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# Huggies, high-fives, and huismannen: Exploring the masculinity and everyday experiences of Dutch stay-at-home fathers

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Huggies, high-fives, and *huismannen*:

Exploring the masculinity and everyday experiences of Dutch stay-at-home fathers

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research study explores Dutch stay-at-home fathers, or “*huismannen*,” and their everyday experiences with their role and their own masculinity. There has been much research conducted on stay-at-home fathers within other countries and cultures, but the current research significantly lacks the perspective and voices of those within the Dutch culture. To gather these voices, oral history interviews were conducted with five Dutch *huismannen*, and the collected data were analyzed using gender theory focused on masculinity and current relevant literature. This analysis led to the conclusion that Dutch stay-at-home fathers create and conform to a complicit masculine identity. It was also concluded that two characteristics of this complicit masculine identity, independence and societal membership, are threatened by stay-at-home fatherhood, but by participating in masculine engagements, these fathers managed to protect and maintain their independence, societal membership, and thus, their masculinity. Recommendations for future research conducted on this topic first includes a replication study with a larger sample size, and then includes a focus on generational differences and exploring the children and partner’s views of *huismannen*.

*Keywords: stay-at-home fathers, masculinity, fatherhood, gender studies*

INTRODUCTION

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The Netherlands is politicized and marketed as one of the most progressive countries in the world, specifically for gender equality. One expects gender roles to be nonexistent, men and women to be equal in every aspect of society – a real-life utopia. Despite these expectations, while “the trend toward gender equality has been noticeable, women and men still occupy distinct functions in Dutch society” (Everyculture.com, 2015). As Everyculture.com (2015) reports, “the differences between men and women are especially noticeable within the nuclear family, where the woman continues to perform the role of homemaker, while the man is seen as the breadwinner or provider.” This family dynamic, while becoming less strictly followed in recent years, is still seen as the most prevalent dynamic in the Netherlands today. There are definitely variations of the division of labor from home-to-home such as both parents working part-time, one working part-time and the other working full-time, etc., but there is rarely any mention of a dynamic in which the breadwinner model is reversed: the mother works full-time and the father is the primary caretaker.

To provide an example of the number of households in which the breadwinner model is reversed, Jan Bletz (2013) explains that the Dutch Male Activity Index recently distributed a survey to measure the number of *huismannen*, or stay-at-home dads, in the Netherlands. The results show that approximately 21% of men stay home as primary caregivers, which is an increase since recent years (Bletz, 2013). Despite this increase, the Netherlands is still significantly behind other countries like Germany and Scandinavia in the number of full-time male homemakers. Researchers infer that “the Dutch man still [is] not entirely convinced of the houseman shelf” and that “the emancipation [of men] has still to go a long way” (Bletz, 2013).

With my research project, I hope to contribute to this enlightenment of Dutch men and the emancipation of these *huismannen*.

The emancipation of these *huismannen* lies within giving them a voice and making them and their lives more visible in Dutch society. When these fathers do stay home to take care of their children, they are challenging not only cultural gender norms, but the culture's hegemonic masculinity as well. Dutch hegemonic masculinity mainly follows the model of Western masculinity: strong, showing no emotion, breadwinner, athletic, etc. But by caring for one's children day-in and day-out, these men are challenging that dominant notion of masculinity, but also complying with it through other actions and behaviors that they adopt or continue to pursue while taking on this uncommon role. Because of this interesting dynamic of complicit and subordinated masculine identities within the stay-at-home father, an explorative study using oral history interviews will hopefully be able to uncover some of the contradictions and intricacies of the masculinities of this marginalized group of people in Dutch society: *huismannen*.

Thus, this study is an effort to explore the masculinity and everyday experiences of men who identify as stay-at-home fathers, or the primary caretakers of their children. In other words, do their experiences with stay-at-home fatherhood affect their perceptions and feelings of their own masculinity? Through these oral history interviews previously mentioned, I was able to interview five men and have been able to draw some conclusions about the overall experience of stay-at-home fatherhood in the Netherlands, as well as a bit about the masculinities of *huismannen* such as how they are maintained, how they deviate and comply with Dutch hegemonic masculinity, and how they are affected by the role of primary caretaker.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

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Sifting through research on the topic of *huismannen*, I felt it was necessary to first offer a background of masculinity in an academic context. I will introduce the topic of masculinity by reviewing the literature that coined and defined the term respectively, allowing for a better understanding of the term. Then, I will introduce the topic at hand, *huismannen*, and review the current literature on stay-at-home fathers in a broader research context and then in a Dutch context.

### MASCULINITY

Masculinity: a word that carries so many expectations, but is so abstract it has yet to be defined concretely. The ambiguity of the word stems from the fact that masculinity is socially constructed; cultures, institutions, and even individuals influence the way masculinity is perceived and defined in a “particular social setting” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 836). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state, masculinity is “not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals” but rather “configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action” (p. 836). Thus, there are many different kinds of masculinities that are constructed across cultures, groups of people, and social settings. Applying this to Dutch culture, there are various masculinities that exist solely within not only this culture, but within groups and social settings that make up this culture. Whenever there are multiple masculinities, however, hierarchies will develop among them. Connell (2005) explains these relations among masculinities, referring to the most dominant or “ideal” masculinity in a certain culture as the hegemonic masculinity.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is derived from the concept of hegemony, “the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is the masculinity in a culture that holds a dominant position and serves as the idealistic model for others to achieve. In Dutch culture, hegemonic masculinity follows the Western masculine trope also seen within the United States and the majority of other Westernized countries. Delgado and Stefancic (1995) state that the man who conforms to the Western hegemonic masculinity is “forceful, militaristic, hypercompetitive, risk-taking, not particularly interested in culture and the arts, protective of his woman, heedless of nature” (p. 211), and let’s not forget, white. While Dutch culture upholds this description to be that of the ideal man, it “need not be the commonest pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) go on to say “men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable, but the same men can distance themselves strategically [from it at] other moments” (p. 841). This is where Connell’s relations between masculinities arise: when men, like stay-at-home fathers, deviate or do not conform to this hegemonic standard. These relations between masculinities include (1) subordination, (2) marginalization, and (3) complicity, which make up the rest of Connell’s (2005) theorized “masculinity hierarchy.”

Subordination characterizes a relationship among masculinities in which one masculinity exhibits qualities that are opposite the qualities encompassed by the hegemonic ideal. Therefore, any masculinity that embraces femininity is subordinated. Ehrenreich (1987) uses a dramatic example to explain how detrimental femininity is to the masculine ideal:

...any adaptive failure – sexual, social, or vocational – may be perceived as a failure in the masculine role and, which is worse, may be symbolically extended through an equation that is calculated only to intensify the anxiety incident to failure. This equation

is the following: *I am a failure = I am castrated = I am not a man = I am a woman = I am a homosexual* (p. 25).

