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**Boyhood to Manhood
in one Pregnancy.
Adolescent Fathers:
A Discourse Analytical Study.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Psychology
at Massey University.

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ABSTRACT.

This study explores the experience of adolescent fatherhood using the techniques of discourse analysis as developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). Twelve adolescent fathers were interviewed (ages 16 to 20 years). All had become fathers before turning 19 years of age. They were recruited from either the local community or were referred to the researcher by guidance counselors at select secondary schools. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Six major discourses were used to construct the experience of adolescent fatherhood. These were: (a)The responsibility discourse. All said they had made major personal and social adjustments to ensure the welfare of their child: (b)The compromised discourse. This positioned their role as a father compromised by societal disinterest and disdain : (c)The agent for change discourse. Fatherhood disposed them to discard self-injurious habits and to cease asocial behavior: (d)Duel identities discourse. Parenthood during adolescence acted to bifurcate their identity: (e)The premature discourse. Accelerated entry into adult roles attenuated their performance as a father: (f)The improvement discourse. Many spoke of wishing to raise their offspring without the detractions which featured in their own childhood. Fatherhood gave many a powerful sense of purpose. Except for those who were prohibited access to their children, all stated the role of being a father was their primary identity and it had an overall beneficial effect upon their lives.

PREFACE

In 1998 my first child, Liri was born. His birth changed my life and I sought every opportunity I could to be with him. At the time I was a high school teacher and with the school's approval, I sometimes took him with me to teach my junior classes. The school had a decile 3 rating and was notable for its very high pupil exclusion rate and the low SES of its catchment. One of my classes at the time was a low ability Year 10 class. The students in it had minimal academic ability and adjustment issues within the class were plentiful. To my delight, I found taking Liri with me into this class had a pacifying effect on the students. Many female students requested to hold him and gave me unsolicited advice on his feeding or play needs. Several males who displayed antipathy for staff, showed fascination for my baby son, and would regularly ask to hold him or play with him. When Liri was in the class, students seemed to be less confrontational and focused more attention on Liri's play, than my instruction. Two years later my second son Rufus was born. By the time he was 18 months old, three of the students from the above class were fathers themselves and one had two children. All three were less than 17 years of age, and in what seemed to be in precarious positions to parent. This study explores the experience of fathering from the perspective of males in such circumstances, and the linguistic resources with which they construct it.

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And my two sons, Liri (aged five) and Rufus (aged two and a half) would like to thank this thesis for being so patient. Patient as I heeded their requests to play, dance, read stories, draw, cycle, bath, play soccer, build duplo, watch Thomas the tank engine videos, walk in the bush and generally spend my time with them, rather than attend to this work.

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