SONS' NARRATIVES OF GROWING UP WITH A WORLD WAR II

COMBAT VETERAN FATHER

By

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Ten men participated in this study; all had fathers who served six months or more in active combat during World War II. Each son was asked about his relationship with his father specific to the father’s combat experience. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. From each transcribed interview a narrative was developed representing the life story of growing up with a combat veteran father. Reading across all ten narratives, eight themes were extracted that were consistent for seven to ten of the participants. Two follow-up questions were later asked of each participant. These questions were also taped and transcribed and formulated into themes. The four most important themes were: avoiding the topic of combat, emotional distancing, father’s perceived change in personality because of the war, and wanting to have more intimate time with their fathers growing up. Fifty-five years after the end of World War II there remains a residual effect on these sons. It is anticipated that this research will assist Canada’s Peacekeepers in adjusting to their civilian life as they raise their families.
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This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my father

Frank A. Smitton, LL.B (UBC, class of '49)
Chapter 1: Introduction

At the end of World War II, hundreds of thousands of Canadian veterans returned home to start their civilian lives, to find jobs, settle down, and raise families. With the war’s end came the baby boom. Millions of children were born in the aftermath of war to veteran fathers. For many of these children the war was something they lived with indirectly. They saw pictures of their fathers in uniform, they may even have seen their father’s old uniform, medals, or other souvenirs. They may have heard their fathers speak of the war. Many children came to know about their father’s war experiences from secondary sources, mothers, friends, relatives, or the media. However, for most of these children, the real stories of their father’s experience remained locked inside their fathers.

My Story

Laurel Richardson (1994, 2000) writes about telling one’s own story or a narrative of the self. Evocative writing, as she suggests, is a way to experience the self-reflexive and transformational process of writing the self. Accordingly she states that many social scientists are now doing this. In the post-modern world, the self is always present despite how we try to surpass it. As this is about sons of World War II combat veterans, it is arguably impossible to write myself out of this research. Therefore, I have chosen to write my story up front while at the same time give voice to the others who were interviewed during this project.
At 20 years of age my father was a Lancaster pilot. The Lancaster was one of the largest four-engine bombers in the Second World War, capable of carrying over 4,000 pounds of bombs a distance of 1,400 miles. It had a crew of seven and despite the rank of the other members of the crew, the pilot was the commanding officer of the crew while in the air. My father flew a total of 26 missions before being shot down. Some of his missions were to Berlin, others to industrial cities in the Ruhr Valley and, during the pre D-Day invasion, to cities and railyards in France.

All I have left of his wartime experiences are four diaries that retell his experiences. These diaries describe places, dates and people, but they do not provide insight into the emotional complexity of a 20-year old man whose responsibility it was to pilot a bomber night after night over enemy ground. It does not tell how he felt to be entrusted with the lives of six other men. The diaries do not tell of how it was to sit in a glassed-in cockpit and watch the millions of tiny missiles sent to shoot down his plane. There is no indication of what it was like the night they were attacked by a German night fighter who opened fire on my father’s Lancaster setting it ablaze. My father wrote nothing of how it was for him to give the bailout order while trying to control the crippled plane long enough to ensure all his crew safely got out of the plane. He did not write about how it was to yell into his intercom to his mid-upper gunner and his rear gunner ordering them to bail out and not hear a response from either of them. He did not say at what point, despite hearing no response from them, that
he made the difficult decision to leave the crippled plane with his two gunners still aboard.

My father evaded capture by the German army; the French underground hid him and a fellow crewmember. My father did not write about how he felt the day he and his crewmember walked into a French town only to discover that they had walked into a German army garrison. He did not write about what it was like to be bombed and strafed by allied aircraft.

As I grew older I became more and more interested in my father's war experiences. I would speak of them with my mother, and she would tell me about the nights my father would have nightmares and wake up screaming and soaked with sweat. I met his remaining crew and was awed by them, but was too afraid to ask them what it was like. I pursued a pilot's license in hopes that it would provide a common bond between myself and my father. I read books on the war especially about the role of the RCAF bomber command. I gave these books to my father but he was only minutely interested. Later in my life, my father told of the night he was shot down and how he held his crippled plane in the air to ensure all bailed out. He told me of how his two gunners died in the plane and how the parents of the two men blamed him for not getting them out. My father told me this story through his tears and how, some 46 years after the event, he felt that if he could have held the burning, broken aircraft in the air a bit longer while at the same time yelling to them on the intercom they might have lived. It is perhaps an irony of war that I happened to be speaking with my
father's wireless operator, whose station in the aircraft is located somewhat to the rear of the pilot's position. He said to me that he had seen the enemy aircraft approach on his radar and that it happened so fast he had no time to warn my father. He went on to say that the rear gunner and the mid-upper gunner never had a chance. The bomber took the full brunt of the enemy's cannon fire in the rear of the plane. He said both of them were dead before my father's bailout order came.

Despite my father's personality before or after the war, there is no doubt that his involvement in the World War II changed his life. I believe that it also affected his parenting of my brother, my sister, and me. The aftermath of the war affected not only my father but it also affected his family.

For many years I tried to understand my father. The war and his involvement in it became the great mystery. I tried several ways to engage him, to hear his stories but none were forthcoming.

Through my training as a counsellor and working with children and adolescents in the public school system, I began to see a father's involvement was very important especially for boys. I began to see the lengths that some of these young lads would go to be noticed by their dads. I saw too, the pain and anguish from many boys when their fathers shunned them. I began speaking with male friends about their fathers only to learn that adult sons were not a lot different from the boys I saw at school.
It was a year into my doctoral training when the topic of World War II combat veteran fathers was sparked again. This time it was a daughter speaking about her memory of seeing her father go off on a train and recalling the day the telegram came stating that her father had been killed in action at Dieppe. Shortly thereafter, I put the two together, boys and their fathers and boys and their World War II veteran fathers. I then wondered what happens to men who experience combat, return home and raise sons of their own? What, if anything, happens to the sons?

The Purpose of the Study

A review of the literature reveals a significant gap in the reporting of the impact of combat on the relationships between combat fathers and their sons. To date there exists no qualitative narrative study focusing on the descriptive experiences of sons growing up with World War II combat veteran fathers in the literature.

My assumption entering into this research was that other sons would have similar experiences as I did with my father. At first, I thought that it might be best to focus only on participants who indicated that they had a distant relationship with their fathers because of the father's combat experience. Later, though, mostly due to the difficulty in finding participants, I decided to invite sons whose fathers had been in combat to participate, whether their subsequent relationship was distant or not.
The purpose of this research study was to investigate sons' narrative constructions about their relationship and experience of growing up with their military fathers. The objective was to explore the nature of the father-son relationship against the backdrop of combat. The autobiographical interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and from the transcriptions personal narratives or stories were created. Each narrative was returned to the participant for their review.

It was also anticipated that this study would provide a springboard to further understand the impact war has on the second generation, and specifically on the father/son relationship.

**Rationale for the Study**

There are a number of reasons for conducting a study on the impact combat exposure on the second generation family members. First, existing research is largely clinically based (e.g. Bourne, 1970; Elder, Shanahan, & Clipp, 1997; Kardiner, 1947). Consequently, little is known about how combat exposure plays out in the lives of fathers and sons after 40, 50, and 60 years have passed. Research done on this topic is largely contained within the military setting and as such, after discharge, often goes unnoticed by the civilian population.

Second, there has been a growing interest raised by Canada's returning Peacekeepers about the amount and level of after tour care. This fact was given much attention after Canadian General Delaire spoke openly about his
posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Fox, 2000). But what about those soldiers who do not have PTSD but did have symptoms of the disorder but no formal diagnosis and therefore do not receive help? What happens to them as they have their own children? The findings from this study have direct application to these soldiers.

Third, fathering has taken a historical backseat to mothering. The long established mother-infant relationship has attracted greater attention (Lamb, 1997; Pellegrini, 2002). In the 1990s, much more has been done in the area of studying fathering and the importance of the father-son relationship (see Faludi, 1999). The stories of the men in this study span some 40 to 50 years, and they talk about some of the ongoing struggles that have come from sons’ relationships with their fathers. Being a father or a son does not end when a son leaves home and starts his life and career. This research provides a different view of father-son relationships.

Approach to Study

The intent of this research was not to examine father-son relationships from the standpoint of conventional social science descriptive methodology that produced a set of data that could then be generalized to a larger population as a whole. The orientation of this research was to gain an understanding of the interpersonal relationship of father and son from the son’s perspective. Since we live in a story-shaped world, the natural method of choice for this research was
the use of narrative. Stories, according to Sarbin (2002), have an ontological status as well as having the ability to represent reality. Sarbin also states that the question of whether the stories are in fact historically accurate is not really the issue, but rather that they have narrative truth, verisimilitude, or a semblance to the truth.

Traditional research methodology is not suited to the task of studying close relationships. A relationship cannot be put into a set of numbers with the intent of making predications. Narrative puts real names to real situations. It allows for identifying the context that gives situations and actions meaning. The narrative accounts produced in this study constitute the core research product and provide a rich, detailed insight to the relationships between father and son. These accounts also provide implications for counselling practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review


The review of the literature will contain four parts. The first will be a brief historical overview of war trauma and its effects primarily on the relationships across generations. Secondly, due to the lack of literature on World War II trans-generational trauma, literature on Holocaust second-generation trauma will be reviewed. Much has been written on both the aftermath of Holocaust trauma and its effects on the second generation which has application to this study. Trans-generational trauma connections will be established between the effects Holocaust parents had on their offspring and the possible effects combat had on the offspring of World War II combat veterans. Thirdly, the literature on father-son relationships will provide insight on how this relationship impacts on the children’s development. Finally, Attachment Theory will be used as a segue into understanding the father/son relationship.

Historical Prospective of Combat Trauma

Homer’s Iliad (1974/ca. 800 B.C.E.) was written some 27 centuries ago and is about soldiers in war (Shay, 1991, 1994). Homer tells the story of Achilles who fought in the Trojan Wars. Towards the end of the Trojan Wars, Achilles
withdraws emotionally and physically from his former large social circle. His closest friends become those that he served with in his own unit. Achilles further withdraws until his only friend is Patroklos, his adopted brother. During one of the final battles of the Trojan Wars, Patroklos is killed. Achilles sinks into a very deep grief. Outraged, Achilles starts a killing spree slaughtering enemy prisoners, women, and children.

Jonathan Shay’s (1994) book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat trauma and the undoing of character*, parallels the mythical Achilles emotional and physical experiences of fighting in the Trojan Wars with those who fought in Vietnam. Through conducting several hundred clinical interviews with Vietnam veterans, Shay concluded that there was a collective or shared story he heard from the veterans, one that helped him understand the seriousness and intractability of their problems. He found that the Achilles-type trauma written about in the *Iliad* was very similar to the kinds of psychological injuries and combat trauma verbalized by veterans of Vietnam. The *Iliad* suggests Shay (1991, 1994; also see Mishler, 1995; van der Kolk, Weisaeth, & van der Hart, 1996) was perhaps the first narrative on how exposure to combat affects the soldier.

The concept of war trauma first entered the research literature around the time to the American Civil War. Myers (1870, as cited in van der Kolk, Weisaeth, & van der Hart, 1996) and Da Costa (1871, as cited in van der Kolk, et al., 1996) reported that many Civil War soldiers suffered from a high frequency of cardiovascular problems coined the phrase “irritable heart” and “soldier’s
heart.” Later, during the First World War, terms such as “disorderly action of the heart” or “neurocirculatory asthenia” were used as descriptors for war trauma.

Historically, there have been many names applied to the syndromes a soldier may suffer from exposure to combat. These include: shell shock, combat fatigue, combat stress, combat neurosis, combat exhaustion, and traumatic neurosis all referring to the commonly acquired disorder that comes from active combat (Kardiner, 1947). Kardiner (1947), in his book on war stress, stated that the above disorders varied little between World War I and World War II. What was different between the two world wars was the freedom of expressing these traumatic disorders. He adds: “there was less pressure to suppress the incipient manifestations of fear” (p. 3). This was due in part to the research generated on combat illness derived from the World War I combatants and the expanding knowledge of the human condition (Kardiner, 1947).

Perhaps one of the monumental research undertakings that came from World War II was The American soldier: Combat and its aftermath (Stouffer, 1949). The American soldier is a four-volume book set. Volumes one and two are:

essentially descriptive of soldiers’ attitudes, particularly of those attitudes seeming to reflect adjustment. The first volume studies general problems of personal adjustment of soldiers to the institutionalized life of the Army; the second treats the special problems of combat and its aftermath. (p. 29)

Stouffer (1949) states that the books were written for three audiences: the military, historians and social psychologists, the main audience. The second volume has relevance to this study as it contains a series of questionnaires that
pertain to a vast number of areas of military life - from food quality to combat. After publication however, it appears that the book series has gone unnoticed.

Other than Stouffer’s (1949) monumental work, little empirical research has been conducted on the long-term emotional and physical effects of combat exposure on veterans of both world wars (Elder, Shanahan, & Clipp, 1997; Figley, 1978; Kardiner, 1947). In part, this can be attributed to declining interest in war and its aftermath once battlefields are silent and soldiers return home; the hardships and suffering they endured are soon forgotten (Figley, 1978).

According to Bourne (1970) the psychiatric casualty rate for World War II was 101:1000. That is, 23% of the battlefield casualties in World War II were psychiatric (Friedman, 1981, as cited in Aldwin, Lenson, & Spiro, 1994). In more specific terms, the number of medical discharges in the United States between 1943 and 1944 was approximately 20,000 per month. Of this number, 9,000 were discharged for psychiatric reasons. Despite this vast number, there is very little follow-up in the literature of after-war care. With the advent of peace, interest in combat related illnesses and problems was quickly abandoned. It was not until the Vietnam War that interest in combated related illnesses was rekindled.