Thus, embracing femininity automatically labels a man as a woman or, even worse, a homosexual. And as seen in Western cultures, being a woman or being a homosexual is subordinated by the privileged heterosexual, White man and the idealistic hegemonic masculinity.

A marginalized masculinity is slightly different in the fact that men who identify with a marginalized masculinity do not have access to the culture's hegemonic masculinity. This relationship predominantly occurs within race relations, specifically when non-White men live in a society in which the hegemonic masculinity upholds the characteristic of being White, like most Western countries. Thus, by not ever being able to become White, these men's masculinities are marginalized. Their status in society and their own masculinity is "always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group," (Connell, 2005, p. 81) so they are marginalized unless the hegemonic masculinity decides otherwise.

Complicit masculinity characterizes the men who do not conform completely to the hegemonic ideal but still benefit from the "patriarchal dividend" (Connell, 2005, p. 79) created by the dominant masculinity's hegemony. Thus, most men have complicit masculinities, ones that do not entirely meet the "normative standards" for hegemonic masculinity, but they still gain from the "advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 79).

Being able to distinguish between and recognize these relations among masculinities is vital in understanding the complexities involved when analyzing the masculinities of the stay-at-home fathers interviewed for this study. To what degree do these fathers conform to the Dutch

hegemonic ideal? Do they, instead, construct a complicit masculinity in which they reject and adopt different parts of the ideal? These questions have been offered answers through a good amount of previous research on stay-at-home fathers, yet only one of these studies have addressed these questions in a Dutch context. Thus, to continue this review of relevant and current literature, the next subsection focuses on research conducted on stay-at-home fatherhood.

### **STAY-AT-HOME FATHERHOOD**

Motivations to become a stay-at-home father vary according to current research. Much research supports decisions being made based on an ideology that having one parent at home is within the best interests of the child(ren) (de Koster, 2004; Rochlen, A. B., McKelley, R. A., & Whittaker, T. A., 2010). Doucet (2004) even reports in her study that a high number of her participants decided that they had “achieved financial and professional success” (p. 284) and that the next step in their careers was to take on the role of a stay-at-home father. On the other hand, though, motivations seem to also stem from unforeseen circumstances, such as unemployment (Rochlen et al., 2010), or the sole fact that the mother earns a higher salary than the father. While these motivations all seem reasonable, in Dutch society, “participation in the labor market is generally high and appreciated” (de Koster, 2004, p. 3), so a father’s decision to exit the labor market, willingly or not, sparks reactions from family members, children, and general members of society.

An American study focused specifically on the reactions and attitudes of the general public towards traditional and nontraditional parents (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005). This study was the first to “empirically document prejudice against stay-at-home fathers” (p. 443), and was able to conclude that general members of society “perceive the stay-at-home father as the worst

parent” (p. 440). The popular public opinion claimed that stay-at-home fathers seem to lack the necessary skills needed to be the primary caretaker of children. But what social group perceives these fathers in this way? When American stay-at-home fathers were asked about what kind of people tend to react the most negatively to their role, they attributed 70% of negative incidents to stay-at-home mothers (Rochlen et al., 2010), the group of people with whom stay-at-home fathers would most likely interact with on a daily basis. Are Dutch *huismannen* perceived in the same way and receive the same negative reactions?

Only one Dutch study specifically investigated the stigmatization and social regard of *huismannen*, providing evidence that these men are excluded by a different social group: the male community (de Koster, 2004). de Koster (2004) explains that “the active self-exclusion of house husbands from the labour market has consequences in the form of passive exclusion from other social spheres” (p. 7), thus reducing the number of social contacts and interactions that these *huismannen* have each day. As daily social interaction is limited to one’s children and other stay-at-home parents, rather than co-workers and male friends, *huismannen* tend to be viewed as outsiders or deviants from the male community, most likely putting their masculinity at some kind of risk.

Unfortunately, the masculinity of Dutch *huismannen* has not been explored extensively. Instead, the masculinity of American stay-at-home fathers has received much attention, especially in the context of Connell’s (2005) relations among masculinities. Most research supports a construction theory: stay-at-home fathers construct their own masculinity based off of the framework of the hegemonic ideal (Doucet, 2004; Melton-Chavarria, 2011). Doucet (2004) explains that stay-at-home fathers construct their masculinity through “delicate balancing acts of simultaneously embracing and rejecting both femininity and hegemonic masculinity” (p. 296).

The life of a stay-at-home father challenges a man to recreate and redefine his own masculinity through embracing parts of various masculinities, including the hegemonic standard, while embracing parts of various femininities as well. Sometimes, though, stay-at-home fathers can be completely “unaware of masculinity as an issue” (p. iii), which Melton-Chavarria (2011) theorizes can lead to “an absence of masculine identity” within these men (p. iii). Thus, the masculinity of stay-at-home fathers can vary widely between individuals, but also cultures and settings as well, so Dutch stay-at-home fathers may have completely different experiences with and constructions of their masculinity.

There is only one piece of literature that investigates the masculine identities of Dutch stay-at-home fathers. Daphne Beukers (2014) compared the masculine identities of part-time working fathers with stay-at-home fathers, focusing on the influences of work, childcare, and fatherhood and how those three elements influenced the construction of a new, broader masculine identity. This identity she coined as “equality-oriented masculinity” in which “responsibility for the family is central” (Beukers, 2014, p. 45), but adherence to the breadwinner role is not stressed. A rough translation from Dutch to English of the following quotation from her study sums up one of the major findings:

The fathers seem to distance themselves from the traditional image of masculinity, because they [are] unable to meet [the standard] and not (anymore) wanted to meet [it]. The fathers gave their own twist to manhood [and] their masculinity to other things than to derive work. Yet it is clear that the traditional image of masculinity remains formative for the experiences of fathers with their own masculinity, it remains a reference framework (p. 39).

Thus, while Dutch stay-at-home fathers may not consciously follow traditional gender roles and adhere to the hegemonic ideal, they still serve as standards to base one’s self-constructed masculine identity upon. Many of the men in Beuker’s (2014) study stated that holding at least

some kind of job was definitely a huge part of their masculine identity, demonstrating that these men do not fully conform to the hegemonic ideal, but still embrace parts of it by basing part of their constructed masculinity on employment status. But if employment status is a huge part of many part-time fathers' masculinities, is it a huge part for *huismannen* who are not employed at all? Do these men find other pseudo-jobs that fulfill the need for employment, or do they construct their masculine identity in a completely different way?

Therefore, while the conclusions drawn from Beuker's (2014) study are extremely useful in the understanding of part-time working fathers' masculine identities, there is still much more to be investigated and discovered on *huismannen*. The following research study aims to fill these gaps and discover common themes among *huismannen* and their masculine identities by exploring their everyday experiences with stay-at-home fatherhood. Thus, the main research question that this study aims to answer is, "How do the everyday experiences of being a Dutch *huisman* affect that father's masculinity?" Some resulting minor research questions that this study also aims to investigate are, "Do *huismannen* experience stigmatization and stereotypes in Dutch culture? Does ditching the provider or breadwinner role affect the masculinity of Dutch *huismannen*?"

