

Improving Communication in Father and Daughter Relationships
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We certify that we have read and viewed this project and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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ABSTRACT

While extensive research has been conducted regarding communication within the family dynamic and the problems associated with poor or ineffective communication, little research exists regarding the area of father to daughter communication. Fathers and their daughters have unique relationships. In a similar fashion, their communication behaviors are often much different than mother – daughter patterns. While it is well documented that interpersonal communication methods are often key indicators of satisfaction within relationships, there are plenty of questions as to why father – daughter communication behaviors differ, where those differences originate, and how they can be improved. This paper will delineate the various barriers to father-daughter (F-D) communication while assessing the current research on the topic. Another factor in the discussion of communication barriers between fathers and daughters' is the part gender and role definitions play and how they create obstacles to effective communication. Many fathers find themselves unaware of the societal pressures with which their daughters contend. This paper will also discuss some of those pressures and while their impact has been highly researched and published, this research is more concerned with how the lack of awareness of these pressures by fathers in general creates challenges to effective communication.

This project aims to coalesce the current research on F-D communication and more specifically the areas of conversation orientation and barriers to communication. A documentary film will articulate the issues using both experts in the field and fathers and daughters themselves emphasizing success stories and the dramatic impact that appropriate F-D communication can have in changing the lives, for the better, of families and by extension communities at large.

Introduction

Fathers along with their daughters face unique challenges with regards to relationship building and related communication behaviors. Age, gender, life experience, cultural norms, even psychological and physiological differences can often impede effective communication. But these factors, while challenging, can be overcome. Fortunately in most families, fathers and daughters have similar motives – that is, relationship satisfaction which can act as a catalyst to improved communication. One study showed that while fathers and daughters may differ slightly in their motives for communicating with each other, high levels of satisfaction occurred for both groups when they communicated with each other for enjoyment and excitement – or merely to assist each other, express their feelings and to show gratitude (Punyanunt-Carter, 2005). So how can families create an environment where this kind of “conversation orientation” is the norm?

The role of communication to levels of relational satisfaction has been well documented (Dindia, 1994). Certainly the principles of Relational Dialectics as first proposed by Leslie Baxter and W.K. Rawlins regarding the “knots of contradictions” and the “unceasing interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies” holds true within the framework of F-D relationships (Baxter, 1988) (Rawlins, 1988). In the family dynamic, fathers and daughters can feel the most detached by natural elements beyond their control and these opposing tendencies can serve to merely cause a lack of communication or complete avoidance. But there is hope within the realms of communication research that indicates these challenges need not remain the status quo.

Years of communication research has demonstrated that family communication between parents and adolescents plays an important role in the development of psychosocial adjustment. (Rueter & Koerner, 2008). The idea of “open communication” where a daughter feels safe to talk to her father for example, has shown to have numerous benefits including lowering levels of risky behavior among adolescent girls, and acting as a “protective” factor directly effecting disclosure among fathers and their daughters. (Liu, 2003) (Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus, & Bouris, 2006).

Certain communication characteristics of the father-daughter relationship lead to satisfaction. Buerkel-Rothfuss, Fink, and Buerkel (1995) found that both daughters and sons reported satisfaction with their fathers based on the father’s time spent with them, observing their listening skills, and sympathy skills. A noted college professor, perhaps the only teacher in the country with a class specifically dedicated to F-D relationships has consistently urged fathers and daughters to share more private time while the daughters are living at home – indeed emulating if not in exact content, but the time allocation of mothers and their daughters who spend far more private time together (Nielsen, 2006).

If indeed it is just a matter of time, fathers can be educated or trained on how to better allocate their time towards their daughters in order to improve their communication opportunities – both in quality and quantity. Time allocation can be measured, analyzed, and then improved which would indeed have a significant impact on improving communication behaviors between fathers and daughters.

But time, or better stated, the allocation of time alone won’t be helpful if fathers don’t know how to create an environment conducive to conversation; particularly if they don’t feel

comfortable engaging in appropriate and beneficial communication patterns or how to manage conflict when problems arise.

Especially for daughters, the consequences of dysfunctional father-daughter relationships can be particularly severe, but research is emerging on the kinds of communication patterns that can improve these relationships and the good news for fathers is that these behaviors are not impossible to implement. This paper will also discuss two particular areas “conversation orientation” as well as examining the common barriers to effective communication that will aid in improving the father-daughter (F-D) relationships.

The research by no means is only useful to fathers. Daughters, by understanding both the challenges within F-D communication and what kinds of behaviors can help fathers improve the communication with their daughters will likely be more sensitive to any attempts their fathers make to improve their relationship by learning from these challenges. After all, as the data will demonstrate – daughters are the direct beneficiaries of strong, mutually respectful F-D relationships and may often wonder exactly what prevents them from communicating more effectively with their fathers.

Literature Review

The role of communication within the family structure cannot be underestimated if for no other reason than it is a key determining factor of satisfaction for each family member. Countless studies have observed, measured, and analyzed the importance and impact of communication between parents and their children. There are distinct differences, however, in the patterns of communication behaviors between mothers and fathers and their respective children. One study found that F-D communication patterns are quite limited compared to mother-daughter communication patterns (Youniss, 1987). This same study noted that mother-daughter communication interactions were more open and that these interaction addressed a variety of topics at a deeper level than fathers and daughters. Another study attributed this effectiveness of mothers over fathers to a greater degree of “openness” on behalf of the mothers evaluated in a study of adolescent daughters and their parents (Barnes & Olson, 1985).