In their article entitled “A century of controversy surrounding Posttraumatic Stress-Spectrum syndromes: The impact on DSM-III and DSM-IV,” David Kinzie and Rupert Goetz (1996) noted that it was not until the Vietnam War with thousands of returning veterans flooding the Veteran’s Hospitals complaining of non-specific medical/emotional complaints that the concept of
combat trauma and post-combat trauma was seriously examined. In 1980, the term Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) became apart of the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, third edition (DSM-III, APA, 1980). In 1987 the revised editions of the DSM included a much more complex description of PTSD. The description contained criteria for those who suffered from long-term effects of trauma that included prisoners of war. In 1994, the APA in its fourth DSM edition provided more specific guidelines that included both individuals who experienced trauma and those who experienced trauma-like symptoms through a secondary source (DSM IV, APA, 1994).

Today the concept of PTSD covers many incidents from being a part of, or witnessing, events including personal attack, disaster, accident or war. It also includes those individuals who are exposed to people and their stories of trauma. What is missing is a specific term that can be applied to the kind of trauma that can only be witnessed in war and specifically in active combat. The kinds of life-altering experiences that war brings are unique. These experiences are not a part of the civilian kinds of trauma that we read and hear about today. Judith Herman’s (1997) book, Trauma and recovery, speaks about the physiological and psychological outcomes of combat. When the potential of devastation and threat overwhelms the human system to the point where the self-defence options of escape or fight are no longer available, the system becomes overwhelmed and disorganized. These events, according to Herman, “produce profound and
lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory” (p. 34).

Figley (1985) defines trauma as “an emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary, catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor’s sense of invulnerability to harm” (p. xviii). Therefore, I believe that the generic term PTSD inadequately describes the effects one experiences both in and after active combat. Combat exposure has its own unique set of symptoms and outcomes and needs to be processed in a way that is different from civilian trauma. I also believe that combat exposure has far-reaching effects on the soldier. These effects can also crossover to those who have close relationships with combat veterans.

Trauma and World War II Veterans

Perhaps one of the most prestigious studies done on World War II veterans was the Stanford-Terman research (as cited in Elder et al., 1997). The Stanford-Terman longitudinal study began data collection in 1922 under the direction of Lewis Terman, professor of psychology at Stanford University. The purpose of the study was to examine life-long patterns of health. Initially 1,528 subjects from Grade 3 to Grade 8 (including 857 males and 671 females) were recruited from schools near the university. The basis for selection and inclusion was a high IQ as identified by the Stanford-Binet intelligence test. Follow-up questionnaires were also used to gain information on family, education, and
career and were administered on four occasions before the war (1922, 1928, 1936, and 1940). Military experience was included on questionnaires administered after the war in 1945 and in 1950. After that, survey data was collected every five to 10 years with the last set of data being collected in 1986.

These data allowed researchers to compare physical and psychological health for participants both pre-war to post-war as well as across their life spans. Of the 856 men in the original study, 328 had seen active combat. Of these men, 204 completed life history records that included detailed descriptions of their military service. These 204 men were chosen for a study lead by Glen Elder (1997) to examine the exposure to combat and its impact on physical post-war health. The findings of his study indicated that combat exposure was linked to physical decline and increased mortality. Those men exposed to heavy combat were found to be at a greater risk of impaired health and had an increased potential for death prior to age 65. It was also discovered that many of the men studied were heavy smokers who described themselves as heavy or problem drinkers. Overall, Elder noted that it was the amount and duration of combat appeared to predict health decline for the post-war study participants.

Elder’s (1997) study did not specifically address psychological outcomes of combat but noted the connection between physical decline and combat stress. Combat stress was linked with feelings of helplessness that often accompany taking part in active combat. With feelings of helplessness then, comes psychic numbing according to Elder. Psychic numbing was defined as the veteran’s
avoidance of thinking about or sharing combat experiences with others. From a physiological view, this added increased stress on the body thereby increasing the likelihood of stress-related illnesses. Given these research findings, we can speculate that these soldiers were emotionally cut off from their families and, in some cases because of their early deaths, they left sons and daughters without fathers later in life.

Aldwin, Levenson, and Spiro (1994) examined the life-long effects of stress and resilience of combat exposure using a cohort of 1,287 combat veterans from World War I to the Korean War, and including a large group from World War II. The researchers found that increased exposure to combat correlated with a higher number of reported negative effects. These negative effects included depression-like symptoms, anxiety, loss of friends (from the war due to combat), and images of death and destruction. The researchers also found a trend for the men studied to feel isolated from their wives and children.

As well, the authors (Aldwin et al., 1994) indicated that there were many positive effects that came from combat exposure. Some included the inoculation against future stress while other participants felt that because they could cope with war, they could cope with anything. Some veterans felt that war had matured them and had increased their self-esteem.

These results however, need to be interpreted with caution, according to Aldwin et al. (1994). Desirable appraisals may come from the men focusing on the more positive aspects of war rather than the negative as a way of coping.
They further suggest that over time, “painful memories may become overshadowed by the pleasant or humorous aspects of those same [negative] memories” (p. 37).

In an article exploring World War II combat veterans and divorce as a life course perspective, Pavalko and Elder (1990) found that heavy-combat soldiers, when compared to other groups in their study, tended to establish a “barrier of indescribable experience that became a permanent, expanding wall between couples, leading eventually to divorce” (p. 1225). They further suggest that combat trauma may have lasting effects on the veteran’s personal and family lives and that combat veterans are more likely to divorce. Pavalko and Elder also indicate that in terms of marriage as a close bonding with a significant other, several combat veterans experienced weak relations with family members due in part from the social losses and because of a special bonding that occurs in combat experience. Generally, wartime stresses promoted and encouraged a comradeship that could not be replicated in civilian life.

Pavalko and Elder (1990) also echo Aldwin et al. (1994) in that several combat veterans reported positive outcomes from their war experiences, including more self-assurance and better coping styles in life. Despite the many positive outcomes of combat, these two studies point to an overall difficulty for many veterans to adapt to life outside of the military, especially in terms of marriage and raising a family.
In a study to examine the life-span perspectives of combat exposure on World War II combat veterans, Spiro, Schnurr, and Aldwin (1997) made contact with 1,224 veterans. These veterans had all participated in the Normative Aging Study (NAS). The Normative Aging Study was a longitudinal, interdisciplinary study of the aging process in men. Originally, the study consisted of over 6,000 participants. Out of the original 6,000, the authors chose 2,280 for their study. It is important to note that the men chosen for Spiro et al.'s study were not patients or outpatients at Veteran's Affairs hospitals. These men were a sample of community residing individuals who happened to be veterans. Of the 2,280 contacted, 1,224 took part in the study. Of these 1,224 men, 44% had been in active combat.

Using the Mississippi Scale for Combat-Related PTSD (Keane, Caddell, & Taylor, 1988) and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2), Spiro et al. (1997) found that when compared to the non-combat veterans, combat veterans reported more problems in family life, bad memories and nightmares, depression, loss of good health, thoughts of death and destruction, and survivor guilt. The strength of these feelings was also based, according to the authors, on the amount of combat exposure a veteran had. While many veterans reported extremely close relationships among veteran friends, the over-riding results indicated that long after the war’s end, combat exposure still appeared to play a role in the veteran’s lives.
In a study on the veterans of the D-Day landing, Harvey, Stein, and Scott (1995) obtained 43 narrative accounts from veterans on the 50th anniversary of the landings. The first 31 narratives took place in Normandy, France at a reunion while 12 other interviews were conducted by phone in the United States after the reunion. Harvey et al. set out to answer the following questions:

1) Would combat veterans of D-Day report a history of grieving and periodic depression and other negative states associated with their colleagues' death and their own peril that day? 2) Would they express guilt because they survived when so many others died; [and] 3) What activities were identified by the veterans as helpful, or not helpful, to their adaptation to these losses? (pp. 316-317)

The authors report the following results: 37 of 43 reported some type of psychological impact, usually a negative experience, while 30 of the 43 veterans mentioned bouts of depression associated with thinking about the events and the deaths that had occurred. Others indicated that they wrestled with regular guilt over their survival and many mentioned that they still suffer from nightmares. Some stated that they still have daytime flashbacks associated with their combat activities.

Of the 43 narrative accounts, 15 mentioned behaviours such as excessive drinking, avoidance of discussion of combat horrors with their families, and avoidance of remembering and dealing with images of their experience. Many stated that they had not talked about their experiences of D-Day and believed that avoidance was the best way to deal with it. They indicated that they believed others would not want to hear nor would they understand. Moreover, after remaining silent for so long made it difficult to know where to begin. On
the positive side, several narratives told of pride, honour and the feeling of *esprit de corps* and how much that meant to them then and continued to mean to them now.

Each study also has its confounding variables. Specifically, it is difficult to conduct research on events that happened 55 to 60 years ago and draw specific conclusions about the long-term effects. Many veterans tended to minimize any symptomatology that could be associated with either PTSD or other combat related distresses. It is also difficult to control for extraneous factors that could mask signs of PTSD or other distresses both psychological or physiological such as low socioeconomic status, prior history of mental illness, state of psychological health at enlistment time, and the kind and intensity of combat. Furthermore, there are difficulties in the selection of comparison groups, the impossibility of random assignment and prior matching when dealing with historical events. Also there is the difficulty of connecting an antecedent event with a specific behavioural outcome given the large number of variables in the life experience of any veteran (Halik, Rosenthal, & Pattison, 1990). Despite these factors however, the thread that runs through the research is that many veterans, regardless of age or rank, who were exposed to daily life-threatening situations of combat, returned with some if not all the symptoms of PTSD. Sadly, it is incalculable the number who did not know, or didn’t know how to attend to it.
Research on Holocaust Survivors and their Offspring

There appears to be little research on the impact a father's combat experience has had on his offspring. Precious few articles exist. The ones that do (Beckham, Braxton, Kudler, Feldman, Lytle, & Palmer, 1997; McCrain, Hyer, Boudewyns, & Woods, 1992; Rosenheck, 1986) are based on pathology usually concerning PTSD. Much of what has been written about transgenerational trauma comes from the work researchers have done on survivors of the Holocaust.

One example of how combat veterans and Holocaust survivors are similar is outlined in a study conducted by Archibald and Tuddenham (1965). These authors followed 105 World War II veterans over a period of 20 years (1945 to 1965). The veterans were divided into three groups. The first group contained 62 veterans who were diagnosed with combat fatigue and had been patients at a VA outpatient clinic. The second group of 43 veterans came from the same clinic but had not seen combat. The final group of 20 veterans had been in active combat but were not patients and had apparently made an adequate postwar adjustment. All three groups were given a questionnaire that covered 22 symptoms experienced in combat. The first questionnaire was administered on discharge, and again at the time of the study. The questionnaire covered past and present worries and avoidances, work, family, health and recent treatment. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was also administered to the first group.
Not surprisingly, Archibald and Tuddenham (1965), using a clinical questionnaire and the MMPI, found that when compared to the adjusted combat group, the combat fatigued group scored higher on all accounts. What was surprising, according to the authors, was that many symptoms were still reported by the well-adjusted combat veteran group; these included depression, restlessness, irritability, smoking to excess and waking in the night. More importantly, their findings were similar to those of Chodoff (1963). Chodoff coined the phrase “Concentration camp syndrome.” Symptoms of this syndrome include irritability, restlessness, nightmares, insomnia, mistrust of others, and in some cases, depression. Chodoff stated, “the difference between concentrations camp survivors and the combat-fatigue group are quantitative rather than qualitative” (p. 476, as cited in Achibald & Tuddenham, 1965).

Research on the offspring of Holocaust survivors is important and relevant to this topic. However, while surviving a concentration camp and surviving active combat share fundamental similarities in terms of trauma and long-term effects, they are also fundamentally different. Combat is a guessing game: kill or be killed. One minute everything is fine and the next minute total chaos exists. In that minute, you can be called upon to make a life-altering decision that includes yourself, your buddy or your crew. In that minute you may witness total destruction of all that is around you or witness the severe injury or death of a friend; total destruction of life and property. The chance that split second decisions might be made requires a constant heightened sense of
awareness. The body and mind must be ready to react as you enter active combat. Then there are the periods of rest where you are removed from combat, where life is relatively normal, only to voluntarily re-enter combat (Grinker & Spiegel, 1945). This scenario gets played out day after day.

The atrocities of the Holocaust on the other hand, devastated both individuals and families to a degree that in many ways was incomprehensible. Many families were affected by the war in terms of loved ones being killed in action, but the Holocaust wiped out entire families. There was no respite or escape from the terror and tortures of living in a concentration camp. You did not sign on for a “tour of duty” knowing that at some fixed point, should you survive, you could go home. The daily horrors of concentration life were never ending. Yet the similarity of surviving the Holocaust and surviving active combat contain similar life altering traumas (Rosenheck, 1986).

Literature on Holocaust survivors cites similar results to those found in World War II combat veterans. In his book In the shadow of the Holocaust, Aaron Hass (1990) reviews much of the literature on Holocaust survival and its aftermath and provides an extensive psychological overview of survivors. Much of what he reports can be seen in World War II veterans who experienced combat. These features include survivor guilt, flashbacks, nightmares, emotional distancing, inability to trust, mild to moderate depression, and in many cases psychosomatic problems such as ulcers and premature aging (see Elder,
Shanahan & Clipp, 1997 for an overview of World War II combat related illnesses).

Conversely, Peter Suedfeld (e.g. Suedfeld, Fell, & Krell, 1998; Suedfeld, 1997; Suedfeld and Pennebaker, 1997; Suedfeld, Krell, Wiebe & Steel, 1997) argues that despite experiencing the horrors of the Holocaust (and of combat) many were able to return to normal life without major psychological scars. In fact, Suedfeld suggests that much of the research done thus far undermines the human spirit and does not give it credit for what the spirit can endure. He argues that what does not kill us often serves to strengthen us. In other words, people have a great capacity to cope under the most dire of trauma-producing situations and then can rise above their circumstances and find enlightenment and meaning, and can then apply the enlightenment and meaning to living fuller and more productive lives. Suedfeld further argues that because incidents such as wars and the experience of the Holocaust are so horrific, we look for the negative outcomes that are surely to follow.

