

### ***Fathering Within Child Welfare***

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This research program will illuminate the experiences of fathers of children who are or have been in care. We are particularly interested in those who father children with adolescent mothers as it is these mothers and their children who are more likely to be involved with child welfare services than older mothers (Trocme, 2001). We are focussing upon this particular group of fathers because there is very little research about their experiences and little is known about the contributions they make or could make (aside from their identification as perpetrators of child abuse or neglect). The research will also examine fathers' experiences in light of kinship care policy and practice initiatives currently under development in child welfare. The research is nested in critical theories and two key sensitizing concepts, fathering and exclusion, will guide the analysis. Specific objectives are:

- a) develop a typology of this particular group of fathers, locating this typology within the literature on fathering, child welfare and social exclusion
- b) develop an understanding of the social processes of fathering in child welfare from the standpoint and voice of this particular group of fathers.
- c) inform the development of inclusive social policies and professional practices for this particular group of fathers.

The project builds on the extensive research of team members. The team is composed of those with beginning, emerging and experienced research records from four institutions: Principal Investigator is Dr. Leslie Brown, University of Victoria. Co-Investigators are Dr. Marilyn Callahan (University of Victoria), Dr. Lena Dominelli (University of Southampton), Dr. Susan Strega (University of Manitoba) and Dr. Christopher Walmsley (University College of the Cariboo).

The team intends to use grounded theory as the principal research method and augment it with survey and social policy research methods. A qualitative method, grounded theory, was selected as it enables the development of a rich description of the experiences of fathers and provides the opportunity to begin theorizing about these experiences, an approach appropriate in situations where little is known about the subject. First, the team will develop a typology of fathers using two approaches: collecting information from files on such variables as age, occupation, cultural background, relationship to mother and fathering roles and responsibilities and examining how fathers are represented in the files primarily by mothers and social workers, using the constant comparative approach of grounded theory. This typology will guide the research team in selecting participants for the second stage, a grounded theory study of the social processes involved in fathering in child welfare, with attention to the construction of fathering and the impact of child welfare on fathers' roles and relationships. As a third stage, the team will involve policy and practice experts in understanding fathers' experiences within the context of kinship policies and practices and make

recommendations for change. Throughout the project, findings will be disseminated widely through conference papers.  
<http://www.signetstudio.com/fatherswelfare.htm>