METHODOLOGY

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In order to understand the depth of a man's masculine identity and the various experiences of stay-at-home fatherhood, my main method of collecting data for this qualitative study was oral history interviews. These interviews were conducted with current or former Dutch stay-at-home fathers, or *huismannen*, living in the Netherlands. A man qualified as a stay-at-home father if he (1) self-identified as the primary caretaker of his children, meaning that he (2) spent more hours taking care of his children than his partner for at least one year. The *huisman* could (3) work a part-time job or not work at all, but (4) must not be the breadwinner of the family. Recruitment methods for this study predominantly involved convenience sampling, using the connections I have with my host family and the SIT network to find participants to interview. To supplement, I also posted announcements to a parenting forum, [ouders.nl](http://ouders.nl), calling to any *huismannen* in the area and searched the Internet for *huisman* blogs and contacted the authors directly. Of the twelve fathers I was able to contact, five agreed to be interviewed, five did not respond, and two declined to participate.

Of the men who were willing to participate ( $n = 5$ ,  $M_{\text{age}} = 50.2$  years, age range: 41-55 years), all of them were currently living within the Netherlands. All participants identified as White males and fit the definition of a current stay-at-home father, or *huisman*, stated previously. Their children ranged from less than three years of age to late teens, so the years of experience being a stay-at-home father ranged significantly as well. Participants were not provided compensation for participating, but will be provided a digital copy of the current study in acknowledgment of their indispensable contributions. All participants were asked the same list of questions for each oral history interview. Questions, in English and Dutch, can be accessed from the full interview guide provided in Appendix A.



By utilizing the oral history interview as the sole method of collecting data, a deeper engagement with interviewees occurred, allowing me to gain a better understanding of the emotions and experiences that influenced their responses to each question. The interviews held in-person were conducted in the father's homes, as it was more convenient for their schedules since they were watching their children during the day. One interview was conducted via Skype, however, and two others were conducted through e-mail, limitations to be discussed later. Each interview averaged about forty-five minutes in length during which participants were asked the series of questions listed on the interview guide mentioned previously. The questions can be grouped into three main categories: decisions & reactions, fatherhood & parenting, and stigmatization & invisibility. The first cluster of questions inquired about their decision to become a stay-at-home father, the emotions surrounding that decision, and the reactions received by others when the role was taken on. The next group of questions shifted the focus to the interviewees' experience with stay-at-home fatherhood: what they really enjoy and what they find challenging or difficult. A daily routine as a Dutch *huismannen* was also explored. The last group of questions explored the fathers' perceptions of the stigmatization and stereotypes (if any) of stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands. Did they experience any stereotypes linked to their more feminine role? Are there any institutional barriers or everyday barriers they face such as changing stations not being available in men's bathrooms?

Overall, the series of questions asked were framed in ways to draw out experiences as responses, rather than opinions. This was necessary for the current research study since it embraces a more open, explorative approach, rather than an opinionated approach. Also, deciding not to explicitly ask interviewees about their manhood and their masculinity was a strategy that was consciously used as a way to make the interview questions more relatable and

understandable. Being aware of and thinking about abstract concepts such as masculinity is not a common thing to do in everyday life, so asking explicit questions about masculinity, I believe, would have made the interview more academic and robotic, rather than flowing like an ordinary conversation.

To consider ethics, while my target community is not relatively as vulnerable as many other groups that can be studied, I still took the necessary precautions that must be addressed when conducting research involving human participants. Before each interview, I thoroughly explained the informed consent form (see Appendix C), also making sure that requested pseudonyms were agreed upon, and that they fully understood the privacy and confidentiality policies of my research. All last names of the participants were unacknowledged.

To try to eliminate the power dynamic sometimes seen between researcher and participant, I allowed each participant to choose where the interview would take place, ultimately making sure that they were in a comfortable environment. Additionally, I made sure that all interviewees understood that they had the choice to not answer any question I asked. This also provided them with partial control over the interview process, further disintegrating the power dynamic mentioned. An interview guide translated into Dutch was also present at every interview so that participants could fully understand the questions being asked before they consented to answering them. With all of these ethical considerations, I believe I was able to successfully create an environment in which my interviewees were comfortable enough to share their stories and experiences needed for me to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands.

### ASSUMPTIONS

The Netherlands is globally marketed and presented as one of the most progressive countries in the world. Thus, before I began researching the Dutch culture and experiencing it first-hand, I assumed that this country was a haven for gender equality where discrepancies and discriminations based on sex or gender were nonexistent. I also assumed that gender roles were very loosely followed and that mobility among these roles was not only accepted, but also truly encouraged. So, when I decided to research stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands, I assumed that there were (1) many in existence, and that they (2) experienced little to no stereotypes or stigmatizations like those seen in other Western countries like the United States. Also, because of my assumption about Dutch culture embracing gender role mobility, I assumed that a *huisman's* masculinity would not be significantly affected by his role.

### LIMITATIONS

Despite efforts to make this study as valid and reliable as possible, there are several limitations of this study that I must address as a researcher. The first limitation, and probably the most detrimental, is the limited amount of time allotted to complete this research study. Given only a four-week period to research, collect data, and then code and analyze it, the execution of this research study is not as thorough and professional as it would have been if more time had been provided. With more time, I would have also been able to increase and diversify my sample, which would increase the chances that my results would be more externally valid, or more generalizable, to the wider population of *huismannen* in the Netherlands.

Focusing on the sample used for this research study, the next limitation to address is the methods in which participants were recruited. While this is a qualitative research study that usually requires fewer participants than quantitative research, having only five voices of stay-at-

home fathers to analyze presents a definite threat to external validity, again, the ability to generalize my findings to all Dutch stay-at-home fathers within the Netherlands. Also, the convenience sampling used, as opposed to random sampling, presents a threat to external validity as well. Recruiting participants through the academics in the SIT network as well as through my academically privileged host family, participants are likely to be of similar background. This most likely excluded from this study the stay-at-home fathers who may not be associated with such academic institutions or live in privileged neighborhoods like the one my host family does, thus making the study a bit more externally invalid.

The way that the interviews were conducted presents a limitation as well. As mentioned previously, two of the oral history interviews were conducted via e-mail due to time-constraints and distance. Therefore, it was necessary to create the interview guide into more of a quasi-survey that the men could fill out on their own. Having participants answer questions on a document and send it back still provided answers to the same questions I asked my other participants, but asking follow-up questions was not possible. Also, without in-person communication, I was unable to witness the emotion that accompanied the participants' answers, as well as create the comfortable environment that is needed to allow participants to open up to sharing the depths of stories rather than just surface-level descriptions. Thus, the data collected from these two interviews are limited in many aspects, but should still be included in the studied to offer these two participants a chance to voice their experiences.