Although this statement applies to Holocaust survivors, arguably it could also be applied to combat veterans. Herman (1997), on the other hand, suggests that only a small number of people have the ability to cope well with traumatic situations. These individuals seem to possess an innate strength of character that allows them to integrate trauma into their vision of themselves and their world. According to Herman these individuals have three core strengths: a strong
internal locus of control, active coping skills, and strong social skills such as the ability to communicate well with others (Hendin & Hass, 1984).

There is a consensus in the research on combat and Holocaust trauma that exposure to trauma often leaves a lasting mark on those involved (Archibald & Tuddenham, 1965; Hamilton & Workman, 1998; Harvey, Stein & Scott, 1995; Van Dyke, Zilberg, & McKinnon 1985). Despite Suedfeld’s argument that research has not given adequate emphasis to those who appear to have put the horrors of the Holocaust and thus the Second World War behind them, the evidence points to something different (Herman, 1997; Janoff-Bluman, 1992).

**Research on Transgenerational Trauma**

Transgenerational trauma is different from secondary trauma. Secondary trauma (see Figley, 1995) refers to people who are in contact with persons who suffer from PTSD. Moreover, Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD) has its own entry in the *DSM IV* (APA, 1994). The nature of this study is not to clinically identify combat veterans with PTSD first and then interview their sons. Rather, this study takes a more holistic approach to combat trauma. It is believed that those fathers who experienced combat will impart that experience in some way to their offspring. Transgenerational trauma better defines this connection between father and son.

To date there is little empirical research on the topic of transgenerational trauma, also known as the second-generation effect, from World War II combat
veterans to their sons (Ruscio, Weathers, King & King, 2002). Furthermore, there are only a few published articles that deal with the topic of the transgenerational trauma of war. Moreover, transgenerational trauma is not well understood within the professional community (Ancharoff, Munroe, & Fisher, 1997). These studies draw their research from families of soldiers who fought in the Israeli Seven-Day War, the Lebanon War, and the Vietnam War (e.g. McGoldrick, 1993; Rosenheck & Nathan, 1985; Sololmon, Waysman, Levy, Fried, Mikulincer, Benbenishty, Florian, & Bleich, 1992), with the lion’s share of the literature on transgenerational trauma coming from the research on Holocaust survivors and their offspring. The bulk of this literature addresses transgenerational trauma from parent(s) to offspring, but does not deal specifically with father/son relationships. The following studies do provide a solid foundation on which to build a vantage point to examine the effects of transgenerational trauma from combat father to son.

Rosenheck (1986) interviewed 12 offspring of five World War II combat veterans who attended a Veteran’s Affairs Hospital for ongoing treatment for chronic PTSD. Despite the limited number of participants in his study, Rosenheck found that the children who identified most with the veteran father absorbed some amount of his pain and carried it into their own adult lives. The consequences of this pain bore out in their choices of marital partners, careers and lifestyle. It is perhaps not surprising that the offspring who identified most with their veteran fathers, according to Rosenheck’s study, were male offspring.
Op den Velde (1997) explored the second generation effects of children who were born to Dutch resistance fighter and to sailors of the Dutch war sailors. He noted from his studies that there was an overall reluctance or a conspiracy of silence (Danieli, 1984) in speaking of war experiences by the parents of these offspring. These parents stated that they did not want to burden their children with their memories. However, according to Op den Velde, feelings of guilt and shame played a role in keeping silent that came from negative experiences such as fear, sadness, and powerlessness. The author notes that not sharing their experiences with their children had the opposite effect than they intended, and that communication about the war with their children was diffuse, confusing, and ambivalent. Many of these children went on to have difficulty with authority and problems in school, and from an emotional standpoint many had difficulty with expressing emotions or fear of intimacy.

McGoldrick’s (1993) dissertation studied the intergenerational transmission of trauma between Vietnam veterans and their male adolescent offspring. In his study he interviewed 35 veterans who had experienced high combat. A scale developed by Boulanger and Smith (1981, as cited in McGoldrick, 1993) was used to assess a veteran’s level of combat exposure. McGoldrick also used several other scales to assess levels of PTSD in the veterans. He then assessed the oldest male adolescent offspring of each of the veterans also using a series of scales to assess behaviour, intelligence and knowledge of the Vietnam War. Both veteran and offspring were then
interviewed. The purpose of the interview was to ascertain how father and son communicated about the father’s war experience. McGoldrick found five types of communicative styles: (1) the father who says too much; (2) the frightening father; (3) the ‘speak no evil’ father; (4) the “I’m OK. Let’s talk” father; (5) and the “wounded but empathetic” father. Each “father” had his own unique characteristics and each one served to either minimize, display the positive, or circumvent the father’s combat experience. Furthermore, of the father’s communication style most sought to protect the son from the real truth; the real horrors the father experienced through combat. Each of the 35 sons was keenly aware of their father’s combat experience and many wanted to understand their father’s legacy of combat.

Aaron Hass’s book (1990) on offspring of Holocaust survivors echoes that of McGoldrick (1993) and Rosenheck’s (1986) findings. Hass interviewed 48 individuals who had at least one parent who survived a concentration camp. His respondents represented a wide spectrum of both age and occupation. They were not chosen from any clinical sample; in fact Hass knew many of his participants personally. His findings reflect those of an average, normal, non-clinical population.

Hass’s (1990) summary of the 48 respondents was very similar to the limited research done with offspring of combat veterans. He noted that children of survivors pointed to “their parents’ emotional unavailability, lack of empathy, and guilt-inducing behaviour as sources of their frustration and resentment”
This is echoed in Ruscio, Weathers, King, and King’s (2002) study on emotional numbing. Ruscio et al. evaluated 66 Vietnam combat veterans and their interactions with their children using a battery of self-reported questionnaires, clinical interviews, and the Combat Exposure Scale developed by Keane, Fairbank, Caddell, Zimmering, Taylor, and Mora (1989). They found that “disinterest, detachment, and emotional unavailability that characterize emotional numbing may diminish a father’s ability and willingness to seek out, engage in, and enjoy interactions with his children, leading to poorer relationship quality” (p. 355).

Hass (1990) also noted that there was a difficulty and an inability among the children of survivors in expressing anger. Many of the participants stated that they tried hard all their lives to impress their parents, but because of their parents’ emotional aloofness, were never recognized or rewarded for their efforts. In my research I have not found parallel literature on the experience of adult children of combat veterans. However, it was my experience that my father suffered from much of what Hass recounts in his book on adult children of Holocaust survivors.

Another common theme that Hass (1990) reported was one of mistrust and cynicism. Children of survivors reported that their parents had taught them to not trust others and their intentions and to be cautious when dealing with others. It was important, according to Hass, for the children to keep to themselves. This mistrust was extended to the belief that others would neither
care nor help. Survivor parents taught their children to keep to themselves and to be self-reliant.

There was also an air of cynicism that was often coupled with pessimism about the world. Many offspring reported that they picked up from their parents that human nature is inherently malevolent. It seems that many of these children were willing listeners and wanted to understand their parent's war legacy. Yet, many if not most parents would engage their children's desire and speak about what it was like for them to live through the Holocaust. Hass (1990) cites the parents' emotional unavailability as an important factor leading to the children's worldview about malevolence.

Hass (1990) believes that the effects of the Holocaust on the offspring of survivors are inescapable. Yet despite the resilience of his participants, there was a cloud that haunted each one. He notes that it is difficult to see parents objectively. Our own needs, wants and frustrations colour our perceptions. These perceptions determine how we interact with them. The imprint our parents give us creates an expectation of the world that mirrors our inferences about how to interact with the world and how the world will interact with us.

Finally, Ancharoff, Munroe, and Fisher's (1997) review of literature which includes studies from the Holocaust, internees of Japanese civil internment camps during World War II, and Vietnam veterans suggests that the legacy of trauma is complex and difficult to predict and that there doesn't need to be a formal diagnosis of parental PTSD for transmission to occur. Silence, one of the
four mechanisms that contribute to the transmission of trauma, can be enough to communicate the message of trauma. “Children learn quickly to avoid discussions of events, situations, thoughts or emotions they believe may provoke [the father’s recollections, flashbacks, distress, or extreme anxiety] such behaviour” (p. 263). Conversely, they suggest that children of combat veterans will often identify with their father’s war experience to know him better and attempt to understand what he went through in order to gain acceptance and approval from him.

Father/Son Relationships

It is believed that a life-long bond between father and son is forged at birth. This attachment even extends to fathers who were not apart of their son’s lives. Eric Clapton’s song My father’s eyes tells about his struggle to understand his attachment to his father even though his father was never apart of his life. Lewis Yablonsky’s (1982) book Fathers and sons suggests that beyond any other relationship a son may have, it is the father/son relationship that has the most life-long impact. He states, “because of the intense involvement, the formation of every man’s basic personality is significantly influenced by his father” (p. 9). However, an emotional gulf (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000) may separate fathers and sons. This separation can be experienced as a life-long source of sadness, anger, bitterness or shame but it does not moderate son’s desire for
connectedness. A boy wants to love his father and be known and loved by him (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

A boy's role model is his father. Sons strongly identify with their fathers. Terry Real (1995) tells of an old Yiddish saying, "the son wishes to remember what the father wishes to forget" (p. 27). The author translates this to mean that the son, in his quest for maturity, "needs somehow to uncover precisely what the father, in his development as a man, felt a need to disavow" (p. 27).

Sons may grapple with the messages fathers send to them. A father’s message, Yablonsky (1982) suggests, provides the blueprint of how a son should live his life. No matter what a son does with these messages, either accepting them or rejecting them, they form cornerstones of the son’s life. Moreover, these messages provide grist for the son’s mill and form a platform for how father and son relate to one another, for example, whether they experience much conflict or whether they have a caring relationship. Typically a son wants his father’s messages to be profound. Yet many messages are mixed with "do as I say and not as I do." The power of these messages, states Yablonsky, impact a son for the rest of his life. They often provide the measuring stick by which a son measures his own life’s successes and failures.

According to Yablonsky (1982) the perceptions and assumptions of the father are passed on to his son and form the backbone of his son’s worldview. What assumptions about the world does a combat veteran father pass to his son? Janoff-Bulman (1992) suggests that the aftermath of trauma alters a person’s
assumption about the world. She postulates that there are three general assumptions held by most people - the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the self is worthy - and that these assumptions are altered as a result of trauma. These are stellar ideas to pass on to an offspring. How are the father’s basic world assumptions altered through the experience of combat and how are these new assumptions passed onto the next generation? Janoff-Bulman does not address this issue in her book, however, in Harvey, Stein, and Scott (1995) it would appear many veterans learn that the world is not a safe place, that bad things can happen, and there is little meaning or personal glory derived from war.

Attachment Theory

The basis for attachment theory is founded in ethological studies which suggests that infants are biologically predisposed to emit certain signals such as cries and smiles. Adults are predisposed to respond to the infant’s signals. When caregivers are consistent and sensitive to the infant’s signals, the infant comes to perceive the caregiver as predictable and reliable (Lamb, 1997). This interplay sets up the foundation for a secure attachment. Insecure attachments, on the other hand, are formed when adults respond with insensitivity to the child. No attachment develops when there are no responses.

John Bowlby’s (1969, 1973) attachment theory explores the nature of the parent-child relationship during infancy and early childhood. During this period
the secure attachment with caregiver(s) in the first two years of life is reportedly related to higher sociability with others, higher regard for the self, and with significant relationships as they move into the adult years. This is contrasted with insecure or anxious attachments which are related to lower sociability, poorer peer relations, symptoms of anger, and poor self-regulation (Greenberg, 1999). Generally, Bowlby’s theory focuses on infant attachments with the child’s closest relationship. In the Euro-American society that relationship is generally the mother. In their observation of what has gone on with attachment theory research in the past, Kindlon and Thompson (2000) summarize: “although you could fill a boxcar with research that has been done on the importance of the mother-child relationship, you could transport all the work done on the importance of fathers in the trunk of a car” (p. 98).

So, how does all this impact on the father? According to Lamb (1997) fathers are elated at the birth of their children. They, like the mothers, feel an emotional connection with their newborns and are often anxious when they have to leave. In his review of the literature on the biological connection (ability to distinguish their child from other newborns by touch), between parent and newborn, Lamb states that there was little difference between mother and father. The difference was in the mother’s ability to distinguish between newborns by touching their faces. This difference is in part explained through the increased time spent with the infant. In Lamb’s view this is the beginning of the crucial difference between parents. Increased time with mother means less time with
father. The father yields caregiving to the mother. Overall, fathers are as responsive to their newborns as mothers. The difference, according to Lamb is in the level of sensitivity.

Fathers are less sensitive when they respond to a newborn. However, as fathers yield more and more of the caregiving to the mother (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998) it seems logical that they would become less sensitive to the needs of the child. Yet there is sufficient evidence to indicate that a secure father/child attachment forms. What happens over time presents a different picture. Again, Lamb (1997) reviews the literature on the extent of father-infant interaction. He reports that in relation to the mother, fathers spend proportionately less time with their children. This gap gets wider as the child gets older. Mothers become the emotional caregivers and suppliers of comfort and security while fathers become the source of play especially with boys. Samuel Osherson (1986) echoes this point.

