reluctance to give up control. Another father said, "When she started claiming her independence she had the ideal that she knew more than me" (F1). On a positive note, fathers shared that daughters started developing their own ideas and beliefs during this time and such growth was perceived as rewarding to witness.

Physical distance. (N = 10) The fifth most frequently mentioned turning point fathers perceived was when physical distance was created usually occurring for the first time when daughters left for college. Although they approved of and encouraged what their daughters were doing, many felt that the physical distance between them was a barrier to their communication. A father noted, "When she left for college we were not as close. As she became more involved in college life we lost that day to day closeness" (F32). Fathers consistently reported that distance resulted in less contact with their daughters and less feelings of closeness. Some fathers reported that they tried to maintain contact by talking on the phone or emailing, but they still felt there was separation between them.

Developing outside friendships. (N = 8) Developing friendships outside the home was the sixth most noted turning point where fathers perceived a change in their relationships with their daughters. Fathers reported this occurred generally when daughters began attending elementary school. One father wrote, "I felt that my daughter didn't need me as much when she started developing stronger ties to her friends at school" (F24). Another father claimed, "She was almost totally focused on her friends and interests and didn't seem to enjoy her family ties as much" (F10). Fathers felt that at one time they were in the spotlight of their daughter's life and now they were no longer. However, they also recognized that friendships with other females' fulfilled a need in their daughters that they could not meet.

The turning points of closeness listed above were the most often mentioned by fathers; however, there were several others noted once or twice, including: *Beginning elementary school*, (e.g., "I hated leaving her at school, but I looked forward to working on school projects together when I got home" (F42); *Daughter's maturity/ developing relationship into a friendship*, (e.g., "Now that she is living independent of me with her own future plans I see her as a mature adult, a friend" (F35); *Working post college*, i.e., daughter gains financial independence, (e.g., "When she got a job I lost control over her life. A change I welcomed because now I knew she could stand on her own feet" (F39); *Daughter has own children*, (e.g., "The birth of grandchildren brought us closer together. She asks for advice often and we have started spending more time together" (F27).

Discussion

Our goal in the present project was to ask what were the perceived events that affected levels of closeness between fathers and daughters? This is a simple question, although it has some important and intriguing implications once answered. Through this qualitative, inductive study, various categories of turning points of closeness emerged that were perceived to have been influential events during the life span of the father/daughter relationship. This study identified both father's and daughter's perceptions of changes in closeness in their relationship, resulting in a set of 28 primary turning points characterizing closeness and perceptions of change within the father/daughter dyad. Four key points concerning the findings of the current project merit some consideration.

First, and for the most part, the fathers and daughters in this study were in remarkable agreement concerning their perceptions of turning points within the father/daughter relationship, essentially agreeing on three of the top five most mentioned turning points, eight of the top ten, and 25 of 28 turning points overall (see Table 1). Remember once more that these fathers and daughters were not related, thus their agreement on the events leading to changes in closeness within the father/daughter relationship is even more intriguing, particularly because both mentioned the same turning point of closeness as their first and second most mentioned experiences, i.e., participating in activities together and the marriage of the daughter. Thus, these events appear to be truly significant turning points for both fathers and daughters independent from some type of shared sense of family history upon which to reference such events. The men and women in this study shared no family history together, yet both groups referenced the same events as meaningful markers of change within the father/daughter relationship.

Another interesting outcome that emerged from the data in this study was the relationship of the turning points with a traditional view of masculine forms of closeness, i.e., the action or instrumental orientation of masculine closeness. Many of the turning points mentioned by both fathers and daughters directly related to a more overt form of masculine intimacy, e.g., doing activities together, issues of control and protection, independence, work, and money. As Wood

