

EMOTIONS IN BECOMING A FATHER

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Fathers, emotions and agency

Showing and experiencing emotions has undoubtedly been seen as women's birth-right, whereas men are often overlooked (Galasiński 2004). The culture of fatherhood and the culture of emotions refer to the norms, values and beliefs about men and women, fatherhood and motherhood. Men's emotions are said to be always under control, they are time-limited and expressively economical. (Doucet 2007; Shields 2002.) By 'emotional agency' we mean men's capability of noticing, naming and interpreting their own emotions. This can also be called a reflection of emo-

Aims

The aim of this study was to investigate what kind of emotions and 'emotional agencies' men construct in their stories about the beginning of their fatherhood, and what kinds of circumstances enable or confine men to their emotion-talk. In other words, what and how men talk about their emotions.

Data and methods

The study material consists of the narratives of 27 Finnish first-time fathers (aged 20 to 42 years) with varying life experiences and situations in life. Men's first-born were 1- to 3-years-old at the time of the interview. Some of the participants were found through the day care system and the rest of them by using the snowball-method. The transcribed text accumulated to 580 pages. A narrative perspective perforates the whole study from the beginning to the end.

Here we use men's narratives as a starting point to analyze *emotions*, *agency* and *modality*. The aspect of modality is taken from the field of linguistics and it is used here as an analytical tool which refers to the expressions broadly associated with the notions of possibility and necessity:

what do men say they can/cannot, want/do not want, must/must not and should/should not do is commensurate with their beginning fatherhood.

Results

Men highlighted closeness, love, experiencing self-sacrifice, helplessness, anger, confusion and the feeling of being an outsider. These also came up as being ambivalent. We noticed that in men's narratives, the agency of emotions can be categorized as strong or weak. *Strong* emotional agency is visible in colourful emotional talk, when men puzzled over something, gave reasons, interpreted, understood or impugned their feelings. *Weak* emotional agency appears in speech when men try to avoid emotional talk: they do not want to explain, analyze or understand their feelings.

We extracted four emotion-types that characterize the way men describe their experiences and emotions concerning the delivery. The types are 'empathizers', 'hesitators', 'reporters' and 'humorists'. The *empathizers* represent a culturally new, and in this study, reigning set of men who are conscious and certain about their emotions and have the capability of launching into them and talking about them openly. These men used 'personalization' (see Luz 1996) when profiling their telling. These men were also anxious about and attentive to their spouses' needs.

The *hesitators* in turn are afraid, uncertain and uneasy about their emotions, but confess their hesitancy openly. The third type, *reporters*, are those who describe their experiences in technical detail, dwelling on every little detail and avoiding in this way their own emotion-talk. The fourth type, *humorists*, means those whose stories are told with 'manly' humor and who in this way avoid facing their own emotions.

Emotional certainty and openness in men's speech when describing emotional experiences during the moment of delivery.

	Emotionally Certain	Emotionally Uncertain
Emotional Openness in Speech	Autonomy, activity and certainty of one's own emotions. Pays attention to spouse's and unborn baby's health (empathy). <i>Modality in doing and feeling:</i> Certainty of what he can do, wants to do, knows how to do, must do.	Passive, non-reflective, fearful and uncertainty about one's own emotions. Pays attention only to one's own survival. <i>Modality in doing and feeling:</i> Does not know can he, should he or does he want to.
Openly Experienced and Sharing Tellers	Empathizers	Hesitators
Non-Disclosing Tellers	Reporters	Humorists

Conclusions

When becoming a father, many men underwent 'emotional surprises', that is, confronting new, awakening, strong, and sometimes quiescent emotions. The modality analysis showed that men's narratives, agencies and emotions about the first steps to fatherhood vary. The four different emotion-types (empathizers, hesitators, reporters and humorists) reveal that men have different ways of expressing their emotions. There is not one prevailing or coherent 'manly way' to talk about emotions – the gamut of emotional-talk is extensive.

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	Certain	Uncertain
Emotional openness in speech	Autonomy, activity and certainty of one's own emotions. Pays attention to spouse's and unborn baby's health (empathy).	Passive, non-reflective, fearful and uncertainty about one's own emotions. Pays attention only to one's own survival.
Openly experienced and sharing tellers	<i>Modality in doing and feeling:</i> Certainty of what he can do, wants to do, knows how to do, must do.	<i>Modality in doing and feeling:</i> Does not know can he, should he or does he want to.
Non-disclosing tellers	Empathizers (11 men)	Hesitators (5 men)
Reflective, intense, open and personal way of talking Internal point of view (his own, child's or spouse's view) 'Re-living' the situation		
Emotional-talk is distant and objective 'Observing', outsider perspective	Reporters (7 men)	Humorists (4 men)

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