Families that encourage and facilitate open communication patterns, sometimes referred to as “conversation orientation” have more frequent conversation and these conversations often lead to higher satisfaction levels, especially for fathers and daughters (Socha, 1995). This pluralistic approach is not surprising in terms of its potential benefits in both the quantity and quality of communication behaviors. What is significant is how data has shown that F-D relationships *in particular* experienced the highest levels of satisfaction in these kinds of environments (Punyanunt-Carter N. M., 2008). Fathers should be aware and take comfort in the

fact that by encouraging a climate of open conversation in their family, it will be less likely that daughters will turn to others for advice and counsel.

When it comes to specific patterns of communication between fathers and their daughters, the data is clear that just like the relationship itself, communication has a significant impact on a daughters' life both positive and negative (this is discussed further in *The Consequence of Dysfunction*). One of the earliest studies on the subject showed that there is a direct link between the environment in which a daughter grows up and the development of her communication skills (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). In fact as another study indicated, communication patterns or striving for some type of ideal method of communicating is not as important as the communication climate within the family (Dunleavy, 2011).

In other words, fathers need not worry about saying exactly the right thing at the right moment. And daughters need not worry about reacting in the perfect way. If both strive to live in an environment where open communication itself is the objective, good feelings and positive outcomes are the likely result.

Katorski (2003) measured what can be called the "attachment style" of the fathers and daughters and determined that there is complete statistical significance between communication satisfaction and a daughter's attachment style with her father. Attachment style is important because young women often feel a societal pressure to detach from their fathers during their teenage years (Zaslow, 2004).

Parents communicate with their children for two primary reasons to control behaviors or to express support. Some studies have gone even further to examine how fathers and mothers uniquely address these primary motives (Punyanunt-Carter N. M., 2005). This same study

demonstrated that daughters were most satisfied when their fathers communicated their feelings of love to them. In addition, when the motive of the communication was primarily for fun or affection daughters indicated a high level of satisfaction with their fathers – indeed, daughters often need someone to talk to and their fathers can certainly fulfill this need.

Some fathers may perceive this emphasis on “conversation orientation” as requiring them to be less discipline-oriented or try to mimic the empathic inclinations typical of mother-daughter relationships. But this need not be the case. As one study suggested, daughters from “consensual” families, (one of the four communication typologies) a family type that implies high amounts of conversation and conformity, resulted in greater satisfaction for daughters and their fathers (Dunleavy, 2011). This dispels any notion that fathers must be “wimps” in order to talk with their daughters.

As studies have pointed out however, father – mother role expectations can be barriers to this kind of open conversation and fathers may feel the brunt of the expectation that while mothers are expected to be more nurturing and emotional, fathers are expected to be more assertive and unemotional. Fathers may encounter a myriad of gender-based and cultural barriers (discussed more fully later) but they should take heart in knowing that something as simple as showing affection can overcome many of these obstacles (Martin & Anderson, 1995).

The Consequences of Dysfunction

The consequences of dysfunction as they relate to communication breakdowns are serious and long lasting. Studies have proven that eating disorders, poor self-image, unhealthy sexual behaviors and other dysfunctions exhibited by many women can be related to the fractured relationships they have with their fathers, compounded by poor communication behaviors (Flanigan, 2001). So it could be surmised that improving communication behaviors in fathers and daughters could literally save lives: The reduction of communication dysfunction could have a significant impact on the future health of many women.

But the consequences of communication breakdowns is not a one-way street. Research also shows that in families that exhibit poor communication patterns, fathers often feel isolated, unappreciated, and even unloved.

Early studies in this field documented how healthy communication between parents and children also significantly facilitated the development of higher levels of moral reasoning in adolescents. (Holstein, 1972) (Stanley, 1978).

Interestingly, more recent research indicates that F-D communication as it relates to discussions involving sexuality can have a very positive influence in young women, directly impacting their views about themselves and their own sexual behavior. (Collins, Angera, & Latty, 2008) (Averett, Benson, & Vaillancourt, 2008).

Other studies have examined why and to what degree daughter dissatisfaction with her father can influence bad peer relationships, unpleasant romantic endeavors, and poor life decisions (Leonard, 1982).

While F-D communication can be awkward for both parent and child (Collins, Angera, & Latty, 2008), fathers who communicate with daughters about sex can reduce the likelihood that their daughters will engage in risky sexual behavior (Wright, 2009). More specifically, research has found that young women whose fathers communicated with them about sex are more likely to use contraception (Somers & Paulson, 2000), are more likely to engage in safe sex communication (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998), and are less likely to be sexually active (Hutchinson & Montgomery, 2007).

Conversely, research has found that women with abusive or absent fathers often choose partners who abuse or abandon them (Secunda, 1992). The concept of “daddy issues” describing women who fall into self-destructive behaviors may be cliché, but that fact doesn’t make it any less relevant for today’s young women.

While research on these causal factors and their positive or negative consequences is plentiful, it is valuable to study how to avoid communication dysfunction because of its severe long term consequence. What types of communication behaviors are healthy, supportive and relationship affirming? (This will be addressed in the documentary).

The Influence of Gender

According to one research group, researchers in the social sciences have spent years investigating sex differences in communication. (Horan, Houser, & Cowan, Nov 2007, Vol 24 Issue 4). The data is clear that there exists a polarization in communication behaviors based on sex, with scholars claiming different behaviors between men and women (Tannen, 2007).

Sex based expectations of parents toward their child can begin as early as infancy. It is an inescapable truth that fathers bring their life experience, including their unique perceptions,

prejudices, and emotions into their relationships with their daughters. But such distinct background and perspective can lead to challenges in their communication with their daughters. Even basic communication skills themselves and a father's inadequacy can prove to be a daunting obstacle. Nielsen (2008) observes that little girls are generally taught more emotional and social communication skills than little boys.