Every child begins life in full union with mother. Erikson (1968) characterized the first stage of life in terms of the struggle between trust and mistrust. The sense of trustworthiness of the world is communicated to the infant by the mother, a message negotiated at her breast. In our infancy we experience the world as mother: soft, warm, and responsive. (p. 6)

Despite attachment theory's focus on the mother-infant interaction and to a perhaps lesser degree, the Euro-American family structure, the father's role in the family is very important. Concluding his chapter on the development of father-infant relationships, Lamb (1997) suggests that marital quality is directly affected by the father and this marital quality plays a pivotal part in the level of
attachment with infants. He states, “fathers’ interactions with their infants were influenced by the ongoing quality of interaction with their partners much more profoundly than mothers’ behaviour was” (p. 119). Second, he argues that in terms of attachment theory, and the amount of literature that has been produced on mother-infant interactions, it may be more rooted in an imposed hierarchy from a cultural, societal expectation that women are more “wired” to care for children.

Similar to Lamb (1997), Ross Parke (1996) writes about the nature of the marital relationship playing an important role in the development of father-child interactions. Parke suggests that there is a connection between the emotional and social support given to the mother and both marital competence and a higher quality of attachment. The quality of the marriage according to Parke is independent of infant characteristics or temperament. In other words, the quality of the interaction between parent and infant is related to the level of marital quality.

Cummings and O’Reilly (1997) suggest that a father’s behaviour in the marital context affects parenting, parental psychological well-being, and children’s functioning while at the same time, these systems affect the father. Three important pathways come from their hypothesis that impact child attachment: parent-child relations, marital interactions, and parental psychological functioning. Parent-child relations are the relationship between marital quality and parent-child relationship. Marital interactions are defined as
the father's interpersonal style with the mother and how that style affects marital interactions and conflict on children. Parental psychological functioning is the "effect on children of the father's psychological profile that relate to marital functioning" (p. 51).

In summary, attachment theory is not as specific about the nature of the father-child role as it is the mother-child role. There are many important considerations that come from attachment theory though. Fathers do play an important role in the development of their infants. Fathers attached to infants as well as mothers. Fathers are important in the context of marital quality that directly affects children. Finally, much of what has happened in terms of fathering, may be due in part to the social and cultural norms of Euro-American culture, and the social meaning of fathering.

Contagion Theory

Lenore Terr (1990) wrote about how horror and trauma is contagious. She suggested that authors and filmmakers such as Stephen King and Alfred Hitchcock relied on this concept to frighten their audiences. Terr believes that trauma can be contagious in two ways. First, through direct exposure to posttraumatic symptoms of someone who has experienced a traumatic event such as combat. Second, through indirect exposure to posttraumatic events carried by those who, themselves, were unexposed. In other words, we may experience trauma if one were to imagine a horrific or catastrophic event, for
example such as what it would have been like to leave a landing craft under heavy enemy gun fire during the D-Day landing of June 6, 1944. But as we are:

[exposed either] directly or indirectly to traumatic events and to the symptoms of others, we experience a kind of toughening process. And we may pick up the symptoms ourselves. We do not develop the whole syndrome [PTSD]. Just a few findings. And these findings may indicate changes in our developing psychology. (Terr, 1990, p. 318).

PTSD, suggests Terr (1990), is passed on from one generation to the next and although children of people with PTSD do not end up traumatized, they carry instead one or two psychological scars or symptoms of the exposure. Similarly, Ancharoff et al. (1997) suggest that traumatic experiences, like an infection, may be contagious to successive generations.

Contagion theory suggests that children exposed to the trauma of their parents, despite any official diagnosis, inherit some of the parent’s world beliefs that have changed due to the trauma. Contagion theory is based on Terr’s (1990) initial assumptions as outlined above but excludes the notion that PTSD needs to be present in the sibling, offspring or partner. Contagion theory also takes into account that the process of father/son attachment may be flawed in some form because of the father’s combat exposure and how such traumatic events, according to Janoff-Bulman (1992) impact a father’s world assumptions. Terr contends that the stress of trauma that affects the parent physically or emotionally has what Figley (1985) calls a chiasmal or a crossover effect. Rosenheck and Nathan (1985) document this contagious chiasmal effect in their
study of the son of a Vietnam veteran who mimicked symptoms of his father's combat trauma.

Contagion theory is not based on first having a clinical diagnosis of PTSD. It works in isolation of it. The theory suggests that if a parent, in this case a father, has been affected by the stresses of combat where combat has affected his world assumptions about himself in the world, it is likely that those stresses would have a crossover effect onto the next generation. In other words, these beliefs about self and world may become contagious and picked up by the sons and in extreme cases, lead to the development of parallel symptomatology (Ancharoff et al., 1997; Harkness, 1993).
Chapter 3: Method

Narrative Method: Part I

This chapter has two parts. The first section explores the use of narrative as an approach to studying stories. In this overview, the use of narrative, what narrative is, and why the choice of narrative for this research will be addressed. The second part of this chapter will deal with the research design used in this study. Here the Collaborative narrative approach (Arvay, 2002) will be outlined together with how it was used for this particular study. The latter part of this chapter will address how the eight themes were attained, how the evaluation of the worth of this study was conducted, and finally the construction and importance of the follow-up questions will be presented.

Narrative Approach to Research

The intent of this research is to construct narrative accounts of what it was like for sons of combat veterans to grow up with their veteran fathers. The Collins (1986) dictionary of the English language defines narrative as "an account, report, or story as of events, or experiences" (p. 1022). The practice of counselling psychology is steeped in narrative. Donald Polkinghorne (1991) believed he could develop a theory of narrative based upon what practicing counselling psychologists do (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Polkinghorne stated, "people increasingly have been turning for help to the psychotherapists,
counsellors, and organizational consultants” (p. x). Narrative then is a way people give meaning to the events in their lives. It is the way they make sense out of their lives and a way they communicate their meanings and interpretations of their lives. As Polkinghorne argues,

it is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. Thus, the study of human beings by the human sciences need to focus on the realm of meaning in general, and on narrative meaning in particular. (p. 11)

To make meaning of their lives, people tell stories. Telling stories is a naturally occurring process of human nature. We reveal ourselves through our stories (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin, 2000; Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1991; Riessman, 1993; Sarbin, 1986). As McAdam (1993) states, “human beings are storytellers by nature” (p. 27). Stories link past to present and explain what may happen in the future. They provide ways in which we meaningfully link our lives.

Jerome Bruner’s (1991) article “The narrative construction of reality” outlines 10 features of narrative. Of particular importance to this research is his “Intentional state entailment.” He states: “narratives are about people acting in a setting, and the happenings that befall them must be relevant to their intentional states while so engaged – to their beliefs, desires, theories, values and so on” (p. 7). Narrative construction of reality understands the events and the effects on beliefs, desires and values that is of particular importance to this study. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1991) argues that narrative structure can be used to “give coherence to past episodes in our lives” (p. 143).
When asked about past events, what is likely to be told is a story of that event. Time is often an organizing structure to the telling of stories. Ricoeur (as cited in McAdam, 1993) suggests that humans tend to comprehend time in terms of stories. As in this research, if asked about past events such as growing up with a combat veteran father, stories of that experience are likely to emerge.

Stories are an interactional process. A story becomes a product of both the teller and the listener and through this interaction meaning is negotiated. People in interaction with one another have to take into account what the other person is saying. This involves interpreting the words and meaning of the others. Interpretation becomes a matter of handling meaning (Blumer, 1968).

What Narrative Is

Narrative inquiries are generally composed around a particular wonder or musing, or a research puzzle. Narrative inquiries carry more of a sense of search or “re-search,” a searching again (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.124). However, defining what narrative is seems to be difficult (Riessmen, 1993). The term narrative has been used to refer to a number of various genres from film to literature to written case notes. Narrative also crosses a number of disciplines that include psychology, education, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics to name a few. The definition of narrative for the purposes of this research is based on Lieblich et al. (1999), who state that the goal of psychology is to “explore and understand the inner world of the individuals” (p. 7). This is what I have tried to do in my training and practice as a counsellor. This is what makes sense to me.
They further state “narratives provide us with access to people’s identity and personality” (p. 7). Narrative then is story (Polkinghorne, 1988).

The organizing theme in narratives is a plot. The plot holds the lived events in a meaningful whole and contains a beginning, middle, and end. Plot provides a sequential order to narrative. As an example, life stories are structured around a life or timeline. Obviously, life story narratives lend themselves well to this structure. However, this study does not address a life story but rather a small piece of a life story. It is temporal and although it continues, it is very much set in the period of “growing up.”

Participants construct meaning as they tell their stories. As Polkinghorne (1988) states, “self is in the middle of its story and has to revise the plot consistently with knowing where the story will end” (p. 69). A plotline then, is difficult to attain because often one memory will trigger another. Memories are often disconnected and there is a sense of flashback and flash-forward. In essence several mini-plots develop within the temporal event of one’s narrative.

Narrative also pays attention to not only to what is said, but how it is said. Narrative is something we do in conjunction with others (Lax, 1992). The plot becomes an interactive dialogue between participant and researcher and is formed by his interaction between participant and researcher. Stories are intractable between teller and receiver.
Narrative as Research Process

Narratives are stories we tell about ourselves to others. It is the way we make meaning in our lives. Many researchers have provided strong arguments for using the narrative method in psychology (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, & Kaye, 1992; Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). It is the primary form of how we come to know our world and ourselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1988). Bruner (1991) suggests that stories are our way of interpreting and creating meaning, while at the same time organizing our experiences, and maintaining a sense of continuity.

How is legitimacy gained in narrative research? Essentially, the question asks how does rigour in research move from the traditional methodology of experimental, manipulative, hypothesis verification to the hermeneutical, dialectical? After all, there is no real hypothesis suggested in narrative study, there are no variables to manipulate, and no final outcomes that can be extended to the population. A “disinterested scientist” gains legitimacy in traditional methodology from the verification of the hypothesis. In narrative research, according to Lincoln and Guba (2000), legitimacy is gained in part through individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus by a passionate participant as facilitator of multivoice reconstructions.

Arguably, the subjective/objective debate is essential, but how does one make meaning from understanding personal experiences and stay detached? How can one write about and represent the greater whole? As Michele Fine and
Lois Weis (1996) state: "yes, we write the stories, we determine the questions, we hide some of the data, and we cry over interviews. But self-conscious insertion of self remains an exhilarating, problematic, sometimes narcissistic task" (p. 265). What is reported and what is not? To deal with subjectivity in narrative research we need to be "up front" and come clean on our involvement (Fine & Weis, 1996).

The process of conducting narrative research requires a significant degree of reflexivity. "How do we, as researchers represent our participants and ourselves in relation to our participants? What do we include and exclude in our texts, and how do we decide?" (Arvay, 1998, p. 70). Arvay (1998) further asks how we represent our participants and how we write ourselves into the text and deal with our own subjectivity? As narrative researchers we are always working with life told as a story (Bruner, 1986). Stories always change and are not stable or fixed. Stories can contain several meanings and can be construed in different ways. At best all we can hope for is a single frame picture whose interpretation is left open to be viewed differently by different people. As such, we as researchers, need to be cautious and reflexive about the interpretations we make (Arvay, 1998).

**Reflexivity and Narrative Research**

Narrative research is an interactive and transformative process where the researcher seeks to learn about and interpret life experience (Sword, 1999). The nature of doing narrative research involves the researcher in the personal lives of
those they research. Therefore, reflection on how the researcher is influenced by the interaction creates personal awareness of how the research is shaped by the biography of the researcher. This provides a transparent view for the audience to understand how the interpretation of the text data was derived (Sword, 1999).

Sandra Jones (1997) states: “reflexivity involves critical reflection of the ways in which the researcher’s social personality, background and assumptions affect the practice of research” (p. 349). It is the act of turning back on one’s experiences by means of conscious reflections, and is an important element in the interpretation of human science research. It is the act of making one’s self an object of one’s own observation (Lax, 1992). The metaphor that Hoffman (1992) uses to describe the process of reflexivity is that of the sideways figure eight or the symbol for infinity. Hoffman states that “the figure suggests a moving trajectory when placed in the context of social interaction” (p. 17) where the social interaction is the junction and the two ends represent the bending or folding back on the interaction that moves the researcher out to the expert position and moves the conversational interaction to a collaborative, interactive process.

The major challenges for the narrative researcher is to invite stories that are deep and rich; clarifying ambiguous points at the same time as assisting the memory process; and finally, to negotiate a more accurate and faithful representation of the story. Specifically, the premise of this research is based on an interactive collaboration between researcher and participant to elicit stories and
recollections of events and times of growing up in a family where the father had been in active combat in the World War II. Not unlike a counselling session, the process of inviting a participant to tell about his relationship with, and his memories of, his father involves an interaction between two people. It is a socially constructed interaction. It is a conversation between two people with the intention of facilitating, co-creating, and co-authoring a narrative account. It is an interaction with shared space and there is mutual interaction within the shared space (Lax, 1992).

The foundation of this research is based on the construction of the narratives where the construction is a dualistic process. The researcher influences the direction of the conversation as much as the participant. The process of reflexivity and self-reflection assist the researcher in examining the assumptions and biases that are brought to narrative research.

An important assumption about doing reflexivity is that the nature of knowledge and meaning is socially constructed. Meaning is derived by the context of a social interaction. It is the process of interpreting the interactions between people. Blumer (1968) argues, “human beings in interaction with one another have to take into account what each other is doing and saying; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their own situation in terms of what they take into account” (p. 8). Lynn Hoffman (1992), a noted family therapist adds, “the social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories arising
from social interchange and mediated through language. All knowledge, the social constructivists hold, evolves in the space between people” (p. 8).

I hold to the belief that in any conversation I necessarily bring into play my life experiences and my imagination to enable me to interpret the meaning of the conversation. From my interpretation I am able to seek clarification and negotiate a shared meaning through the use of empathy. The interpretative process is dynamic, and as such it continues after the conversation is over. The problem presented is: are the interpretations consistently those of the participants and not consistently mine? To keep myself true to the authenticity of my participants’ stories, I continually reflected on my own story.