One limitation that is out of the control of the researcher and the participant was the Dutch-English language barrier. Although all of my participants spoke conversational English fluently, I have found that since English is their second language, there still can be an inability to express oneself fully in a different language other than one's native one. I encountered many

instances in which the interviewees would be expressing themselves and would stop in the middle of their sentence to say that they “did not know how to explain themselves in English,” and proceeded to provide me with a Dutch word that fully expressed what they were trying to say. Therefore, because of this barrier, my interviews may be lacking the deepest and truest emotions that these men really wanted to express, but did not have the words to express them correctly or fully in English.

To address any researcher biases and my own positionality, as a woman, I obviously will never have the experience of being a man, or even a stay-at-home father. This definitely presents a challenge in interpreting and understanding the experiences of these men that have been shared. Thus, while I can understand masculinity in an academic context, I will not be able to fully grasp the experience of masculinity in the context of *huismannen*. Another potential bias that I may have is my own family’s dynamic compared to the family dynamics of these men. I grew up in a household in which my father was the breadwinner and my mother stayed at home with my brother and I, a dynamic that mirrors the norm here in the Netherlands. Since I did not have a stay-at-home father, and instead experienced a normative family dynamic, I am not able to fully understand the experiences that these men have as primary caretakers of their children.

Taking into account these limitations, I do believe that this study provides a good insight into some of the lives and everyday experiences of Dutch *huisman*. Most importantly, though, this study gives Dutch stay-at-home fathers a voice in academia – a voice that has not been given to them considering the lack of current research noted previously. As long as this research provides them that voice, this qualitative study has served its true purpose.

INTERVIEWEE BIOGRAPHIES

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**MARK**

Mark, forty-one, has been living in Amsterdam for eleven months with his wife and two daughters, both under six years of age. He was raised in a small town located in Holland by two working parents, and as a student, he studied physical therapy. He worked as a physical therapist until his first-born daughter turned a year old, and then the decision to stay home was made. His wife, an airline pilot, has a demanding job that she loves. While they were both working, Mark was dropping his daughter off at daycare each day and only saw her before and after work. The “feeling was not really comfortable [for him and] the situation of family was quite disturbed” (Mark, personal communication, April 29, 2015). Thus, a decision needed to be made on who would stay home with the children and who would provide the income. The decision was made based on who made the most money (his wife), as well as his wife’s ambitions for her career. Now, the primary caretaker of two daughters, he has been a stay-at-home father for almost two years, and describes the experience so far with the word, “joy.”

**JACQUES**

Born in Rotterdam and raised in Amsterdam, Jacques was part of a normative nuclear family consisting of a father, a mother, two older sisters, and a younger brother. His father was a teacher, and his mother stayed at home most of the time to care for him and his siblings. Currently, he is fifty-four years old and has a teenage daughter. He has been a stay-at-home father for over four years. The decision? He was given an option to leave the company he was working for after thirty years of working, with financial benefits included. With these financial benefits, it was possible for him to stay at home with his daughter for at least three years. His daughter reacted very naturally and “was glad there was always a parent at home for her”

(Jacques, personal communication, May 1, 2015). Add on the positive support from his family and Jacques describes his experience as a *huisman* with the word “‘comfort,’ [living his] life the way [he] thinks is the right way in harmony with family and friends” (Jacques, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

### **MAURITS**

Maurits also currently lives in Amsterdam, but grew up in the small village of Bilthoven with two younger sisters, a father who worked five days per week, and a mother who he described as the traditional housewife. His life growing up was a “fairytale easy life” (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015), and he decided to study law when it was suggested to him by his father. Unfortunately, he states, “maybe I’m not a photocopy of my dad,” because he struggled finding a job that he truly enjoyed as he bounced around from jobs in advertising agencies to jobs in food companies and insurance companies. After his two daughters were born, he felt a need to provide for them, so he worked a job that ended up being too stressful, leading to a nervous breakdown, as well as a physical breakdown that landed him in the hospital. In that hospital, he came to the realization that something needed to change. Knowing that he could have “an unemployment benefit for one year...[he] made a conscious move to be the person at home” (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Since then, he spends his time with his two daughters and puts a lot of time into the library at their school. He describes his experience as a *huisman* with the word, “wonderful.”

### **JOS**

Jos, fifty-five, currently lives in Schagen with his wife and two teenage sons. He grew up as the eldest of three boys, with his mother at home with them and his father working five days per week. He dreamed of becoming a journalist, but ended up obtaining a degree in graphic

design, as well as a degree in the Arts, specifically painting, drawing, and sculpture. With a theater job, he spent a good amount of time at home already, so when the decision to become a stay-at-home father needed to be made, he states that it “really made itself” (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015). His wife earned a higher salary and was more ambitious about her job, so they agreed that the choice was clear. Thus, Jos has been a *huisman* for “like forever!” – since his daughter was born, and then again when his sons were born (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015). To describe the overall experience, Jos provided me with not just a word, but a statement: “I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. If I had to make the choice again, I would do exactly the same” (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

### **ROLAND**

A forty-eight year old *huisman* born and raised in Roermond, Roland grew up with a breadwinner father who worked as a taxman and a mother who stayed home with him and his two older sisters. When he was twelve years old, his mother entered the labor market to earn money to buy family necessities, but the family dynamic still remained traditional as his father remained the breadwinner. Now, Roland and his wife have two children, one teenage daughter and one teenage son. Since 2010, Roland decided to stay at home with his children after facing problems with his health and his job at a magazine. He has always been a freelance journalist and worked at home most of the time, so his children were used to him being home frequently in the first place. Overall, the support from his family has been great, with his mother and sisters finding it no problem for him to stay home as they see that he does a lot for his wife and children. Roland summed up his experience as a stay-at-home father with the word, “okay, because that’s what counts in the end” (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015).



## OVERARCHING THEMES OF INTERVIEWS

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The following section attempts to organize the qualitative data collected through oral history interviews conducted with the five Dutch *huismannen* previously introduced. The questions included in the interview guide can be divided into three main categories: the decision and reactions to staying at home, stigmatization and stereotypes, and the experience of stay-at-home fatherhood. The data collected from these interview questions has been organized into three overarching themes: (1) Independence vs. Dependence, (2) Navigating Limited Social Interactions, and (3) Stigmatization and Society: Be a Part or Be a Stereotype. These themes present the most prominent main ideas that were encountered throughout most, if not all, of the men's described experiences and emotions discussed in the interviews.

### INDEPENDENCE VS. DEPENDENCE

One theme that presented itself throughout most of the interviews was a theme of independence versus dependence. When asking each interviewee about making the decision to stay home with their children, responses ranged from retirement to the loss of a job to even giving up one's job willingly. While these men stated that this decision did not make them feel like less of a man, they *all*, however, mentioned at least something about feeling of dependent upon their wives' income or feeling like they lost some of their independence.