and Inman (1993) and others have argued (e.g., Floyd & Morman, 1997; Morman & Floyd, 1998; Swain, 1989), men create and maintain closeness and intimacy with other men in uniquely different ways than do women. While we might expect these gendered forms of closeness to manifest themselves in the father/son relationship, clearly they are also significant in the relationships between fathers and their daughters. For example, many of the daughters reported that when they started to play some type of sport, this became a turning point of closeness in the relationship with their fathers, and for the most part, a positive change increasing perceptions of closeness within the dyad. Masculine forms of creating and maintaining closeness are evident in almost every major turning point mentioned by both fathers and daughters, while the more feminine forms of creating or maintaining closeness (e.g., talking face to face) are conspicuously absent. This more activity-based type of relational intimacy, what Wood and Inman (1993) called “closeness in the doing,” is further supported by the dad as primary “playmate” perspective found in the extant fathering literature. For example, Paquette (2004; Paquette & Bigras, 2010) have argued that the “father-child activation relationship” is developed primarily through physical, rough-and-tumble play that encourages the development of competitive skills, risk-taking, and helping children learn to stand up for themselves. Moreover, Willms (2009) argued in her study of fathers, daughters, and sports that sharing interests and activities in athletics can establish an intense and influential relational bond of closeness between a father and his daughter. All of this implies that fathers and daughters agree that a primary pathway to closeness in their relationships is through activity and the masculine approach to building and sustaining closeness and that for this to occur, daughters must adapt and/or adjust to the more masculine interaction style of their fathers.

Third, as noted above, fathers have been found to have significant influence over their daughter’s academic achievement, career choices, mental health, body image, mate selection, and sexual and social confidence. However, very few of the turning points of closeness directly mentioned by either fathers or daughters reflected the extant literature on the influences found within the father/daughter relationship. Thus it appears that the events associated with changing levels of closeness between fathers and daughters are not necessarily directly related to how fathers have been found in research to influence their daughters as they mature from young girls to young adult women. And while much of the extant literature rightly notes the importance of the role of close, positive relationships between fathers and daughters, it appears that the actual experiences perceived to have changed levels of closeness for good or bad are perhaps more covert in nature, indirectly related to the more long-term implications of the influence of a father on the psycho-social development of his daughter.

Finally, and in keeping with the grounded theory approach of the current study (Charmaz, 2000, 2006), the turning points of closeness that emerged from the data from both fathers and daughters provide another interpretation of the critical moments of change influencing closeness within the father/daughter relationship and further support the theoretical conceptualization of closeness as not only an emotion felt between two people, but rather a lived experience grounded in and constructed by human interaction. Fathers and daughters learn what it means to have a close relationship, lessons that come in everyday experiences such as playing sports or doing schoolwork, or in life-changing moments such as a wedding ceremony or the birth of a child.

Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth, qualitative assessment of the turning points of change found within the father/daughter relationship. As such, it makes three significant contributions to the literature in this area. First, because the father/daughter relationship has been historically

under-studied in relation to other family dyads, the current project makes another contribution to this relatively limited area of family relationship research. Second, as mentioned above, paternal closeness has been associated with a number of important outcome variables for daughters, therefore, the current project offers an attempt at expanding our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which father/daughter closeness is created, maintained, or dissolved. Finally, the current study is another effort to extend the turning point methodology into the family experience. Only a handful of family focused studies use the turning point method, and yet family narrative theorists have extensively argued that various types of family stories and family story-telling represent powerful, emotional, and insightful opportunities to gain a deeper understanding into the meanings ascribed to consequential moments of family life (e.g., Langellier & Peterson, 2006).

The relationship between father and daughter deserves much more attention, especially from scholars interested in the interpersonal quality of family interaction and its associated outcomes. Closeness is a fundamental aspect of any personal relationship and is especially salient in the relationship between parents and their children. The relationship between father and daughter is one that spans a lifetime and plays a significant role in shaping both individual's identity. Because the quality of the father/daughter relationship significantly influences so many important outcomes for daughters, understanding the ways in which fathers and daughters relate, interact, and negotiate closeness is necessary, not only to advance father/daughter research, but also to provide new insight into the role and function of closeness as a lived experience within personal relationships.

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