Reflexivity in this research allowed me to be apart of the research while at the same time providing a structure to keep authentic the voices of the participants. As Richardson (2000) suggests, it allowed me to write myself into the research. Through this process I was able to also share some of my story with my participants, thereby establishing a closer relationship with them opening the shared space between us. Many times I acknowledged the impact of their stories and later wrote about them in my journal so when it came time to write the interpretive narrative, I was able to keep the authenticity of their voices separate from mine.

Rationale for Using Narrative Inquiry as a Methodological Approach

People are storytellers by nature (Cochran & Laub, 1994; Lieblich, Tuval-Machianch, & Ailbar, 1998; Polkinghorn, 1988). Accordingly, a story becomes
one's identity and we know or discover ourselves and reveal ourselves through
the stories we tell. The mission of psychology, according to Lieblich et al. (1998),
is to "explore and understand the inner world of the individual" (p. 7). Narratives,
then, allows access to people's inner world and to their identities and
personalities. The retrospective nature of narrative provides a unique view of
patterns and action that could have not been predicted by using formal science
(Polkinghorn, 1988). Narrative also offers a collaborative approach to think about
and write about this experience through co-constructed interviews as a social
interaction

In this literature review, I have suggested that quantitative scientific
methods are ill equipped to provide understanding to the relationship between
combat veteran fathers and their sons. Moreover, it is only though historical
accounts that understandings emerge through retellings and reveal how
relationships were important.

Narrative inquiry has it roots in personal stories (Clandinin & Connelly,
2000; Polkinghorne, 1988). Personal stories are the backbone of doing narrative
inquiry. Within the paradigm of qualitative research, narrative as a method of
researching, representing, and understanding the experiences of sons growing
up with combat veteran fathers is key. As Epstein, White, and Murray (1992) put
it,

a story or narrative provides the dominant frame for live
experience and for the organization and patterning of lived
experience. A story can be defined as a unit of meaning that
provides a frame for lived experience. Stories enable persons to link aspects of their experiences through the dimension of time. (p. 97)

Narrative offers a collaborative approach to think about and write about this experience through co-constructed interviews as a social interaction. As Polkinghorne (1988) suggests story and narrative are interchangeable.

Role of Researcher in Narrative Inquiry

According to Krieger (1991), we need to recognize the nature of our participations in what we know. In other words, we cannot disengage from the research process (Arvay, 1999). Similarly, Laura Krefting (1991) suggests that the researcher cannot remain neutral in so much as the researcher’s background and personal history with the subject area dictate how the results will be analyzed and written up. She goes on to say that the researcher is part of the research, not separate from it.

The epistemological basis of this research is based in social construction. Therefore, the role of the researcher needs to be transparent without the inherent sense of power. It is important that I am up front with my research participants about the reason for this study. It is important that I self-disclose my story where appropriate.

As mentioned above, reflexivity is an essential component to narrative research. This process happens in two different ways. The first way is through keeping and maintaining a reflective journal throughout the research process. The journal included field notes, personal experiences, and ways to improve for
future interviews. It provided insight into my own process and emotions as they came up from listening to the participants’ story. It provided me with key clues as to where I would likely be emotionally triggered. My research journal allowed me to question my beliefs about methodological considerations especially as I wrote up my research. It also provided me with a self-dialogue that allowed me to examine my own beliefs as I went though the analysis and the process of creating the narratives that proved invaluable during times of frustration. Writing in the journal allowed me to gain important distance between my story and the others. In the end, it provided me with a map showing how I came up with the narratives. As Arvay (1998) put it, “as narrative researchers we have to be cautious and reflexive about the claims we make” (p. 72).

**Evaluative Criteria**

There is some debate as to how narrative research should be evaluated. Several writers use the quantitative measures of reliability and validity as a way of contextualizing the process of narrative evaluation or using quantitative terms such as internal validity and paralleling these terms with qualitative terms (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Krefing, 1991) while others (see Lieblich et al., p. 172, for a brief overview) state that quantitative terms are inappropriate to use to evaluate the rigour of narrative research. Narrative evaluation cannot be condensed to an exact canon of establishing a set of standardized techniques or prescribed rules. Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993) noted, “there is no canonical approach in [narrative] interpretive work, no recipes and formulas, and different validation
procedures may be better suited to some research problems than to others” (p. 69).

Several authors however suggest alternatives methods of narrative evaluation (Arvay, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Heliker, 1997; Lieblich et al. 1997; Mischler, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Despite the outward differences between these authors as many use different terms to mean similar ideas, there is a point of convergence. Most agree on the specific concepts that need to be included when evaluating a piece of narrative research. These include reflexivity, trustworthiness, coherence, pragmatic usefulness, and persuasiveness or credibility.

Riessman (1993) is quite succinct in her discussion on the necessary ingredients for narrative validation. She proposes that there are four essential criteria for the evaluation of narrative research, they are: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic use. Despite this, however, there is no blueprint on which to build exact measures of evaluating narrative research. Each study must stand alone and be judged according to the outcomes of the study. The important considerations are fair and accurate representations of those whose stories are told. Ethically, it is the researcher’s responsibility to be diligent in the portrayal of others. For this research, I have chosen four criteria to evaluate the worth of this study: persuasiveness, resonance, coherence and pragmatic usefulness. These criteria are based on Riessman (1993) and on Arvay’s (1998) unpublished dissertation and were chosen because this research is
based on the data analysis outlined in Arvay (in press). It would seem prudent that I also follow Arvay’s criteria for evaluation as this lends support to her collaborative narrative method. These four criteria will be further discussed in the second part of this chapter.

**Collaborative Narrative Method: Part II**

The method used in this study for researching the meanings constructed by the sons of World War II combat veterans will be addressed in detail in this section. The basic premise of this research rests on the assumption that dialogue and meaning are socially constructed between two people while acknowledging memories are fragmentary, partial, and subjective (Atkinson, 2002).

In part, I agree with Arvay’s (1998) assumptions outlining her epistemological basis for her research design.

1. Knowledge is socially constructed and therefore, dialogue is a process of a co-construction between two individuals.

2. Humans create their identities through the stories they tell.

3. Humans are meaning makers and we cannot separate our emotions and feelings out of a conversation, therefore, we impose meaning on our interpretations as well as those of others.

4. As Arvay states, “reflexivity, the act of turning back on one’s experience by means of conscious reflections, is an important element in the interpretation of human science research” (p. 107).
5. Narrative researchers should include their stories in the research text to gain a deeper understanding of how the interpretations were constructed.

6. There is no single way to read the data; it is an interpretive process.

7. Interpretive data is a human construction created by researcher located inside the research and therefore, have a vested interest in the research.

8. There exists a power hierarchy between participant and researcher and all possible attempts should be made to ensure a collaborative research design.

The collaborative narrative research method developed by Marla Arvay (1998; in press) was adapted and used to construct the narratives for this research. Her collaborative narrative method contains six phases: (1) setting the stage, (2) the interview, (3) the transcription process, (4) four interpretive readings, (5) writing of the narratives, and (6) sharing the story.

Before starting the research I had the opportunity to first tell my story to my research supervisor. After the interview, I reflected upon what meaning I derived and how my life had been affected. I then discussed these with my supervisor. I became aware of the emotional intensity of actually telling the whole story.

**Criteria for Selection**

The criteria for the selection of participants were based on two considerations. First, the father had to have been in active combat for a minimum
of six months. This time period is consistent with the literature on combat exposure (e.g. Elder, et al., 1997; Rosenheck, 1986) in terms of heavy combat verses light combat and no combat exposure. Active combat was deemed to mean being on or near the frontline during times of battle and being in direct contact with enemy fire. The second condition was that the fathers had to be in a position to also engage the enemy.

A third criterion that was hoped for but not essential was one of diversity in field of service. Diversity across services, army, navy, or air force was felt to add to the research question. It was however, self-selecting and no control was established to control for area of service. The theatres of operations ranged from the Pacific to Africa to Europe. While the majority of the fathers were in the army (n=7; various branches of the Canadian army and two with the British army), two had fathers who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, one in the Royal Canadian Navy, and one served with the German Luftwaffe. Unfortunately, of the ten participants who volunteered for this study only three had living fathers.

Participants

Potential participant referrals come from various sources. Some came from World War II veterans who had attended projects headed by the research supervisor. These men had stated that they had sons who would be willing to participate. One referral came from a fellow doctoral student. Others came from an advertisement sent out to all Lower Mainland Royal Canadian Legions. Two men came through conversations I had with friends and neighbours and after
they heard what I was doing they volunteered. From a pool of 16 men, 10 were identified for participation in the study. From this group there were two sub-groups. The first group was compiled of men who were born prior to their father’s involvement in the war and the second group contained those who were born after their fathers had returned. These groups were not planned for in the initial research however, but is important to mention here.

Five referrals came from men who were born prior to their fathers going overseas and whose fathers were subsequently killed in action. While these men were excited to participate they did not meet the criteria necessary for inclusion in this study.

**Setting the Stage**

Stienar Kvale (1996) states that a semistructured life world interview is, “an interview whose purpose is to obtain description of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6). Here, the phenomenon to understand is the son’s perspective of growing up with a combat veteran dad. In discussion with my supervisor, it became clear that going into an interview and simply asking the research question might not provide the kind of depth that an interview could attain. The interview needed to be structured and at the same time free flowing. In order to sensitize participants, it was decided to use two sets of questionnaires. Questions for the questionnaires came from conversations with the research supervisor and
other committee members (see Appendix A). The questionnaires were then given to fellow doctoral students to ensure that the questions were easy to understand.

The first questionnaire asked participants to briefly outline their father's military background. Questions such as "what unit did your father serve with," "in what theatres of operations did he serve," and "what rank did he obtain" were included (see Appendix A). This questionnaire was to be returned to the researcher prior to the interview. This allowed me to get an overall understanding of the father's involvement during the war. The second questionnaire, that also doubled as a interview guide, was included to sensitize the participants as to the kinds of questions that would be asked during the interview and provided them with pre-knowledge of the research question. It also provided an overall guide to the direction of the interview (Kvale, 1996).

Participants were then phoned to have the questionnaires mailed to them and to set a time for the interview. This time was also used to provide a brief overview of the research as well as to provide some background information about the researcher. This was an important component to building rapport with participants. It was also helpful when we met to conduct the interview as there had already been a relationship established.

The Interviews

The interview is not, according to Mishler (1986), a natural flowing conversation that would happen between two people who know each other. It is
more a "speech event." More substantially, in this research it is an interaction aimed at understanding the meaning of the participants; experiences of growing up with a World War II combat veteran father (Warren, 2002). Kvale (1996) uses the metaphor of the traveller to speak about interviewing, and tells how the traveller wanders together with the participant. "The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants and asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of the lived world" (p. 4).

Speaking in depth about one’s father and the relationship would be difficult for most people. Rubin and Rubin (1995) discuss the importance of gaining a participant’s trust and displaying trustworthiness on the part of the researcher. Without trust, they argue, participants will not freely share their stories and themselves. All participants in this study were informed about the nature of the research in letters and telephone conversations. They were also informed about the coding practices. To ensure anonymity, therefore, the use of pseudonyms was employed. An essential part of qualitative interviewing, according to Rubin and Rubin (1995), is the safety and security of the participants’ identities.

How does a researcher overcome the reluctance by participants to disclose their relationship with their fathers? To encourage a dialogue, the questionnaire provided to the son prior to the interview was used as a focal point for the interview and as a way for them to start teaching me about their experience (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This dialogue provided the basis of a shared language of
discourse. That is, we were able to build upon our shared knowledge of the war and the cultural terminology that goes with it. Sharing cultural similarities and knowledge helps rapport (DeWalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 1998).

Interviews were most often conducted at the participant's residence at their request. Two interviews were conducted away from the participant's home with one conducted at the participant's place of employment while the other was conducted at the researcher's residence. All interviews ranged from one and a half to three hours. The initial part of the interview was used to obtain consent to participate in the research, the purpose of being audiotaped, and a review of the process of voluntary participation (see Appendix C). It was important to restate that if for any reason they felt uncomfortable or were in any way feeling distressed, they could halt the interview and withdraw at any time. It was also important to point out that counselling would be made available to them should they feel the need to debrief after the experience of sharing their stories. Further, it was explained that any identifying features such as their father's specific unit numbers or any other identifying features would not appear in any text.

Before the interview began, the questionnaire on the father's military involvement was used. This allowed for "small talk" and to allow participants to feel more comfortable with the process as the audiotape microphone was connected to their shirts. As the researcher, I also was able to self-disclosed my background and my personal motivation behind doing this research. Several of
the participants commented after the interview that the self-disclosure helped them feel “equal” and understood.

My overall concern was how I would encourage participants to tell their stories. It was decided that I would start each interview the same way with a “starter statement”:

I am interested in how it was for you to grow up with a combat veteran father and what that relationship was like for you. I am interested in the type of relationship you and he had. I recognize that these are your memories and whether they are right or wrong doesn’t matter. They are your memories and that is what I want to understand. Perhaps the best place to start is to think of your earliest memory of when you knew your father had been in the war.

In response to this question many participants told of how they saw pictures, old uniforms and in one case how they played with a trunk full of old war stuff.

What followed turned into more of a conversation rather than an interview. Kvale (1996) defined conversation as a “wondering together with” (p. 4). Although there was the set of questions or interview guide that provided a “map” to follow, the conversations wandered in and around those questions. I repeatedly used the counselling skills of active listening, empathy, probing and clarifying to ensure understanding. Without exception all participants commented on how much they enjoyed the interview and how relaxed they felt when talking about their fathers. Often there were displays of emotion as they brought back memories of how they had interacted with their fathers and many commented on how safe they felt to be emotional.
Transcription Process

From an epistemological point-of-reference, it is important to recognize the socially constructed nature of the research interview. It is a coauthored conversation-in-context and not a quasi-positivist reification of the transcript as data about the interviewee, frozen in time and space (Poland, 2002).