Take for example, Roland, who explained that staying at home with his children was less of a decision to be made and more of the way life worked out for him. Overall, he said that this role has worked out for him, but in the beginning, he definitely struggled with the loss of independence:

In the beginning I found it very difficult not to earn money anymore and being dependent of my wife paying everything. After a couple of years...now it is okay by me. I do all I can in the household (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015).

The dependency on his wife's salary was also Roland's response when asked to elaborate on the most difficult thing about being a stay-at-home father. He described it as "a humiliation not to earn money [and] letting my wife pay for everything" (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015). This feeling was not solely characteristic of Roland's experience, though. Many of the other interviewees expressed worry about giving up their jobs, but the following quote from Mark's interview perfectly sums this up:

For me, I had to think about [quitting my job] for at least one to two years. Like, jeez, I'm quitting my job, you know? And giving up my independence (Mark, personal communication, April 29, 2015).

Thus, independence seems to be very closely linked with holding a job. Mark goes on to say that "when you are making a salary, you have this feeling of independence" (Mark, personal communication, April 29, 2015), but how does one conceptualize this statement? How does making a salary equate to being independent? Maurits provided scenarios of buying gifts for other people, as well as buying a friend a drink in the pub, that makes this concept a bit easier to understand:

There was no income from my side or connected with me, just [my wife's] income – it didn't make me feel less of a man, not at all. Only it makes you aware that if I want to go to the pub and I want to offer a friend a drink, you don't feel that comfortable anymore because that is not my money I'm spending there (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

To buy presents for other people...if you have not earned that money yourself, I don't feel that I can spend it that easily. So that's sort of a line. I don't feel that I'm allowed to cross that line (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

As one can see, these stay-at-home fathers tended to struggle with the dependency on their wives' salary, which resulted in a loss of independence. But while these fathers described to me this loss of independence and feelings of dependency, I happened to notice that a constant

balance between independence and dependence was occurring throughout their daily routines that they described. Most of these men that I interviewed would take on their own projects or hobbies that, I feel, either functioned as a job or seemed to make them feel more independent. For many of the *huimannen*, working on home-improvements, participating in organized sports, or even writing blogs I assume functioned as those outlets that seemed to increase their feelings of independence. For Jos and Mark, building and making furniture and fixings for their homes served as their job to take on, on top of their jobs as full-time fathers:

I don't really have a job right now, but we moved into another old house that needs fixing and rebuilding. It was an old house and we wanted to change things. Not really redecorating, but building new lockers, fixing the ceiling and stuff. So I did that too (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

I also design furniture and make things. I also make boats, but that's just kind of a hobby thing. I think in the end, maybe in one year, I will be working again (Mark, personal communication, April 29, 2015).

Taking on these kinds of projects seemed to mean a lot to these men when describing their daily routines, so I infer that one can attribute the importance of these jobs to some sort of gained independence. Relating this back to the independence vs. dependence theme, by gaining independence through these "masculine" jobs and hobbies, I was able to see and hear feelings of dependency lessen as they spoke about them. This can be seen through the transition of these men from the beginning of their experience to now – many of them started out with feelings of dependency, as explained previously, but most end up finding these outlets like Mark's self-defense classes or Jos and Roland's freelance writing or blogging, and ultimately enjoying the experience of stay-at-home fatherhood. Maurits seems to even found independence solely from his job as a stay-at-home father after a long struggle of trying to find a job that suited him:

I get to be my own boss. I'm my own boss and that's also great because I don't have to...being a father is something that's only responsible to yourself and to your children. It's very nice to be that independent (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Overall, independence seems to be the most threatened concept when first becoming a stay-at-home father, but is also easily retrieved when one finds the balance between dependency and independency. The way that they accomplish that balance is unique to their personal characteristics and interests with side jobs and physical activities, but if one thing is true for all of these men interviewed, this balance is a key theme of their experiences.

### NAVIGATING LIMITED SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Another key theme of *huismannen* experiences is navigating limited social interactions. As questions were asked about the daily routines of these fathers and the most difficult part of their role, participants often referred back to their social interactions with others, or the lack of them. More specifically, the men I interviewed noted that their social interactions are much more limited now that they have become stay-at-home fathers, but when they do have everyday social interactions, they tend to be predictable – talk, talk, talk about the kids. In other social settings other than school, though, Dutch *huismannen* must navigate the interactions carefully and a bit unconventionally. I will begin explaining this theme starting with the limited interaction aspect, and then move on to explain the interactions with others, parents or not.

When one becomes a parent, there is an automatic assumption that one's opportunities to socially interact with others will be dramatically reduced due to the busy lifestyle that accompanies parenthood. At first while analyzing the data, this theme did not seem significant enough to report because *all* kinds of parents go through some kind of "social droughts." But when I looked closer to each interviewee's mentions of a lack of social interaction, most of them stemmed from the same question: "What is the most difficult thing about your role as a stay-at-home father?" For example, Mark states that the most difficult thing about his role is that he "has

to be [at his house], [he] cannot go away” (Mark, personal communication, April 29, 2015), which I assume limits his interactions with others. Two other interviewees, Roland and Jos, also expressed a lack of social interaction as the most difficult part of their role:

The lack of social contacts [is the most difficult thing]. I don't have many friends...It's always something in life, you just have to be grateful for what and whom you have and what's going well (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015).

Well the difficult thing...one of the things is, of course, that being at home with two boys, most of the time you are alone with them. So your adult conversation is a little low sometimes. Sometimes you can get a little lonely. You can go out and meet other mothers with the children... (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Hearing these parts of the conversation with my interviewees, I couldn't help but ask with whom they *do* interact most of the time. Not to my surprise, they answered with “other parents.”

Maurits and Jos explain that they interacted with other parents that had children at the same school as theirs:

most of the people I meet have to do with the school my children go to and I meet them around the house, at the playground, or when we have something organized with children. At this moment, that's the people I meet the most (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

When [my kids] were smaller, I had more contact with other parents – at school, after school (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

While it is a good thing that these fathers still maintain social interactions with the people (mostly mothers) they encounter the most at their children's schools, playgrounds, etc., “but of course you always talk about the children” (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Therefore, I couldn't help but wonder what happens when they interact with those who aren't always around their children and hold full-time jobs. These are the interactions that make this theme significant enough to present as findings – the interactions that these men described to me seemed unique to their role as a stay-at-home father. For example, Jos provided spoke about being in a party situation with other working fathers and being asked about what he does for a living:

...sometimes you end up in some kind of party situation where men create their own little group and women create their own little group and then in the men's group [the conversation will] always be about careers and cars and that kind of stuff. And I was always sort of afraid of the question, 'and what do you do?' Those sort of questions always come back when you're among strangers because people want to know what you do for a living. So I never really found a good answer for that...I tried several alternatives but when I told them I stay at home with my kids, usually the reaction would be, 'Oh wow, that's wonderful, I want to do that myself.' They look at it sort of like its an everlasting holiday, not having to work at all (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