Often boys are taught to hide feelings of fear, loneliness, insecurity or pain. This can present enormous challenges when as fathers, these grown up boys are required to have effective, sensitive, and mutually satisfying communication with their daughters. Somehow a father must overcome his gender in relating to a daughter of the opposite sex, who, more than likely, is much more skilled at basic relationship based communication.

Societal and cultural impact

In addition to all the common challenges presented by differing roles, distinct gender differences, age related factors etc., society itself seems to be working overtime to present enormous challenges to father-daughter communication. Indeed as one author noted the goal of fathers should be to reduce the odds that their daughters will be caught in a "cultural straitjacket" that severely limits a young girls' options simply because of her gender (Kelly, 2002).

One common myth is that fathers have less impact on their daughters than mothers do. While it is true that in a two parent household, mothers have spent far more time in nurturing children, fathers' role in the communication process can have a significant impact on a child's life – especially a daughter. For example, Wright (2009) showed that fathers are more likely to engage in father-child communication about sexual issues with their sons than their daughters and that this is perpetuated by gendered belief about the role of fathers and their daughter's

sexual socialization contributing to a lack of said communication. In other words, fathers tend to address certain topics with their sons and not their daughters simply because they feel it is more appropriate due to their gender and for no other reason. As one author puts it, fathers often look at their daughters as a great “mystery” and even well intentioned dads can feel caught between the often negative stereotypes that imply the idea that fathers are either invisible or incompetent, thus confirming a father’s own feelings of self-doubt (Kelly, 2002).

Society often perpetuates certain role definitions making it difficult for fathers to have effective communication with their daughters which can have serious negative implications on the relationship. Even portrayals of common movies such as popular Disney animated films can influence ways fathers and daughters relate – and re-affirm certain stereotypical behavior that could reinforce communication difficulties. Fortunately, recent research as part of this project revealed that most F-D relationships are depicted in a positive light (See Appendix A).

It is worth noting here that the recent ruling by the Supreme Court to legalize same-sex marriage could have a tremendous impact on daughters, particularly those purposefully raised without a father figure. On their website the American College of Pediatrics cites numerous studies that have demonstrated the importance of both a father and mother in the home. The college issued a stern warning:

While the debate over the legitimacy of same-sex marriage can be viewed from many perspectives, there should be little debate about the effects it has upon children: Same-sex marriage deliberately deprives the child of a mother or a father, and is therefore harmful. The College has sought to defend the child’s position in this debate from an objective, scientific standpoint (Home page).

No doubt forthcoming research will help clarify what effects this ruling will have on daughters, particularly. For now, the evidence is clear: Fathers who strive to create an environment of openness with their daughters and demonstrate a willingness to overcome the barriers beyond their control and try to communicate with their daughters can have a positive influence on their daughters.

Research on the nature of communication behaviors between a father and daughter, the barriers, the consequences of inherent dysfunction, the challenges presented by age and gender along with societal and cultural impact could prove invaluable to those hoping to improve father-daughter relationships.

The research on F-D communication is relatively new and few studies, if any, have coalesced the research into easy to understand, less academically theorized principles along with practical skill set recommendations complimented by a documentary film that supplements the academic material. The potential for real awareness building and behavior change in this field is enormous and of singular importance and a documentary film illustrating these objectives could prove very valuable.

Common barriers to Father-Daughter Communication

Despite having numerous barriers to overcome, a considerable amount of daughters have rewarding relationships with their fathers. As one research study pointed out, either the barriers don't exist at all or those barriers were simply not as problematic for certain families. This same study suggest that a more "practical approach" would prove more successful than trying to change societal expectations (Dunleavy, 2011).

In his important book "Dads and Daughters" author Joe Kelly who has spent two decades studying, writing about and lecturing regarding father-daughter relationships discusses the "wildly contradictory set of visceral feelings that men have about raising girls" (Kelly, 2002). While he doesn't specifically categorize these feelings into communication typologies, many of the fears and challenges fathers feel can be easily defined and ascribed directly to communication barriers. These barriers, paraphrased and grouped together include:

- Fathers, desiring to protect their daughters in ways no one else is capable of, struggle with how to communicate that desire, feeling inadequate.
- Fathers are scared about the evolving sexuality of their daughters – wanting them to be happily married someday, but often do not have anyone they can talk with about this fear.
- Communication with daughters is particularly messy because their emotions are messy – and volatile. What worked yesterday may not work today so communication strategies must be very flexible – and not always obviously logical.

- In their desire to say the right thing, a fathers' words can backfire and instead of building their daughter up, they seem to knock her down. A typical if clichéd example is how a father answers his daughters' question: "Dad does this dress make me look fat?" To a father, this is a landmine of potential self-destruction.
- Fathers often struggle with how, when, where, or even whether to talk about important issues with their daughters such as body image, sexuality, friends, careers, money, school, relationships, sports etc....
- Fathers often feel that communicating with a son is a piece of cake compared to talking with a daughter – especially finding the right balance between listening (so she will talk) and talking (so she will listen).
- Communication regarding her accomplishments and demonstrating his pride about such achievements, including her on-going independence can be frustrating for a father.

Summary –Documentary Objectives

Throughout the research regarding F-D communication several over-arching themes emerge consistently. Before discussing any practical solutions, it is important for fathers and daughters to be made aware of their communication barriers. This awareness alone is a first step in creating mutually satisfying behaviors, for how do we correct what we can't see? By seeing themselves in these barriers and how common they are, fathers in particular will likely be less self-critical and can begin to change their behaviors. Once this is accomplished, practical

methods can be applied that will help re-build or re-affirm the F-D relationship and establish a foundation for change.

First, the power of an F-D relationship based in conversation orientation is key. The most powerful communication tool in a father's shed is to regularly express his love for his daughter in word and deed. In a relaxed, pleasant environment daughters will respond in kind, relishing the time spent with their father, listening to his advice and applying it in their lives. This is by no means a guarantee, but the research is clear – without a healthy relationship based in positive communication, the odds that a daughter won't be negatively impacted are very low.