The transcription of audiotaped interviews compresses a three dimensional interaction and places it in two dimensions (Poland, 2002). The spoken word does not translate well into the concept of a sentence. Most people speak in run-on-sentences for example, which make the process of converting to paper difficult. Many aspects of nonverbal communication and other aspects of interpersonal communication are also not captured in text. Moving a conversation onto paper while remaining true to what was said both verbally and nonverbally requires careful consideration. As Ann Oakley (1981, as cited in Poland, 2002) states, "interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed door there is a world of secrets" (p. 635).

After each interview and before transcription of the interview, I quietly reflected on the interview while listening to the audiotape and journalled about how I felt during the interview. During this time I would write comments about what could be done better next time in terms of my process and about asking better questions. I also made notes about any emotional displays or incongruencies between what was said and body language. I also noted areas of
defence when I probed further into the relationship. I was also keenly aware of the times that I slipped back into the role of the researcher. Comments such as “Is this what you are looking for?” or “I hope that is what you want.” These statements were clear indicators of the power differential in that I wanted something specific from them. Over time, though, I noticed that these statements became less apparent during the interview and were reserved more for after the session was over.

It is recognized that a transcript represents a moment in time. Further, the transcript represents a co-construction of a social interaction between researcher and participant. Transcripts, according to Kvale (1996), are decontextualized conversations. He argues that in the translation from words on a tape to words on paper that the original conversation fades away. What is left is a somewhat stale remnant of a free flowing, living conversation. While there is no agreed upon way of transcribing, it appeared that it would be important to capture as accurately as possible the conversation as it existed. For this reason, the individual chosen to do the transcribing holds a graduate degree in English and is highly skilled in doing transcriptions. She has for many years transcribed for several researchers within the university community and does this for a living.

The transcriber was told about the nature and intent of the research along with the research question (Poland, 2002). She was also informed as to the intent of the transcription. She was instructed to transcribe verbatim and to query any words or phrases that were not understood on the transcript. Prior to the first
transcription we sat down to work out a schema that would be used for conversation analysis that included: pauses, laughing or coughing etc., garbled speech, interruptions, overlapping speech, emphasis etc.

Once the tapes were transcribed, I went over them while listening to the tape to ensure accuracy of content and spelling while at the same time adding in any comments or notes I had made after the interview. These included displays of emotion (e.g. laughing, sadness, tearing up), suggestive body language (e.g. folding of arms, moving around in the seat, looking away) and other nuances.

Despite the number of different ways to do transcription, I chose to simply transcribe the conversation putting my questions and responses in italics and the participants' conversation in regular type. I felt that coding or otherwise breaking up the conversation into smaller portions would objectify and distance the meanings within the conversation. In order to clearly identify the narrative stories within the conversation, I felt that it would be best to simply transcribe entire blocks of speech and work with the whole rather than the parts.

After working with the first transcription, I was struck at how my story and their story overlapped. After the first interview I realized how closely I would need to monitor myself so as not to become entangled in the participants' stories. The struggle to be reflexive about my subjectivity in the research and yet "wander together" was something that I had to pay attention to throughout the remaining interviews.
Four Interpretive Readings

Interpretation, according to Kvale (1996), is subject to error because the person doing the interpretation is doing so through his or her own world experiences. Furthermore, the researcher is looking for something: answers to the research question. How objective can one be when looking through a subjective field of past experiences?

For this process the transcribed text was formatted to fit onto 11"x17" paper that contained four columns. Four different coloured pens were used to represent each reading. Each column represented a separate reading. The first reading was reading for content. Here I listened to the tape to ensure accuracy of transcription and adding or deleting errors or omissions. The second reading was to locate the participant. During this process I would ask myself: How is he feeling? How does he present himself? What meaning is he trying to convey? What does he want to convey in the story? What parts of himself does he want to share and what parts does he want to keep private? Where do emotions become strong? Also during this stage, I would mark stories that had a beginning, middle and end. This helped in organizing the conversation into sections that would become necessary when it came time to write the narrative.

The third reading was to read for the research question. Here I went through the transcript looking for ways in which the participants answered what it was like to grow-up with a combat veteran father. I was also reading for the many layers of implied or inferred knowledge where the participant would stop
or hesitate or have a disruption in the flow of conversation. During this reading, I also added any journal notes that I had made after the interview.

The final critical reading in this narrative method was culture and power. Some participants grew up in the late 1940s while others in the 1950s and early 1960s. The baby-boom generation grew up in the shadows of World War II. The culture of that time is different than today. In order to understand one’s story it is important to understand the influence, the culture and the context of the social world. It was often easy to locate culture and power in the readings as many participants stated: “that’s the way things were in those days.” During this reading I had two questions in mind: what were the cultural phenomena (television, toys, the kinds of games played) of that time; and second, in what ways did World War II, the Korean War, and the Communist threats influence this era?

**Writing the Narratives**

The next task before writing the research narratives was to form a general plotline that started with the family that the participant grew up in. This led to a loose chronological progression and I organized the stories to fit this format. All narratives were written in the first person – a literary device aimed at bringing stories ‘back to life’. As Arvay (in press) states, “this method resists such reductionistic tendencies and makes every attempt to fashion a tale that is
embodied – a tale that is coherent, compelling and revealing of the storyteller’s intention” (p. 271).

The narratives are not stories with clear plotlines building to a climax and ending in a resolution. Rather, they are works in progress and as in real life, they contain contradictions and ambiguities. These narratives are but a small chapter in lives that are not yet finished.

Sharing the Narratives

Once the narratives were written and reviewed by an outside reader for content and flow, they were individually mailed along with a cover letter to the participants. The cover letter explained that the participants should carefully read the narrative for errors, omissions and for accuracy. I also asked the participants if their narrative represented what their life was like growing up with their fathers. The letter stated that I would call them to set up a time to review the narrative with them. The follow-up interviews were all done via the telephone and with the participant’s consent, the conversations were audiotaped to ensure accuracy in any changes they requested.

These narrative accounts were co-constructed. The men in this study individually told their stories, and the conversation between them and myself were recorded and transcribed. Each transcription was then crafted into a narrative and each narrative was co-edited by the participant. Each participant was asked to read their narrative with three questions in mind.
1. Does your narrative accurately reflect our conversation and your experiences?

2. Does the narrative leave out or misrepresent any important information the needs to be included?

3. Do you feel, after reading your narrative, that there is anything that you need to add?

Overall, the comments made by the participants were very positive and affirmed the narratives. Some were quite flattered by their narratives and said how important it was for them to tell their story saying, "It was quite accurate," or "That's exactly how it was." Others were saddened by not having the chance to now be able to speak with their fathers about the war. Almost all said that this work was important.

Evaluating the Worth of the Study

For the purposes of this research project I have used the four criteria set out by Arvay (1998). Her criteria are built around Riessman's (1993) discussion on the evaluation of the worth of a narrative study. The methodology used in this study has its roots in social constructivism: that the dialogical nature of the narrative accounts was co-constructed between the participants and myself as the researcher. Therefore, positivist methodology such as reliability or internal validity is ill-suited to evaluate a study such as this. What follows is a brief explanation of the four criteria together with how this study met the requirements of each criterion.
Persuasiveness

According to Riessman (1993), persuasiveness or plausibility asks if the narrative is reasonable and convincing. In other words, does it seem convincing that someone could have the kinds of experiences outlined in the narrative? Polkinghorne (1999) suggests that if a reader can resonate with the story then the story has verisimilitude; the story has a truthful quality about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this research study, care was taken to ensure persuasiveness was accomplished by giving the narratives back to the participants for their review and editorial comments. To ensure that the narratives were convincing beyond the participants, all 10 narratives were subject to a peer critique. The oral and written reports from the peer reviewers support the notion of persuasiveness.

Resonance

Resonance (Arvay, 1998) comes from Riessman’s (1993) concept of correspondence. It implies that the researcher takes back the results to those who were studied for the purpose of having the participants validate that the narratives accurately reflected their story. To further ensure resonance, all 10 narratives were given to outside review by persons who had had direct or indirect but related experience with this topic. In their instruction sheet, they were asked if the story resonates with their experience. All four reviewers stated that the stories touched a chord in their experience. All spoke about the difficulties that sons could have given the nature of their father’s combat.
experience and could understand many of the struggles told about in the narratives that sons had with their fathers.

**Coherence**

Coherence, as Riessman (1993) defines it, is based on the research done by Agar and Hobbs (1982). These authors contend that there are three kinds of coherence: global, local, and thermal. Global coherence refers "to the overall goals a narrator is trying to accomplish speaking ... to justify their actions" (Riessman, 1993, p. 67). Local coherence is the way the narrator connects the related events in a narrative. This is similar to using an account to justify an action. Thermal coherence is about content. The contents of a narrative can be grouped together and forms a theme or themes that run like a thread throughout the narrative. Riessman suggests that their model is difficult to apply to the researcher/participant interaction in interviews as it implies there is a "rational speaker" with a "discourse plan."

Coherence is a somewhat slanted towards how a researcher interprets the transcripts or how a researcher's beliefs or values enter into the interpretations. Moreover, what kinds of stories are to be expected by the reader? How is subjectivity removed from the interpretive process?

In this study, coherence was established by giving the narratives back to the participants and asking for their comments as to the accuracy of its representation of their lived experience. Coherence was also established through peer reviews as they were asked whether or not the stories they read were
coherent and could they formulate an essence of the person the story was about. Feedback from the participants and from the independent reviews indicated that the narratives were coherent.

**Pragmatic Use**

The pragmatic criterion is related to the extent that the knowledge gained in a study informs others research and as such shed light on the human condition. According to Riessman (1993) pragmatic usefulness is based in the future. The participants themselves first established the pragmatic use criterion. Several stated that this type of research was long overdue and noted that many more would benefit from telling their stories. Many commented on how useful it was for them to tell their stories and some commented on how it had motivated them to find out more about their fathers, something they said they had thought about doing for years. Some commented on how they saw how their relationships with their fathers was playing itself out in their own relationships with their own sons or daughters. One participant stated that a book based on this research needs to be written about this subject.

The pragmatic use criterion was also explored by asking peer reviewers if they thought others would benefit from hearing these stories in workshops or other forms of presentation. All reviews indicated that they felt that it would be useful especially in the area of Canada’s returning Peacekeepers and members of Police departments. One reviewer indicated the emotional content of the stories
maybe difficult for some to hear and advised to be cautious when presenting the stories.

**Independent Review**

The aim of the review was to have the narrative accounts validated by independent sources in terms of coherence, resonance and pragmatic use. Four independent readers were chosen and asked for their reactions to the narrative. The four reviewers held either a doctorate or were in the process of completing a doctorate in Counselling Psychology, and all had experience in working with trauma or had a working knowledge of the military. Two people reviewed one narrative each while the other two reviewed four narratives each. Each reviewer was provided with written narrative accounts and given the following instructions:

Read each narrative two times. The first reading is to gain an overall understanding or feel for what is being said and to familiarize yourself with the story. The second reading is for the following questions:

1. Is this a coherent story? Does it flow? Can you formulate the essence of what the person was saying in the narrative?

2. Does this story resonate with your experiences? Does it ring true for you? Is it believable?

3. Is this a pragmatic story? Would it be useful for others to hear this story? Does it have utility to use at a workshop or other forms of presentations?
Follow-up Questions

The purpose of the follow-up questions was to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the relationship between father and son (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). All 10 participants were asked the same two questions. The questions were asked after the participant had received, reviewed, and made any necessary editorial changes to their narratives. The follow-up questions were a logical progression from the narrative and given the nature of the research, the questions supplied a greater understanding of what the sons wanted from their fathers.

During the follow-up interview two other questions were asked of the participants. The first was: “Imagine for a moment that you could go back to your childhood and you had the kind of relationship you wanted with your father. What would that be like?” The second question built on the responses of the first question. It asked, “Imagine for a moment that you received all those things you wanted from your father. As a young adult how would your choices of career and personal relationships been different?” If participants became stuck, I would offer an example from my life. This was often enough to encourage them to respond.

These two questions follow from the narratives. They attempt to understand at a greater level what it was that these sons did not get from their fathers. The questions make the narrative come full circle and provided the missing piece of what sons want. The results of the follow-up questions will be presented in Chapter 4.
Independent Reviews

Independent Review #1

These were powerful stories. I started to get quite emotional as I read them. I especially found Big Bear's story to be hard. Not only did he have to deal with his father's lack of involvement in his life but he also had a difficult time fitting in in a new country because he was German. I found the stories to be very believable and coherent. I was impressed at how your participants started off saying that they had "normal" childhoods, but as they began to reflect on their relationships with their fathers, realized how much more they wanted from their dads. I see much of this in my own father and with the relationship with my brother. I resonate with some of the anger these men talked about in the stories about not getting what they wanted from their dads and not knowing how to get it.

I think that others would benefit from hearing what these men had to say especially the hard or emotional aspects of their stories. There appeared to be a universal theme of all wanting a closer relationship with their dads. It might be important for other men to hear that.

Independent Review #2

I found the story gripping in several ways. It is coherent in that it seems to have a theme that the participant sees himself somewhat, through understanding how his dad was with him and how he reacted to his dad. The participant’s insight is based to some extend on the recognition of what he lost because his dad did not speak with him about
important matters, and yet having the understanding of why his dad did not talk to him about the war.

It has value in teaching and workshops as it is about absent fathers, wanting something from our fathers, and failure to connect emotionally with fathers. I found this story to be a powerful process as he admits he was feeling more and more emotional as he recounted his story of growing up with his dad. It also appears that the participant becomes more aware of his own relationship with his son and realized he should participate more fully in that relationship as a result of participating in this study.