Jos also went on to say that telling the men that he was a *huisman* was "kind of a conversation killer as well because that was all [the men] had to say about it" (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015) because they did not understand what it was like to be in that role. When interacting with other men later on after this experience, he even would that that he was also "a freelance text writer and would emphasize that so there would be something to talk about" (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015). After trying to find the best way to navigate these somewhat uncomfortable social interactions, Jos summed up his experience saying that,

...at other parties, I've found myself in the circle of women talking about the kids and how funny they [were] and how many words they could already pronounce. I was more comfortable there...It just felt better to be among other mothers who had lots to say about their children...that was something I had something to say about or that I could talk about with these women. The men didn't want to talk about that because they didn't know about it (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

While finding this kind of comfort in the women's group is great, does feeling more comfortable among a group of women have an impact on a stay-at-home father's masculinity? When asked, Jos did not feel like it had affected his manhood, but instead, Maurits had an interesting point to share. While he stated that he did not feel like less of a man when talking to his old college friends, he expressed a different kind of feeling influenced by success:

...with the guys I still know from my college days, for them sometimes I feel a little bit sort of maybe not embarrassed but sort of something that makes me look not that successful if I compare myself to them (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

This feeling of Maurits ended up also being the most difficult thing about his role, saying that “sometimes [he] feels a bit not so successful because [he’s] doing this” (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015) instead of a full-time job like most men. Now that it is somewhat understood how the *huismannen* feel when interacting with other people in society, it is necessary to explore how society views them. This brings me to my third and final overarching theme of my interviews that explains the stigmatization of Dutch *huismannen* and how society plays a role (or doesn’t play a role) in their experiences.

### **STIGMATIZATION & SOCIETY: BE A PART OR BE A STEREOTYPE**

Throughout the interviews, questions were asked about societal stigmas and stereotypes, but also about the way the Netherlands supports, or does not support, stay-at-home fathers. Responses to these questions tended to be quite similar, but what was more interesting were the ways in which the men would bring up participation in society when speaking about their feelings of being a man and how their children view them. Therefore, I will begin with a subsection describing the stereotypes that these men have (or have not) experienced, then I will move on to another subsection that delves into the men’s participation in society.

#### *STEREOTYPES & STIGMAS*

When asking interviewees about potential stereotypes linked to the stay-at-home father role in the Netherlands, many of them expressed that they never experienced them themselves, but were able to offer some stigmas based on reactions from others that they’ve experienced. A common stereotype that the men often mentioned was that of the “softie”:

Although it is accepted, most women still want a working-man who earns his money, I am sure of that. I think people think stay-at-home fathers are softies, not able to find any work, having no ambition at all (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015).

I do not know much stay-at-home-fathers. There are maybe stereotypes in the media: soft, not ambitious, lazy maybe? (Jacques, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

I think there are several ways that people can look upon a stay-at-home dad. The most common I think is that you are some kind of softie, injured kind of guy who is a slave of his wife or something like that (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

With Jos' description, one can also see the theme of independence vs. dependence playing a role in creating stereotypes. He also thinks "people tend to think about you as dependent on someone else" (Jos, personal communication, May 4, 2015). Roland also faced this stereotype, stating that "some people think that I don't want to work and find it 'stupid' [and that] I let my wife work and pay" (Roland, personal communication, May 5, 2015). This stereotype of being dependent on one's wife seems to me to be the most hurtful stereotype in Dutch society. Being dependent upon one's wife seems to correlate with not participating in society due to the lack of working a job. Thus, the next subsection demonstrates how my interviewees spoke about their participation in society.

#### *PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY*

Finding a way to participate in society seemed to be one of the biggest issues that my interviewees faced. Despite the fact that they are actually participating in society by raising the next generation's children, Roland provides a perspective of Dutch culture that explains how Dutch society only recognizes those who participate in the labor market:

The government wants everyone to work, to have a job that pays. Like everywhere everything is economy and it's about your financial contribution to the country. You have to work so you can spend money...The government won't change the point of view that everyone has to work and earn money. That's capitalism. So, it's up to the stay-at-home fathers themselves just to be happy with their choice or situation and letting that know, not to be ashamed (Roland, communication, May 5, 2015).

So when the government does not recognize these men as part of society because they do not hold a job, would a man's masculinity be threatened here as well? When I spoke with my interviewees about this, Roland did state that he "felt less a man...but also less a member of



society” (Roland, personal communication, May 1, 2015). I then infer that both independence (as introduced previously) and participating in society are closely linked with a man’s masculinity. But to my surprise, my interviewee’s masculinity did not seem as much of a concern when they were thought of as less than a member of society. Instead, it seems to me that a bigger concern was their children and *their* perceptions of their role in society. Maurits provided me with a good explanation of this concern:

Sometimes, I feel, on my side that other children have their parents come back from work and these children hear stories about their work. For me they don’t get that. So that’s something which I felt not pressure by but felt like its something I should not let happen that I become sort of/my children feeling like ‘yeah, my dad is not playing his role in society.’ He’s somebody outside society because he’s not working. So there is still a feeling that I should be doing something. Being a dad at home is not enough in this society – its not enough just to be a man who is working at ironing and cooking. So there’s still this sort of expectation – its still there (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

After giving me this explanation, Maurits began telling me about the amount of time he spends at his daughters’ school, especially at the library:

I’ve always been quite active at their school – I’ve taken over the library at their school sort of so I put a lot of time into that library and that’s a different kind of thing for them to be not proud of me as a provider but they can take pride in the way that I am making sort of a positive participation in that school (Maurits, personal communication, May 4, 2015).

For his daughters to take pride in the way he is participating at their school, I seem to think that working at this school is a way for Maurits to continue participating in society and to show his daughters that he *is* still a member of Dutch society, even if he doesn’t hold a full-time job.

Looking back on other interviews as well, most of the *huismannen* participated in something that seemed to replace the full-time job and allowed them to “participate in society.” But since this stigma still exists in Dutch culture today, Jacques was able to perfectly sum up one of the ways that stay-at-home fathers should deal with feeling like less of a member of society: “There is no

support [but] you have to be creative yourselves! And that is oké!” (Jacques, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

These overarching themes serve as a framework for the findings that were drawn from this qualitative research study. Now that each of these themes have been explained and demonstrated, the following section will discuss the relevance of these themes to the existing literature reviewed previously in the study.

DISCUSSION

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This study's main objective was to answer the question, "How do the everyday experiences of a Dutch *huisman* affect that man's masculinity?" Given my small sample of interviewees and the other limitations of this research study, it is hard to draw concrete conclusions about the experiences of Dutch *huismannen* and their masculine identities. However, the overarching themes presented in the previous section offer some good insight into the perspectives, experiences, and masculine identities of a few Dutch stay-at-home fathers that can at least be used to supplement the current research conducted on the same topic, as well as draw some tentative conclusions that can be used to more fully understand the role of the *huisman*.