The next most powerful principle is private time dedicated between fathers and daughters where communication opportunities will arise. But in today's busy society how can a father carefully orchestrate his time to make his daughter a higher priority and find common interests that will allow for easier time allocation? As the research has shown, fathers and daughters often have very different interests. Finding ways to bridge those differences – beyond compulsion of course—can be difficult. But it is very possible.

Thus the short film – documentary has the objective of having regular fathers and daughters discuss common barriers, how they became aware of them and what some of the related consequences of those barrier were. On camera fathers and daughters will discuss how they were able to express their love towards each other in simple, distinct ways and the benefits to the relationships that were attained by these expressions. Fathers and daughters will also be asked how they were able to allocate time for each other, and what some of the positive outcomes of dedicating time together were.

Experts in the field of father-daughter communication will be interviewed with their thoughts and opinions on the subject material – specifically discussing barriers, conversation orientation and how improved time allocation can be achieved and the consequential benefits of these principles in the lives of any father and daughter who desires to achieve them.

Research Method Proposal

Research Method 1: Discuss with fathers and daughters their overall assessment of their relationship, the nature of their communications and their awareness of barriers to that communication.

Research Method 2: Discuss with fathers on camera how they learned their role definitions, where they believe they learned how to interact with their daughters, and what influenced them both negatively and positively.

Research Method 3: Conduct similar interviews with daughters on their feelings about their communication behaviors with their fathers and how these behaviors have influenced their relationships with their fathers.

Research Method 4: Discuss, on camera, with both fathers and daughters how they feel society has influenced young women today, specifically with regards to pressures that are unique for females.

Research Method 5: Interview groups of fathers discussing how much time, on average, each father spends in one on one time with each daughter. Then interview a group of related daughters asking them the same questions. Compare and contrast outcomes.

Research Method 6: Interview on camera a variety of experts chosen from the cited references and authors who have written on topics in the field of family communication including those who have studied the roles of fathers, the impact of fathers on young women, the difficulties fathers and young women face in today's culture. Discuss how fathers can find ways to express

their love for their daughters. Questions will be asked regarding the nature of time allocation and the benefits to fathers and daughters who have spent time together.

Research Method 6: Interview on camera celebrities who have openly discussed the positive impact their fathers or father-figures have had in their lives. Interview celebrities for whom fatherhood has had a significant positive impact on their careers and their lives in general.

Structure of the Documentary

The structure of the documentary would be both academic with the purpose of educating the viewer on the salient issues and obstacles involved in solving communication barriers between fathers and daughters and entertaining using interesting interviews to support the main thrust of the film. The more engaging the interviews and the related responses the more powerful the information. For example, Oscar nominated actor/writer Ethan Hawke has openly discussed how raising three young daughters has changed his life.

Using effective graphics and soundtrack music the film could have an important impact in increasing awareness and illustrating the fundamental principles in this important topic.

This short documentary will be unique in that a diverse variety of daughters and fathers will talk about strategies that worked to build F-D relationships will be examined.

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APPENDIX A: Father – Daughter Roles in Films

Coding Categories: “Hero/Protector,” “Comic Relief,” “Detached Reluctant,” “Counselor/Role Model”

86% “Positive” portrayals of fathers in film with father-daughter primary plots

Movie	Category	Rating	Synopsis
Mystic River	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father mourns daughters’ killing
Cheaper by the Dozen	Comic Relief	Positive	Father keeps sanity amongst 12 kids
Matchstick Men	Hero/Protector	Positive	Criminal finds out he has a daughter
What a Girl Wants	Hero/Protector	Positive	Young girl meets British father for the first time
Jersey Girl	Hero/Protector	Positive	Businessman sacrifices career to raise daughter
A Walk to Remember	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Preacher supports Christian teenage daughter
When a Man Loves a Woman	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father helps daughter cope w/Mom’s addiction
Parenthood	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Positive	Overbearing father means well
The In-Laws	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Positive	Well-intentioned fathers screws up daughters’ w
Twilight	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Gentle father advises vampire-to-be daughter
Evelyn	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Positive	Alcoholic widowed father earns back custody of
Lethal Weapon	Hero/Protector	Positive	Police detective risks everything to save daughter
Trouble w/ the Curve	Detached/Reluctant	Negative	Veteran baseball scout struggles with adult daughter
Three Days to Kill	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Negative	CIA agent struggles to spend time w/ daughter
Father of the Bride	Comic Relief	Positive	Caring father frantically helps to-be-wed daughter
To Kill a Mockingbird	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Attorney takes care of daughter during race trial
Paper Moon	Hero/Protector	Neutral	Con man loves but puts at risk his daughter
True Lies	Hero/Protector	Positive	Undercover agents protects daughter from harm
Little Miss Sunshine	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father in dysfunctional fam. supports pageant daughter
Taken	Hero/Protector	Positive	Special Ops father rescues kidnapped daughter
Beasts of the Southern Wild	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Negative	Impoverished father ignores young daughter’s r
The Incredibles	Hero/Protector	Positive	Superhero father teams up w/ family to save world
Hook	Detached/Reluctant	Negative	Overly busy fathers ignores children
Mrs. Doubtfire	Comic Relief	Positive	Divorced dad disguises himself as Nanny to his kids
Crash	Hero/Protector	Positive	Latin father protects daughter in the inner-city
Kick-Ass	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Crime fighting dad instructs daughter to emulate
Annie	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Wealthy bachelor reluctantly adopts orphan girl
Juno	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father supports knocked up daughter
Hanna	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father teaches daughter survivor skills
Despicable Me	Hero/Protector	Positive	Villain reluctantly adopts 3 sweet little girls
Haywire	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Special Ops dad teaches tough daughter
On Golden Pond	Detached/Reluctant	Negative	Grumpy dad can’t relate to outspoken adult daughter