Independent Review #3

Yes, this is a coherent, comprehensible narrative. I can understand the essence of what the author is saying. Although I did not have a military father, I grew up in the same family dynamics (six children, dad was the life of the party but absent from his children and not supportive), so I can resonate with this experience. It does ring true for me. I also think this story has a tale to teach especially for men trying to understand their military fathers. I think veterans and Peacekeepers can learn from this story especially what not to do.

Independent Review #4

In answer to the first question yes, absolutely. Hearing people speak from their experience and you could almost visualize them going back in their minds as children dealing with a father that had been in the war. The stories followed and brought up a lot of stuff for me too. The essence of the stories paralleled so much. Some of the themes that came out for me were the rigidity of the father that came back with “yes sir, no sir”
mentality, which of course I can resonate with. It got me thinking how my children would relate to me as their father in a narrative with my background in [a paramilitary organization] with the very strict military type of training. The essence of what they were saying about what they experienced as children based on the war experience of their father came through very clear.

Seeing myself as a father who has some of these pieces for example I am not quick to speak about some of my traumatic experiences and my training being very militaristic. So, probably I have a similar style with my children that can be somewhat non-emotional as a result of needing to shut off emotions. I often don’t think I give my children enough of my emotional self because I have learned to shut it off. So, these are totally believable stories. I found myself nodding my head recognizing that probably the way they would have seen their father and you can almost hear them asking, “I wish I could have had more.”

The usefulness of these stories for me caused me to look at the way I parent. I can also see the usefulness of these stories to have others, look at the impact of their lives [in paramilitary organizations] on their children. I think that may be very important. Overall, I got a sense of the pain and what could have been that came out in the narratives. Not having a father they could talk to and how their lives were so etched with the experience of their father. It was very powerful.
Chapter 4:

Findings/Results: The Narratives of Combat Veterans' Sons

The purpose of this chapter is to present the narrative accounts of the 10 men who participated in this study, their responses to the follow-up questions and the independent comments by reviewers. Each narrative account represents a condensed version of the original interview and constitutes the results of this study. The narratives contain the essential elements of that interview so that it presents a cohesive, tight format that is easy to read. In a similar manner the follow-up questions will also be presented. An analysis of each narrative with contrasts and paradoxes will follow each narrative. The second part of this chapter will present the grand narrative themes of both the narratives and of the follow-up questions. Also discussed will be the cultural background that influenced the narratives.

The answers to the follow-up questions, for the sake of brevity, will simply be numbered 1 and 2 following the narrative. Question 1 asked: “Imagine for a moment that you could go back to your childhood and you had the relationship that you wanted with your father. What would it be like?” Question 2 asked: “Imagine for a moment that you received all those things you wanted from your father. As a young adult how would your choices of career and personal relationships been different?”
All changes or objections however slight were incorporated into the narratives. For many this review of their narrative and seeing themselves as a “third person” through the use of a pseudonym brought up a lot of emotion. Some commented on how little they knew about their fathers. Some questioned why neither they or their fathers ever spoke about the war. A few said that after reading the narratives how much they missed their fathers. One participant said, “My father died too soon.” Another was amazed at how little he knew about his father’s six years at war and after reading his narrative felt compelled to learn more about his father’s war experiences.

**Sons’ Narratives**

**George’s (age 68) Narrative**

* I am the middle of three boys. My older brother is about 14 months older than I and my younger brother is about 5 years younger than I. We were raised on a farm in a small town in Saskatchewan. I thought it was an idyllic life. It was the most wonderful place in the world to live. We liked the winter, spring and summer. We enjoyed all the seasons. And then, it was taken away from us. So, we had to adapt, which I don’t know if we did too well.

* My father enlisted in the Army in 1940. I was in grade three, so I was about eight years old. It was the depression and I think he thought it would be a good idea because that way he would make a steady income and we as a family would also get money. Dad was older than most when he joined. He lied about his age. He was 38 but told them he was 32. He wasn’t the only one. I remember that the two guys, one standing in front of
dad and behind dad, were only about 16. After he enlisted, he went to Regina, got his kit, returned home and the next thing I remember we were standing on the train platform seeing him off. He returned some five years later in May of 1945.

A lot happened in those five and a half years. Shortly after dad left, we moved to Regina and from Regina we moved to Victoria. My mother’s parents had retired there so it seemed like a good move for mom. It was hard on my brothers and it was hard on me. We were used to attending school in a one-room schoolhouse. We were thrust into big schools and because we moved a lot, we were always coming into a new school well after the school year started. It was hard for us to make friends. My brother and I became loners. We had attended 10 schools by the time I was in grade seven. My mom did well in Victoria. She got a job in the shipyard as an assistant pipe fitter. I think it was a good time in her life and she enjoyed her independence. For her it was better than living on a farm raising a family in rural Saskatchewan.

I became quite independent. Mom wasn’t around much so we came and went as we pleased. I would attend school and roam around the city. I still like to get out and wander today. At one point we would sell newspapers on the street corner. The city in those days was full of service men. Practically everyone wore a uniform and men were always coming and going. It was very strange to see someone not in a uniform and you would wonder why they were not. Of course many jobs had by then become frozen so if you were a teacher or something, you weren’t allowed to join. I think dad joined just before that happened. Had he waited, his job, as a farmer would also have been frozen. There were lots of trade jobs open during the war. Many of my classmates finished school
in grade 8 and took up an apprenticeship in one of the trades. You could do that during the war. I stayed in school. I think that was one thing my father instilled in us.

I know we used to write to dad. As time went on though, we would write less and less. I think that was more of a reflection of our age at the time. I know I felt bad that we didn’t write more. I remembered that dad too, wrote less and less. He always knew where we were, but I don’t remembered reading many letters from him. We just sort of stopped communicating. It was hard living without him. Mom did the best job she could do, but dad was more of the cornerstone of the family.

By the time dad got home we were pretty set in our routine. I was 14 and my brother was 16. Both my brother and I were at least six feet tall. I’m sure he was very surprised. After all, he left when we were still quite small and living a rural life. Five and a half years later, we had grown quite a bit and now we were living an urban life. Of course that would have been hard on him too. Dad was a farmer and now he lived in the city. Our family had changed. I recall that after he returned we never called him Dad instead we called him Pop. I think that hurt him because we called Mom, Mom, but it was really hard to call him Dad. I feel sad now to speak of it. I would have liked to have called him Dad, but we couldn’t call him Dad. It was just strange. When he came back he was sort of a stranger and we felt strange with him. There was something missing there, it had been too long. It was too bad because he was a nice guy.

It might have been different for me had I been younger when dad came home. At fourteen, I was fighting the hormonal wars so I really wasn’t too interested in what Dad did during the war. He never spoke about what he did, nor did he attend unit reunions. He did belong to the Legion. There were a few souvenirs he brought back with him. I
think it may have been some German stuff. I never really asked him about it and he never spoke at length other than the odd story. I would have liked to ask him, but other things in life got in the way. It is too bad and now, I wish I had had that opportunity to speak with him.

If he had changed in any way because of the war and what he saw and did, he didn't show it. As soon as he got home, we bought a house and started to fix it up. He planted a vegetable garden and we started in with mowing the lawn and painting the place. He just took charge. I know he would have rather stayed in Saskatchewan. Had he not gone to war we would have been there now and I'm sure I would have followed his footsteps and be running combines and be concerned about the price of wheat. We stayed on the Island and he went to work.

Dad started working at the shipyard. He told me a story once about how he was dropped off at a job and the foreman didn't leave any instructions so he and the crew just sat around and did nothing all day then headed off to the pub. Dad drank quite a bit. He would often hit the pub on his way home and I recall joining him and his crew when I was older. I'm not sure that they drank on the job, but when they finished work they were off to the pub. I think the drinking started in England. I don't remember him drinking much before he left. He spent a lot of time in England before shipping out to Sicily. So drinking was one of the major pastimes in England. They would spend the day on manoeuvres then spend the nights in the pubs. Dad died at 70 and alcohol was a contributing factor.

I know generally where he was and what he did during the war. Dad was a gun mechanic on a self-propelled gun. I guess that was like a very big tank. He spent three
years in England before landing in Sicily and then travelling up the Italian boot. He went as far as Monte Casino and then I’m not sure where he went after that. He finished the war in Belgium. He and another soldier were billeted with a family there and I remember him corresponding with them after the war. I recall one story Dad told me. I guess he wasn’t always with his self-propelled gun. This one time they had to clear a town somewhere in Italy. I think they might have had to do something like this a few times. They had to go house to house to ensure the enemy wasn’t hiding. He had told me that they had passed a dead German who had been blown against a pile of logs. The blast was so strong that the German had stuck to the logs. Dad’s partner wondered if the German’s spine was broken. Dad chuckled at that to think that his partner had actually said that. I guess that was sort of the cool detached black humour they used. I know there are many more stories but I never asked and he never told me. I do think that the five years overseas were probably the five best years of his life. I think he had a good time. He was a sociable guy, and he was easy to get along with.

When Dad came home, I remember he couldn’t walk though an open door way. He would approach the door way very slowly and almost peek around it before he went through it. I remember him commenting on all the booby traps that were set in the towns in Italy. Mom used to get very mad at him when he did this. I remember her saying, “What the hell is wrong with you? You just going to stand there?” It took him a while to get over being suspicious of entering through doorways and to accept that Victoria was a safe place. We thought it was kind of funny, but we didn’t really understand. It is very hard to imagine my father in the war and what he had to do.
Mom and dad divorced during my second year of university. They should have never stayed together after he returned from the war. I suspect it would have been a big transition for him to come home and pick up where he left off and act like nothing had happened. They both put up a good front.

Our lives would have been very much different had dad not gone to war. I would have been somewhat of a different person now. It would have helped us emotionally. He would have likely not become an alcoholic and as I mentioned, we would still be living in Saskatchewan. I feel sad that I never really spoke with him about the war. I would really like to have him back. He was a really nice fellow. I admired him and what he did. When he did come back I was well into my teenage years and was focused on me. I then went off to university, got married and had my own family. We drifted apart. I lived on the mainland and Dad was on the Island. It took twenty years to mature and realize that my father was a pretty neat guy. I just never really made the effort to speak with him and now I regret not having talked with him a lot more.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

Before my father left for war, life on the farm was pretty good. I remember he and I doing a lot of stuff together especially the year my brother went to school and I was home. Had he not gone to war we would have stayed farming.

After he got back it changed. He was quite surprised when my brother wanted to go to college. He expected us to finish high school and that was that. He didn’t see the need for going on. I don’t think he knew what we were thinking. If I would have tried
more [to get to know him] we may have been able to have the relationship prior to his leaving, but it didn’t happen.

Question 2:

I think he was probably afraid to offer his advice. Had he been more involved with me, I may have stayed with my original job, but I left and followed my brother to university. When I left home, my parents separated. I saw him just a few times when I went back to the Island. Had my father and I been closer, I think it would have impacted on my relationships. I’m not sure how though.

Analysis: George

There are several themes that arise from George’s narrative. The first theme is one of emotional distance and regret between George and his father. This narrative speaks of an idyllic life prior to his father’s enlistment and subsequent departure for overseas and combat duty. Upon his father’s return the basic structure of the family had changed. This is coupled with what seems to be a large personality change, the second theme, given his father’s PTSD like behaviour (e.g. his father’s drinking and his father’s behaviour as he approached open doorways because of booby traps) despite George commenting that it wasn’t something that lasted long. There is also mention of how his mother and father should not have stayed married after his father’s return from overseas. This is opposed to the idyllic life they had in rural Saskatchewan before the war.
These two inconsistencies are interesting in light of George saying his father was the same man before and after he went to war.

George mentioned several times his regrets of never speaking with his father about his five years overseas and of his regrets over how they drifted apart. Near the end of the interview, and quite emotionally, George told of how he admired his father and wished he could be more like him.

Another important theme is the role of the mother. His mother appears to be someone George admires while at the same time dislikes. It was on her initiative that they moved to Victoria where she worked and provided for them while his father was overseas. It is not clear about the exact nature of their relationship but she did appear to more involved in his life than did his father. In part, this comes from George’s comment about calling her mom, but not being able to call his father “Dad” after his return and his sadness around that would suggest that his father was somewhat distant from the family unit.

Finally, there is the theme of not speaking about the war or using humour to speak about it. Both of these themes are evident in George’s narrative.

**John’s (age 64) Narrative**

*My father left for World War II’s Desert Campaign when I was two years old and my sister was three. We lived in a small town outside of London during the six years he was away. I don’t remember too much about that time really, but I do remember how we would have to get under these tin shelters when there was an air raid and I remember hearing and seeing the buzz bombs going overhead. I also remember going to a movie*
theatre with my mom to see, I think Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs or something like that. They always showed war footage before showing the main feature. On the screen they were showing a convoy going somewhere, and one of the ships, I guess, looked like a troop ship. My mother leaned over to me and whispered that that ship was just like the one my father was on. Then all of a sudden, the ship she had pointed out, blew up. It was very traumatic for me as I had not been prepared to see it blow up. Even after the war, I remember I went with some friends to the movies and they had to take me out of the theatre. I was moaning and sweating. It wasn’t that I saw that ship blowing up, it was that I associated it with my father being on that ship, I think.

When my father enlisted in the army, at 21, he was a very handsome, good-looking man. I don’t think there was any particular reason he joined the army other than that’s what everyone else was doing and I know he would have done his duty for King and country. During his six years in the army he was wounded twice, once in the leg in El Alamein and once in the gut when he was in Italy. He was never sent home because of his wounds, although he did come home once on a leave and I remember going to London with my mom to see him. When he was discharged, he had lost all his teeth and I remember him being quite ill for some time after.

Dad served as a private with the British Seventh Armoured Division for the entire war and he went from the Desert to Italy to Normandy. As I think about it, I am surprised that he wasn’t killed. He saw a lot of action. I don’t know what his duties were. I don’t know anything about it. He never spoke at all about it. Once in a while he would sit and tell us something. He would laugh about the desert campaign. I recall him saying that the dysentery was bad and they never had any water and they lived on biscuits. He
used to get quite a charge out of the Americans during Desert Storm with all their bottled water.