To begin, the theme of independence vs. dependence describes how the *huismannen*'s independence seemed to be closely linked to the maintaining of their manhood. Ehrenreich (1987) explains that this kind of link is due to adult masculinity becoming "indistinguishable from the breadwinner role" (p. 20) over time. It has now come to the belief that "the man who fail[s] to achieve this role [is] either not fully adult or not fully masculine" (Ehrenreich, 1987, p. 20). Thus, I noticed that my interviewees seemed to feel "less adult" or "less masculine" when they gave up their jobs, and consequently, their independence. In order to make up for this loss, though, my interviewees took on other jobs or tasks to regain their independence and alleviate that internal conflict they were experiencing. This finding supports one in Doucet's (2004) study in which she explained that the stay-at-home fathers she interviewed found ways to reinforce their masculinity by "engaging in sports or physical labor so as to maintain masculine affiliations and to exhibit public displays of masculinity" (p. 293). Through this theme, then, I can tentatively conclude that the masculine identities of Dutch *huismannen* are affected initially by the loss of independence linked to the loss of a job, but the identity is regained and rebuilt

through other forms of masculine engagements such as sports, physical labor, or participating in other societal organizations.

This brings me to another theme involving stigmatization and participation in society. As previously discussed in my review of the current literature, American stay-at-home fathers reported that stigmatization was highly present among the general population, with stay-at-home mothers being the group to stigmatize stay-at-home fathers the most (Rochlen et al., 2010). Comparing the intense stigmatization that Rochlen et al. (2010) reported to the stigmatization reported by the Dutch *huismannen* in this study, stereotypes do not seem to be as prevalent in Dutch society as they are in American society. However, the stigmatizations in both societies do seem to stem from the same source: a lack of participation in the capitalist society characteristic of Western civilizations. Since one is only worth what you produce, earn, and spend in these capitalist societies, the Dutch *huismannen* I interviewed seemed to feel like lesser members of society. Ehrenreich (1987) sums up this feeling by explaining that throughout history,

“...men had the ongoing opportunity to demonstrate their maturity by actually working at a paid job...only in very exceptional cases can an adult man be genuinely self-respecting and enjoy a respected status in the eyes of others if he does not ‘earn a living’ in an approved occupational role” (p. 19-20).

Therefore, enjoying a respected status in society and feeling like a participating member seemed to be one of the more difficult aspects of the *huisman* role for my interviewees and could possibly be for all Dutch *huismannen* as well. To earn a “respected status in the eyes of others” (Ehrenreich, 1987, p. 19-20) and regain their societal membership, Dutch stay-at-home fathers turn to participating in school libraries like Maurits, in sports like Mark, or even creating a children’s theater company like Jos. By participating in these kinds of civic activities, I can make another tentative conclusion that Dutch *huismannen* make up for their lessened status in the capitalist Dutch society by giving back to society in other creative ways.

Not being recognized by Dutch society also seemed to have a negative effect on my interviewees' masculinity. This brings me to my final theme of navigating limited social interactions. Despite the reduced number of interactions these fathers reported, they still had opportunities to interact with those outside of their everyday routines. More specifically, when they interacted with other men who embrace the provider role upheld by the Dutch hegemonic ideal, Dutch *huismannen* expressed feelings of being unsuccessful. Sometimes the men they spoke to thought of their job as an extended vacation, implying that these fathers were distanced from everyday life and society for an undetermined amount of time. These findings support the results of de Koster's (2004) study that suggest *huismannen* are passively excluded by the male community. He explains "the active self-exclusion of house husbands from the labour market has consequences in the form of passive exclusion from other social spheres" (de Koster, 2004, p. 7). In the case of the men that were interviewed in this study, looking at the social interactions that occurred at parties and at reunions with old college friends, I can infer that these men experienced some kind of social exclusion from their respective male communities. Social exclusion from male communities, I can tentatively conclude, results in the feeling of not being a "full man" (Ehrenreich, 1987, p. 20), consequently affecting the masculinity of Dutch *huismannen*.

Taking into account the themes just presented and the tentative conclusions drawn from them, they can all account for some of the ways that *huismannen* in the Netherlands maintain their manhood. The themes of independence versus dependence and stigmatization and society demonstrated that independence and societal membership are closely linked to a man's masculine identity. Thus, when these fathers strived to regain independence and societal membership through creative ways and civic activities, they were also regaining parts of their masculinity that they had lost as well. The drive to do this stems from the relationship between

hegemonic masculinity and complicit masculinity that Connell (2005) describes. Since Dutch stay-at-home fathers do not comply with the hegemonic ideal due to the fact that they are not breadwinners, their masculinity is already compromised. But since they also *benefit* from hegemonic masculine ideals, their masculine identities can be categorized as complicit. As explained previously, complicit masculinity mainly involves rejecting and adopting different pieces of the hegemonic ideal – a balancing act. In the case of Dutch *huismannen*, one can conclude that (1) they embrace a complicit masculine ideal that (2) rejects the breadwinner characteristic and instead (3) adopts societal participation and independence as major characteristics of their masculine identities.

## CONCLUSION

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This qualitative research study aimed to explore the masculinity and everyday experiences of Dutch stay-at-home fathers. Through the interviews with five Dutch *huismannen*, three main themes surrounding their stories and experiences were discovered. Each of these themes provided tentative conclusions about the complicit masculine identity that Dutch stay-at-home fathers tend to embrace, as well as the overall experience of being a stay-at-home father in the Netherlands.

Since it is clear that these fathers do not meet the standards of the Western hegemonic ideal because they lack a full-time job and do not fulfill the provider role, their masculine identities are constantly being balanced to formulate their own complicit masculinity. For Dutch stay-at-home fathers, their complicit masculine identity seems to be highly influenced by independence and societal membership and participation. Evidence for this conclusion can be seen through both (1) the negative feelings of dependency and isolation from society expressed throughout the interviews and (2) the explanations of civic activities, sports memberships, physical labors, etc. that seems to increase feelings of independence and societal participation. Thus, when asking participants about their masculinity and manhood, many of them reported that they felt it was unaffected. For these men, the balancing act is definitely working and their complicit masculine identities are definitely intact.

While this study has many limitations to consider when considering these conclusions, it still provides useful information about the masculinity and everyday experiences of stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands. More importantly, though, it gives *huismannen* the voice they have not been able to express very easily. Judging from the lack of academic research on the topic of

stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands, I can assume that there is still much more to be discovered about Dutch *huismannen* in the future.

This brings me to my suggestions for future research on the topic of *huismannen* in the Netherlands. The limitations of the current study can serve as a useful basis for improvement in future studies. For example, conducting a qualitative research study with more participants would definitely improve the validity and generalizability of the study and its conclusions. On the topic of participants, conducting a cross-generational study of stay-at-home fathers would provide many more perspectives of the role and the hegemonic ideal throughout generations. One could also interview the *huisman's* children and partner(s) and focus on *their* perceptions and views of stay-at-home fatherhood.