The Secret Life of Arrietty	Hero/Protector	Positive	Dad helps daughter survive world of giants
Fiddler on the Roof	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Jewish dad tries to understand rebellious daughter
Take Shelter	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Mentally unstable dad tries to protect his family
Fly Away Home	Hero/Protector	Positive	Dad supports daughters journey to save geese
My Girl	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Widowed undertaker provides for only daughter
The Wrestler	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Negative	Irresponsible dad tries reconnect w/ teenage daughter
The Descendants	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Betrayed dad tries to relate to rebellious daughter
True Grit	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Surrogate father teaches the ropes to fatherless boy
Dan in Real Life	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Divorcee tries to understand teenage daughter
American Beauty	Dysfunctional/Jerk	Negative	Mid-life crisis dad tries connecting with teen daughter
Say Anything	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Banker dad tries to protect coming-of-age daughter
She's Out of Control	Hero/Protector	Positive	Protective dad befriends daughters tough boyfriend
Epic	Hero/Protector	Positive	Over-protective scientist dad worries about daughter
The Host	Hero/Protector	Positive	Korean grandfather rescues daughter from the future
Saving Mr. Banks	Hero/Protector	Positive	Alcoholic father inspires future writer daughter
A Separation	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Caring daughter risks marriage to provide for dad
Beauty and the Beast	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Sweet oddball dad encourages oddball daughter
War of the Worlds	Hero/Protector	Positive	Detached divorcee rescues daughter from alien
Million Dollar Baby	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Reluctant father figure trains young woman boxer
In Good Company	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Aging dad supports daughter going to NYU
Absolute Power	Detached/Reluctant	Negative	Thief father betrays adult daughter after reaching
Because of Winn-Dixie	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Preacher father raises daughter in small town
Hide and Seek	Detached/Reluctant	Negative	Psychologist widower w/ daughter odd occurrences
The Missing	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Aging rancher helps daughter rescue grand-daughter
Swing Vote	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Slacker father seeks attention of young daughter
Les Miserables (1998)	Hero/Protector	Positive	Adoptive father/outlaw raises girl in 18 th century
The Village	Hero/Protector	Positive	Overprotective father creates utopia for blind daughter
Traffic	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Drug czar struggles with daughter's addiction
The Little Mermaid	Hero/Protector	Positive	Stern father worries rebellious daughter's ambition
Mulan	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Young girl goes to war in place of father
The Game Plan	Detached/Reluctant	Positive	Self-absorbed athlete changes w/discovery of daughter
The Family Stone	Counselor/Role Model	Positive	Father manages dysfunction during wife's health crisis
Poltergeist	Hero/Protector	Positive	Father tries to save daughter from supernatural
Uncle Buck	Hero/Protector	Positive	Irresponsible Uncle fills absent father role for teenage
Interstellar	Hero/Protector	Positive	Astronaut dad strives to repair life changing decision

APPENDIX B: Objectives/methods: Sample interview questions for documentary short.**Audience Analysis**

- Who is this film for?
- What is the learning/teaching objective?
- What feelings will the film provoke within the audience?
- What calls to action and shifts in behavior can the film influence?

Fathers

Fathers who view this film will reflect on how having a daughter has fundamentally changed them. They will consider or re-consider how their interactions and behavior provoke distinct reactions in their daughters, often very different than their mothers. They will receive affirmation of both the positive and negative long term influences that their relationship with their daughters will have on them as girls, young women and adult women. They will observe communication behaviors, reflect on their own behaviors and consider alternative behaviors that will improve the time and quality of their communication. Finally, they will be uplifted and motivated to renew their commitments to their daughters in new and powerful ways.

Daughters

Daughters who view this film will reflect on how the relationship with their fathers has fundamentally changed them in ways they may not have realized. They will better understand the important short and long-term influence a good relationship with their father can have. They will consider the challenges and difficulties that fathers have in communicating their love and their willingness to help their daughters. They will be encouraged to reach out and strengthen their relationships with their fathers realizing that this is one of the most valuable resources available to them in their often very complex lives.

Question and Interview method: The following are SAMPLE questions – only a few will be selected.

S.P.I.N. (Situation – Problem – Implication – Needs Payoff)

SITUATION QUESTIONS

Daughters

How would you describe your relationship with your dad?

What are some of your earliest positive memories with your dad?

What do you love about your dad?

What kind of influence does your father have on your life?

Fathers

What do you remember about how you felt when your daughter was born?

What were some of your worries about becoming a father?

How would you describe your relationship with your daughter?

What kind of impact has your daughter had on your life?

Experts

According to your research, how important is the relationship between fathers and their daughters?

What kinds of things would people be surprised to know about fathers and daughters?

How have father – daughter relationships changed over the years?

What kinds of universal patterns of behavior do you see across cultures when it comes to father and daughter relationships and problems?

What are some of the common communication roles fathers and daughters exhibit?

How has society and culture impacted father and daughter relationships?

PROBLEM QUESTIONS**Daughters**

When did you first realize that the relationship between with your father and mother was different?

In what ways is your relationship different with your father and your mother?

What have you noticed about how you treat your father differently than your mother?

Would you say you have difficulty communicating with your dad?

How would you describe your communication patterns with your dad?

How do you express affection with your dad?

How much time a week do you spend talking live with your dad?

How would you describe your father's role in your life?

Fathers

When did you first realize that your relationship with your daughter was going to be challenging?

What differences did you notice about how you treated your daughter differently than your son?

What challenges have you encountered in talking with your daughter?

How much time a week do you spend talking live with your dad?