Overall, this research study and its conclusions may not be the most valid, but the study has still accomplished the main goal of qualitative research: providing a platform for the voices of a marginalized group in society. In the end, it should not matter whether I used the correct methodology to collect data or whether my participant pool comprised the most representative sample or even whether my findings are significant enough to draw conclusions. What matters are the voices presented in this paper – the voices that have been absent from academia in the Netherlands for far too long. Therefore, while this research study may not provide the significant conclusions that is expected of it, the study, most importantly, brings attention to the topic of Dutch *huismannen* and is able to inspire new research studies in the future – more studies to give even more of these men the platform they deserve to share their stories, experiences, and voices.



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## APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE [ENGLISH]

**Primary Research Question:** How does the experience of stay-at-home fathers affect aspects of their masculinity?

I. Ethical Guidelines/Consent

- Review consent form and ethics
- Ask if a pseudonym is necessary or the if participant prefers their real name to be used

II. Introductory Information

- Could you state your name and age?
- Where were you born/where were you raised?
- Could you please describe your family growing up? Who took care of you and your siblings (if any)? Who was the breadwinner?
- How many children do you have? Could you please tell me a little bit about each?

III. Decision & Reactions

- How long have you been the primary caretaker of your children?
- How did you make the decision to stay at home with your children?
  - o Was the decision difficult or easy?
- How did your children react to your decision to stay at home with them?
- How did your family react? (mom, dad, siblings, etc.)
- “Can you give me an example of what someone has said to you when they hear that you are a stay-at-home father?” (Melton-Chavarria, date, p. 26)
  - o “Are there differences in the way that men and women respond? Does your masculinity ever come in to question?” (Melton-Chavarria, date, p. 26)
- How do you handle negative feedback (if you experience it at all)?

IV. Fatherhood and Parenting

- Could you please describe your typical weekday routine?
- Could you please describe your typical weekend routine?
- What is/are your favorite thing(s) about being a stay-at-home father?
- What is/are your least favorite or most difficult thing(s) about being a stay-at-home father?

V. Stigmatization & Invisibility

- Do you feel that there are stereotypes about stay-at-home fathers in the Netherlands? If so, could you please describe these stereotypes?
- Have you encountered a problem with changing rooms/stations not being available in men’s restrooms? How did you solve this problem?
- In what ways do you think the Netherlands supports full-time fathers?
- In what ways do you think the Netherlands could improve on the situations of full-time fathers? Are there any policies that need to be created? Any stereotypes you feel need to be broken?

## VI. Extra Questions

- What do you like to do for fun or in your free time?
- What do you do with your friends?
- If you could choose one word to describe your experience as a stay-at-home father, what would that word be? (English or Dutch)
  - o Would you like to describe why you chose that word?
- How has your role as a stay-at-home father challenged your feelings of being a man? Has this role affected your manhood?

## VII. Questions/Ethical Guidelines

- Is there any additional information you'd like to share about your experience as a stay-at-home father?
- Do you have any questions for me about the interview?
- Any questions about my research process?
- Explain ethics
  - o Reiterate privacy & confidentiality
  - o Ask again whether a pseudonym is preferred

## APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW GUIDE [DUTCH]

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**Primaire Onderzoeksvraag:** Hoe werkt de ervaring van huismannen invloed op de mannelijkheid van de Nederlandse mannen die in Nederland wonen?

I. Ethiek en Toestemming

- Vragen over toestemming en ethiek?
- Wil je een pseudoniem wilt? Is je voornaam okay?

II. Introductie Informatie

- Naam en leeftijd?
- Waar ben je geboren? Waar ben je opgegroeid?
- Beschrijf je familie. Die verzorgd voor jou en je broeders en zusters? Wie was de kostwinner?
- Hoeveel kinderen heb je? Kunt je mij vertellen over hen?

III. Beslissing en Reactie

- Hoe lang ben je een huismannen geweest?
- Hoe heb je de beslissing te maken?
  - o Was het moeilijk of gemakkelijk?
- Hoe heb je kinderen reageren?
- Hoe heb je familie reageren? (moeder, vader, broeders en zusters, enz.)
- Reacties van anderen of vreemden ? Voorbeeld? (Melton-Chavarria, date, p. 26)
  - o Is er een verschil tussen mannen en vrouwen? Is uw mannelijkheid in twijfel ? (Melton-Chavarria, date, p. 26)
- Hoe ga je om met negatieve feedback als je het ervaart?

IV. Vaderschap en Ouderschap

- Beschrijf je normale weekdag routine.
- Beschrijf je normale weekend routine.
- Wat is je favoriete ding over het fiet dat en huisman?
- Wat is je minst favoriete of moeilijkst?

V. Stigmatisatie en Onzichtbaarheid

- Zijn er stereotypen over huismannen in Nederland? Kun je een paar beschrijven?
- Problemen met kleedkamers niet in mannen toiletten? Hoe ga je dit oplossen?
- Is het Nederland steun huismannen? Belied?
- How kan Nederland te verbeteren? Nieuw belied?
- Wat stereotypen wil je breken?

VI. Extra Vragen

- Wat zijn je hobby's?
- Wat doe je met je vrienden?
- Kies een woord om uw ervaring te beschrijven al seen huisman? (Engels of Nederlands)
  - o Waarom heb je dat woord kiezen?

- Hoe is wordt een huisman uitgedaagd je mannelijkheid?

## VII. Vragen en Ethiek

- Alle andere informatie over je ervaringen?
- Heeft u vragen voor me over het interview te hebben?
- Heeft u vragen over mijn onderzoeksproces?
- Ethiek
  - o Herhaal de privacy en vertrouwelijkheid belied
  - o Pseudoniem?

APPENDIX C – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

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**HUGGIES, HIGH-FIVES, & HUISMANNEN  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM****THIS STUDY IS BEING CONDUCTED BY:**

Courtney Grey

Undergraduate Student

Stonehill College

*Contact Information*

Email: courtneygrey@hotmail.com

Phone: 06 26 07 15 78

**Brief description of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the masculinity and parenting of Dutch stay-at-home and single fathers living in the Netherlands. I am interested in looking into how this specific kind of fatherhood affects a man's perception of his own masculinity and his own style of parenting his children.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this research study, I would ask you to participate in an oral history/life story interview with me on the topics discussed in the previous description. The time commitment is relative, but a rough estimate would be approximately 1-2 hours.

**Risks of being in the study:**

There are no known physical or mental health risks associated with this research study.

**Participant Rights Notice:**

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Your decision whether or not to participate or terminate the interview will not affect your current or future relations with SIT, Stonehill College, or myself. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - All information you present in this interview will be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, let the interviewer know before the interview takes place.
  
- b. **Anonymity** - All names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
  
- c. **Confidentiality** - All names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

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Participant's name printed

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Participant's signature and date

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Interviewer's name printed

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Interviewer's signature and date