How would you describe your role in your daughters' life?

Experts

What kinds of things has your research uncovered about the state of father and daughter relationships?

Describe some of the major challenges facing fathers today?

What types of obstacles to improved communication are most common in father and daughter relationships?

What do daughters wish their fathers knew about them?

IMPLICATION QUESTIONS**Daughters**

How has your relationship with your father impacted your life?

Can you talk openly with your father and if not, what issues has this created for you?

Can you think of a situation where your father really helped you resolve an important problem?

Do you feel comfortable going to your father for advice? Why not?

How does your relationship with your father make you feel about yourself?

Why don't you spend more time with your father?

Fathers

Has your relationship with your daughter been frustrating in any way? How? Describe the last time your daughter came to you for advice and how you felt about it?

How do you feel about the amount of time you spend with your daughter?

Are there certain topics you feel very uneasy talking with your daughter about and how does that make you feel?

Finish this sentence "I struggle talking to my daughter when..."

How has your relationship with your daughter impacted other aspects of your life?

Experts

What are some documented effects of poor father – daughter relationships?

What do most fathers/daughters say they regret about their relationship?

What are the most common communication barriers between fathers and daughters?

What are the primary causes of those barriers?

How directly linked is a girl's relationship with her father and her self-image?

What would people be surprised to know about things that fathers worry about?

NEEDS PAYOFF QUESTIONS

Daughters

How would your life change if you had a better relationship with your father?

If you could fix one thing in your relationship with your father what would it be and what would fixing it do?

What do you want your father to know about how you feel about him?

Considering your relationship with your father if you could go back in time, what would you do differently?

What do you want to say to your father right now?

Fathers

How would your life change if you had a better relationship with your daughter?

If you could fix one thing in your relationship with your father what would it be and what would fixing it do?

What do you want your daughter to know about how you feel about her?

Considering your relationship with your daughter, if you could go back in time, what would you do differently?

What do you want to say to your daughter right now?

Experts

If you could tell fathers/daughters one thing, one behavior they could improve, what would it be?

What is the secret to fathers and daughters communicating better?

What kinds of impact have you seen when fathers and daughters work through their issues together?

Can you describe some of the behaviors of good communicating fathers?

Can you describe how having a strong healthy relationship with a father empowers a young woman?

APPENDIX C: The documentary project

Why a documentary?

As a film critic with over 15 years' experience and nearly 900 published reviews in addition to working as the Artistic Director for DOCUTAH all 5 years since its inception, the documentary film format is something I have come to respect, appreciate, even love. My topic seemed perfectly suited to the documentary format for two primary reasons:

First and foremost, the material while certainly steeped in academic research, lends itself to the conversational style – hearing and seeing fathers and daughters talk about their own experience is far more powerful in many cases than a purely academic approach. I noticed something interesting when mentioning my plans to film a documentary – particularly to fellow female students or friends: Daughters are highly cognizant and deeply in touch with their feelings about their relationships with their fathers. Adult women of any age are eager to talk about their father – daughter relationships, their difficulties, triumphs and misgivings. It occurred to me that just about any daughter I captured on film would be willing to open up and talk about their father. It is almost like this particular relationship is an enigmatic area that women feel compelled to explore and discuss – as if they have been waiting for the right moment to unload their myriad of emotions to another interested party. This predilection to converse about this potentially very private matter would make the task of a documentary much easier.

Finding fathers to open up about their relationships with their daughter's especially on camera, would be unsurprisingly a more difficult task. One of the barriers to F-D communication is the very real awkwardness many fathers feel in this subject matter. In essence, many fathers

find it difficult to talk to their daughters – so having them talk ABOUT those specific challenges doesn't make it any easier for them. Having said that, my thought process was that if I could find the right fathers who could articulate their feelings effectively, there would be great potential for material that many fathers would find highly relatable. Like many of the challenges fathers' experience, their primary obstacle is not so much in the uniqueness of their issues, for communication barriers are very universal among fathers. The primary obstacle is helping fathers recognize the difficulties in their relationships and then see that they have the ability to overcome those challenges. Fathers in particular are empowered by watching other fathers share their vulnerabilities and their success stories.

The other reason I felt the documentary format might be suitable for this topic, is grounded in the practical accessibility of film. I became a true champion of the subject material and I hope to continue to beat the drum for stronger F-D relationships for many years. My understanding of the complex issues involved has both humbled and stimulated my desire to get the word out about this topic. I don't think it is blasphemous to suggest that more people will sit down and watch a film rather than read an extensive research essay.

Film has the power to reach people that might not otherwise be interested in an academic approach, though it could be noted that the documentary film format itself has not exactly swept the nation by storm – the box office results are clear evidence of that. As comedian Louis CK pointed out when presenting the Oscars in the Documentary categories at the Academy Awards earlier this year, while the documentary is the only film format that has the power to “change a life,” there was no doubt that the Oscar was “going home in a Honda Civic.”

So while my previous research proved that many of today's movies contain references, themes and even important plot points rooted in Father – Daughter relationships, the documentary format was the right method to directly address the nuances of those relationships.

The next question was how to how to film the documentary, what subjects to interview, which topics to cover and how to produce a professional looking product on a shoestring budget.

The Documentary: Pre-production

When I met with my advisory committee at Southern Utah University (Jon Smith, Ellen Treanor, and Matt Barton) some months before the project began, I came away relieved regarding two major conclusions: The committee loved the idea of a documentary, and two, they recommended to keep the film short – perhaps in the 20-25 minute range. As a very busy graduate student with no less than three time consuming jobs (including Executive Director of a local community theater and Adjunct Professor at Dixie State University) the thought of having to produce a feature length documentary--which many filmmakers often spend years making---was no less than frightening. So the committee helped give me some foundation and encouragement while providing some input on the structure of the documentary.

One of my first and perhaps most important decisions was how to film the doc? I am not deeply experienced in technical details of film technique or hardware. And beyond just the filming, the secret to any great film is in the editing process which is done in post-production.

Fortunately with my background in film (I have been writing weekly film columns for the largest local news agency for 15 years) and with experience in locally produced independent films I knew several experts in the field. I had hired Mike Crockett to do some video work for the theater and I found his work to be highly professional and his work ethic uniquely responsive

and efficient. Mike was willing to travel with me, do all of the filming and complete the post-production work. His fee was a bit painful but reasonable. I knew I did not have the time to become an expert in filming, it would detract from my other important duties in the filmmaking process, and the end product would look like crap. Hiring Mike might have been the smartest thing I did for as turned out, the documentary at the very least “looks” professionally shot.

The next step in the pre-production phase was to make some basic outline and decisions based on the content. One of the beautiful but also frustrating elements of documentary filmmaking is that the content involves a dynamic, often very unpredictable journey of discovery and revelation. My hunch was that as the interviewer, a key to having good content revolved around choosing the right subjects and asking the right questions. Based on the research background I had spent many hours investigating, I had a good feeling of the direction I wanted to go with the film. But really, a documentary sort of writes itself. I believe it was legendary director Alfred Hitchcock that suggested: “On a (scripted) film, the director is god, in a documentary, God is the director.” This very real perspective suggests that a documentary filmmaker can only do so much in terms of creating content. The documentary filmmakers job, as I came to learn, is to find a provocative topic, find the right people to discuss it, ask the right questions, listen carefully, then organize all of the content in a compelling and cogent manner.

I knew my subjects would be pulled from three main categories: Fathers, daughters, and experts in the field. I read many authoritative sources in the areas of Father – Daughter communication. I was unsuccessful in contacting most of them. However I had read and really enjoyed author Joe Kelly’s book “Dad and Daughters.” I found out he authored and managed a very informative blog (dadsanddaughters). I reached out to him through (on?) Facebook and amazingly he responded to me the same day. From his book it appeared as though he was based

on the east coast so I was thrilled when I found out that when his daughters moved to the Bay area, he and his wife followed them. Like me, his passionate foray into the subject material was fueled by his own transformational relationship with his daughters. I would soon learn what a wonderful, articulate and intelligent expert on this subject he is.

I also had some local sources, experts in the field of psychiatric and social counseling. Martha Ham had been an amazing and influential advisor to me and my family and an engaging personality to boot. She agreed to be filmed and share some of her experiences. She is from the south originally and brought some diversity to the content.

My decision on the fathers came down to this: Should I find fathers who were experienced and knowledgeable on the subject, or rather should I interview fathers that had difficulties, and perhaps overcame them? The latter proved harder to find. And even if I could would such a father be able to articulate their misgivings and challenges? This prompted the question – was the overarching objective of the doc to be instructive from a cautionary perspective or more positively toned “how-to-do-it-right” perspective? This was an important distinction and demands a scrutiny of the intended audience and what the filmmaker hopes to achieve and perhaps as important HOW to achieve it? This was one of my most difficult challenges. I was torn by which approach would be the most accessible and the most effective. Too much painful material and fathers might be scared off. Too sugarcoated and the film might not be taken seriously. I wanted the film to be academically credible, but imminently watchable. I wanted it to speak to the novice and the educator. Could I have it both ways? What academic credibility would I be sacrificing if the film was as entertaining as it was educational?

One thing I knew for certain: I was surrounded by good fathers. My own experience is that men don't mind being instructed but they are more often inspired by success stories rather than cautionary tales. I decided to interview men who I had personal experience with and were models of many of the principles rooted in good F – D communication. I also wanted to find at least one father who had supported his daughter through a traumatic ordeal and had maintained a good relationship throughout. Finding a father like this would be difficult but in the end, achievable. Good fathers, I found, do not blow their own trumpets very loudly. They usually move about quietly and without much fanfare, dutifully and cheerfully upholding the integrity of their commitments while performing the unselfish minutia of great fatherhood. They work in the trenches of daily caretaking – listening, counseling and inspiring in almost imperceptible ways. Yet, these great fathers who usually look and act unsuspecting of any celebrity, are those who have the greatest influence on their daughters. I wanted to capture, on film, these every-day, average-looking heroes.

My search for daughter subjects was different by design. It would be easy to find bright, articulate daughters in and around my own community – but their experiences might be a bit too homogenous. When I talked to Joe Kelly about this, he suggested I meet and interview some women he knew in the Bay area who had very diverse stories that could prove interesting. The potential for surprise and discovery here was exhilarating. Travel plans to visit Joe who would set up the interviews were made, Mike and I boarded the cheapest flight we could find, paid the excess baggage fees related to the camera gear, and couldn't wait to sleep overnight together it what turned out to be an Oakland based motel where it looked like a murder had been committed the night before. Ah, the joys of documentary filmmaking!

The Documentary: Filming

Cameraman and Chipotle connoisseur Mike and I spent an entire day film in and around Oakland. I had 5 pages of sample questions I would ask daughter and father subjects. These questions were decent but they often led to more interesting and satisfying discussions. Jessica, the bisexual, mixed-raced cyclist with the father who lived outside her home even after her parents divorced was a total joy. Her story about her relationship with her very traditional African-american father and his initial rejection of her female partner was engaging and illuminating. We met Emily, a very successful gay attorney in her law office and her strong relationship with her father and their strong bond over Giants baseball was really sweet. It reminded me of my relationships with my daughters – one who formed a huge affection for our beloved Los Angeles Lakers (the team of my youth and beyond) and the other daughter who grew fond of the Utah Jazz after moving to Salt Lake City. What joyous moments I have had attending and watching basketball games with them. It was inspiring to hear Emily talk in such loving tones about her father and her appreciation of the many hours he spent with her sharing his passion for baseball. No doubt this is an important bedrock in the foundation of healthy F-D relationships. If a father can find an area of mutual interest, most daughters thoroughly enjoy and are willing to devote time with their dads sharing a collective hobby. Almost by accident we met Omonigo, a law clerk in Emily's firm. A recent Stanford summa cum laude graduate she had caused a stir in her Nigerian rooted family by – shock of all shocks – deciding to go to law school instead of medical school. This highly articulate, obviously intelligent young woman was eager to talk but it took over an hour of interviewing to dig below the surface of her polished veneer and extract some deeper emotional feelings about her father – whom she adored.

We came home and over the course of several weeks filmed three fathers Tysen, Ben and Andy, personal acquaintances who all share my personal esteem for being three of the most dedicated husbands and fathers I know. I loved interviewing them and felt their insight would be readily appreciated, especially by other fathers. We debated whether to have their young daughters on film. This material could have added tremendously to the doc. But after investigating the IBB requirements for using minors in a campus-sanctioned project it was deemed too time-consuming of an approval process and too complex to deal with given our time frames. Subject matter for another film, for sure.

I was able, however, to capture the story of Stan and Katie who had experienced some tumultuous years together working through and ultimately both surviving Katie's drug addiction and related, often near-death, experiences. This was easily the most heart-wrenching of the interviews. A technical glitch surfaced when we were caught one mic short, and I wish we could go back and re-record our session with them. But what we did capture of film was compelling, incredibly honest and rewarding.

I became enchanted with the guerrilla filmmaking style of documentary filmmaking. It can be done simply and allows for a human authenticity unparalleled in scripted filmmaking. I learned to be careful to really listen to those being interviewed and not get fixated on asking certain questions – or a certain amount of questions. While the process of interviewing is critical, it is just a means to an end and it is critical to understand the objectives of what is to be extracted while respecting the humanness of authentic conversation. I am anxious to improve my abilities in this area in the future.

The Documentary: Post-production

Everyone who knows even a little about the technical aspects of filmmaking will affirm the importance and difficulty of the editing process. In essence, films, documentaries in particular, are made or broken during the editing process. It boils down to, as Bob Seger sings in “Against the Wind,” “...what to leave in, and what to leave out.” Together Mike and I had shot, I believe, over 18 hours of footage including B-roll material. The B-roll or supplemental material can be critical in a doc, adding variety and much needed artistic flair. With the goal of ending up with a film of only 20-25 minutes, there was an arduous task ahead of editing down all of those hours and still be left with content that covered the material in a thorough, effective and compelling way.

My first step was to document, or transfer to paper the comments extracted from every interview subject – essentially creating a written transcript, by hand of the salient points. This ended up being a very time-consuming but very valuable task, resulting in over 20 pages of hand-written notes. I then color coded with highlight pens and categorized the comments into a variety of conceptual groups. For example, “Listening,” “Communication,” “Body/Sex issues,” etc.... This would help me arrange the various issues by priority so that the meat of the documentary focused on the “critical few” issues that seemed to be most prominently discussed. It also helped in arranging topics or ideas that were directly addressed by multiple interviewees so they could, if possible, be presented together.

The next step, after the ideas were organized was to storyboard the content, and insert the movie clips in what I felt were the most appropriate places. As a hardcore movie fan, I felt movie clips dealing directly with F – D issues would be insightful and entertaining – breaking up some

of the monotony of the interview process. I had gathered quite a few clips, but the clips that remained in the final film were the most relevant. After investigating the “Fair Use” laws regarding copyrighted material, we inserted the clips with the proper acknowledgements. The editing process is greatly aided by a strong storyboard – even if visual effects are not used. A storyboard is essentially a graphic outline and can help the filmmaker visualize flow, transitions, structure and pacing, among other things. Having watched hundreds of documentaries, it is clear many filmmakers do not take the time or underestimate the importance of the storyboard process. Believe me, it shows.

I won’t soon forget the image of my eight foot long kitchen table with all my content notes spread out from which I made my storyboard. This process was tedious at times but exhilarating at other times because of the nuggets of wisdom to be discovered, examined and extracted. Applying a researcher’s eye to the content of a documentary is challenging to be sure, for how does one really know what material will both do justice to the film’s vision and yet connect with an audience on both an intellectual as well as emotional level?

It was also in post-production that I added an animated clip produced by a Dixie State student of mine – again, just a little something different to drive home an important point Joe Kelly made about fathers “putting down the shotgun.”

The Documentary: The finished film

My editor Mike was very instrumental in helping me cut the film down to its final 34 minutes. Watching the final version with my wife, my most supporting yet most honest critic was exhilarating. She gave me some excellent feedback. I shared the film with others who also

gave me very positive feedback. Part of my exuberance was, no doubt, a bit of relief knowing the project was finally consummated, but I took great pride in it too. It wasn't garbage. It covered a lot of the material I wanted, yet it was more varied and more unpredictable than I expected.

My advisory committee gave me good feedback as well. One member contacted me immediately to tell me how much she loved it. One member thought there were parts that could have been faster paced and a few more things edited out. There was a discussion about having me more personally involved. I really didn't want to make a film with me in it. It was not about me. I know people who love Michael Moore films partially do because of his personality, but I did not want to detract from the subjects or the subject material in any way.

In summary, I am grateful for what I learned during this capstone project. I had the help and encouragement of dozens of people. The collaborative elements of this projects were thrilling and significant. I hope "To Hear, Not Fear" is a springboard for me to make more documentary films and take the lessons learned from this debut and continue delving into important topics worthy of exploration and examination.