He told me about Patton in the desert. He said after seeing some pictures about the Americans landing in Africa that what really happened was that the Americans got the shit knocked out of them by the Germans. He said that he and his troops had to go and rescue them. There was American equipment spread out all over the place and there was so much food left behind by the Americans in their retreat that my father thought they were in paradise.

I remember hearing other stories about the war and I think I may have heard them from my mom. One was Montgomery’s six miles of field guns at El Alamein. Apparently the noise of the guns firing was so loud it made his ears bleed. Another story was about him being trapped in a minefield and getting out by following his sergeant’s footsteps. His platoon went into a battle and by the time they finished, there were only three left and they had to get back through their own minefield. He would have been killed if his sergeant hadn’t called to him telling him to stop and go the other way. Another story was when he was in Italy around Mt. Etna. He said how kind the Italian people were to him and his troop mates. Those are the only stories I know. That’s about the only things that I’d have ever heard him talk about and nothing ever about killing or any of that type of thing. Dad never, ever spoke about the war. Never! He received a lot of medals and I often joke with my wife about wearing them, but it is against the rules.

I remember giving Cec Merritt, who won the Victoria Cross, a ride home one day and we got talking about my father. I had mentioned to him that dad had been with the 7th Armoured. He started to ask me questions about dad and I told him that I didn’t
know. He was really upset with me because I didn't understand a lot about what my dad
did. I felt a bit guilty that I hadn't ever talked with dad about the war. I never thought
about it - about asking him.

After the war we immigrated to Victoria. My mother had a sister already living in
Victoria and I think dad thought we could do better if we left England. I was eleven when
we left and I remember the trip across the Atlantic, landing in Halifax then taking the
train to Victoria. Dad and I were the only ones who didn't get seasick on the way over.
We came across on the Acquitania. It was her last trip and she was a beautiful ship. The
trip to Victoria was spectacular. I remember thinking as we went through Jasper that this
was paradise.

Dad eventually got a job at the dockyard in Victoria and stayed there until he
retired, and because of him I always had a summer job. I got to do different things around
the dockyard from cutting grass to going down into a ship's bilge and cleaning it out. By
the time dad retired he supervised a lot of people and had a lot of responsibility, which
makes me wonder why he remained a private all during the war.

Dad was a gentleman. He always dressed very well and was always ramrod stiff,
which I think he got from his military service. He was very soft and didn't like
controversy and didn't like anything controversial. He never, ever raised his hand to us.
He died about four years ago and I really miss him. Just before he died I kissed him and it
was only the second time that I had ever kissed him. He had had a bypass operation in his
sixties and when he was in the hospital for the operation that was the first time I had ever
kissed my father, whereas my son comes up and kisses me all the time. In those days, you
didn't do things like that.
He was a hard worker and he was highly regarded by his co-workers. He wasn’t though, the kind of guy to take me fishing or play soccer with me. He liked to keep to himself and read the newspaper. He didn’t spend much time with me teaching me things. I mean he was hopeless at woodworking. He wasn’t a normal dad in a way. He never saw any of my soccer games but maybe he could never get the time off work. He was always there though. He provided the food and stuff. Essentially, he got on with his life and I got on with mine. In some ways I am like him. I like my privacy. I like being alone and I am happy with my company. I knew he loved me and I loved him — we were just never touchy-feely. Describing him now I feel very sentimental and emotional. I know I don’t hero-worship or anything like that. He was just a guy who did his job and he would have done it well, too. I admire him for that. He wasn’t the type of guy that was overly well educated or had a big job or anything like that. He just did his duty. No matter what it was, he worked hard and I think he approached the war on the same basis.

My mother was the all power of the family and that was it. She was very strict and she would be the one to discipline us. I don’t know that she meant to be that way, but that was the way it was. My mother was the boss; she was very strong. Dad was the provider and he was happy with letting her take charge. My mother used to play field hockey too and she was quite competitive and aggressive. I remember her team winning several awards. I think that came out in her parenting. I would say that overall, mom and dad had a good marriage as far as I can tell. I never heard them fight and I suspect that their styles complemented one another.

Dad didn’t really provide any direction for me in my career choices. He had wanted me to work at the dockyard yet he never said anything to me when I went in my
own direction. I don't think he ever gave me any advice on anything. He was never hands-on in that way. I remember I had dropped out of school when I was fourteen and he never really said anything to me. My mother on the other hand was furious. I learned that hard way though and finally went back to school. I had thought of the military but I had a friend who had joined and after talking to him realized that I would be making a mistake. I don't think dad would have minded had I joined the military. He always told me to get an education though, and if I had pursued college, he would have paid for it, but he never insisted that I go. Eventually I started my own business and moved away. I guess in hindsight it would have been nice to receive some direction but he wasn't the type to ever give advice.

My mother had said that dad was a changed man after the war, but I don't know how. I know he would have seen so many things similar to Saving Private Ryan and as we speak I realize that he would have been involved in killing. He would have done it too because he would have done his duty, yet it is hard for me to envision. He was very lucky not to have been killed. I think it was amazing really. Yet, he never spoke about it. I even remember going to the local pub on occasion and having a few drinks with dad. We would talk about my mom and life but he never brought up the war. I think he packed it away and I don't think he ever wanted to remember. I am not sure that the war changed him. I feel that he was the same man before that war as he was after the war. I liked the way my dad and I were. To me, I was satisfied with it, the way it was between us. He was he, and I was I and we did our own thing, but I guess we could have been more open with one another. In all though I am proud of my father and what he did.
I find now that my son is very much interested in the Second World War. He seemed to have had a closer relationship with my father and I know they spoke about it often. My son and I have a real interest in history. I learned recently from one of my son’s friends that my son had presented a very interesting presentation on WWII in his history class. Apparently he had entertained the class with stories he had got from talking to my father. I never really sat down with my son and spoke to him about it. It’s funny that my son and I don’t really talk either. I guess I am more like my father than I think I am.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

If I think back, I would like to have had a bit more direction in the way I was going. That is one thing I would have liked. It would have been helpful. I was always a wild bugger through school. I hated lessons. I hated all that. Dad never once said anything about it, never once. For example, I would have loved to go to university, but I didn’t. It’s my fault not his. I know he would have paid for it if I had wanted it. If I wanted to do it, I could have done it.

He was a very laid back guy. It’s amazing. I’d love to be able to talk to him now that you’ve brought all these memories back. It amazes me that he could have gone through all that bloody war and come back and be the same - to me - my mother said he wasn’t but to me he was the same. I didn’t know him before he went away of course. He never really wanted to get deep into anything. He would always back away from things like arguments or things like that.
He just wasn’t the type of guy who was going to push you to do anything. He was never the sort of guy to direct you in anything. My mother was the one who looked after us.

Question 2:

I think it would have. It probably would have made a difference. Now mind you, my dad wasn’t there in the main time when they say kids get their direction, but I actually had the relationship I wanted with my father. I really did. Most of my stuff came from my mother. Some of it was strange. Some of it affected me. Even when we came over here to Canada, she was the main force in the family. She gave me most of my direction. Had my father insisted upon me doing things – he never did.

Analysis: John

John’s narrative speaks of uncertainty, and at times confusion about his relationship with his father. John, in this interview, said many times “I don’t know” and was at times frustrated with what he didn’t know about his father. At times he would speak with some surprise that his father had seen so much combat that he hadn’t been killed, let alone seriously wounded. It was hard to imagine his father actually involved in combat, but said “He would have done his duty.” Overall though, this part of his father’s life appeared quite mysterious to John. He knew enough about his father to know generally where he had been and what he had done, but none of the specifics. This point is exemplified in his conversation with Cec Merritt, VC, who, John stated, became angry with John for
not knowing. According to John it still caused him some concern that he didn’t know much about his father.

It is as if there was a six-year gap of time that no one seems to know about. In part, John seemed to struggle with this almost blaming himself for not knowing. There is a sense that John’s father was a large part of his life, but there is more of a sense that whatever his father did was more of the behind the scenes type parenting. When John spoke about parenting and his life in the family, he commented more about his mother than his father. In some sense, John may have wanted to protect his father and protect his relationship with his father. Often John would allude to their relationship as being a “fait accompli” or there is nothing I can do about it. “I got on with my life and he got on with his.” Perhaps this speaks of the emotional distance between the two and how both John and his father came to terms with it.

Other several themes that emerge from this narrative include John’s father not talking about the war or if he did it was in humorous or anecdotal terms. Interestingly, John’s father of all the participants’ fathers was the one that served the longest, on the most fronts and saw the most combat. Another theme indicates that the parenting was left to his mother and how his father was quite fine with that arrangement. Any direction he received often would be coming from his mother. With this comes a sense of sadness that there was no direction or invitation to discuss important life events with his father. As John stated his father was a “hands-off” father.
John said that he felt that his father had not changed because of his years in combat. His father was wounded twice and came home with severe illnesses. Yet a few sentences later, John stated that his mother noticed his father had changed. As mentioned above, it may be that John wants to protect his relationship with his father.

Other themes speak of pride and admiration for what his father did in the war and about what John calls being a history buff. There is a theme of regret about not speaking with his father about his war experiences and finally, a realization that through this interview, his relationship with his father is similar to the one he has with his son.

Rob's (age 54) Narrative

I am the oldest of four in my family. There is my brother, two younger sisters and myself. I was born during the Second World War and my father stayed with the Navy until he retired. I grew up with the Navy being a big part of my life. The Navy was really one big, close-knit family. During the war, we lived in Esquimalt and I remember hanging around the dockyard and going aboard the ship he served on. It was quite exciting and I was very proud of my dad. As a sailor, my father did very well. He started at the lowest rank and by the time he retired, he was a high-ranking officer. That is quite an accomplishment and it speaks loudly about who my father is. My father served in both the major theatre of war. He landed with the troops during D-Day piloting one of the landing crafts, and he was onboard the ship that liberated the Canadian and Allied prisoners of war from Hong Kong.
Living with my father was like living with John Wayne. He was pretty strict and had this incredible belief in democracy and in his country. He was very patriotic, proud, determined and confident. He always gave off the aura of "Here is guy who can handle anything." He walked it and he talked it. I very much admired him and as a child, I wanted to be like him. To me, my father was a hero. Not in the hero medal sense, but a hero in the sense that he was the kind of man you could count on, depend on. He cared how others perceived him and he cared about his family. I still admire him to this day for what he was.

My father rarely spoke about his war experiences. I remember asking him in my early teens but he was quite reticent. Mostly I got my information from overhearing conversations he had with his navy buddies. For example, after the war he was transferred to England for a year when I was about twelve. He was there with four other officers who had all been in England with my dad during the war. I recall several stories that I had heard as we visited many of the places around England where they had been. I felt very proud to be a part of these conversations, to have the chance to ask questions, and to see that part of my father's life. In some ways it was like seeing my father's life through a window. I recall too, that most all the stories were humorous ones. They avoided the stuff that was not pleasant.

All was well in our relationship until I hit teens, fourteen I think. My father was very structured, very rigid and very disciplined. With the structure, rigidity and discipline, I totally rebelled to the point where there was open hostility between us. I left home at 18 and didn't really have any meaningful contact with him until I was in my twenties, married and a family of my own. I still wanted to emulate my dad and I wanted
his recognition and acceptance, so I joined the Navy. The funny thing is, now that I think back to those times, I realize that I had no identity.

No sooner had I started cadet training, I was sent back east for a course. I realized that I had to live under my father's shadow. I was my father's son so I was expected to perform to that level. I did but wherever I went, I was still my father's son. I didn't like it. I remember being befriended by a high-ranking officer when I was in training. It was quite a perk and I had three or four of those, but I didn't like being treated differently. On the other side of the coin were instructors that had had my father as their officer and some took it out on me. One of my instructors was actually disciplined by my father and he thought that now he could get his revenge. In the end, I realized that I could not be me, so I abandoned the Navy and joined the Air Force.

I stayed with the military because I not only wanted to emulate my father but I also wanted to prove something to him. I wanted to prove that I could stand on my own feet and that I could be someone. To show him I could survive and exist in the same arena as he had. Also, I wanted space between us. Had I stayed in the Navy, there would have been a good possibility that I would have been sent to the West Coast. The Air Force gave me the opportunity to stay in the East. Then one day, I started to take a long hard look at myself, what I had done, and why I was doing it. I realized that I had stayed with the military because I was angry with my father and wanted to prove something to him. I remember saying to myself, "You're screwing up your life because you're angry. You're trying to prove something to somebody else." I left the Air Force shortly thereafter, married and started a family. That decision led me back to the West Coast where I started to rebuild my relationship with my father.
When I think back about my father's war experience the first thing that stands out for me is his loss of youth. He went from being a kid to being a man overnight. He didn’t have the time to go through what my generation and I went through. They didn’t get the opportunities and the luxury of exploring open doors. They didn’t have the opportunities to make decisions about what they might want to do. When he joined the Navy during the war he had not made the decision to make a career out of the Navy. He didn’t make that decision until after the war.

I know now that my father saw many horrible things. I found out that on his approach to the beaches during D-Day the bottom of his landing craft was torn out. They had to scramble to shore where they were pinned down by enemy machine gun fire for some time. He lost many of the men that were in his landing craft that day. The worst stories come from his liberating of Hong Kong. The Japanese had done horrible things to the POWs.

I worked in road construction one summer in the interior of B.C. One night, where I stayed I got talking to one of the senior engineering construction crew. I can’t remember how we got on to the subject but I had told him that my father’s ship had carried off the Hong Kong POWs. He told me that he had been one of those POWs. He told me about all the medical and health problems he had because of his time as a prisoner. I understood for the first time my father’s anger.

I remember wanting to ask my father about what he did but I was afraid that he might have become like my uncle. My uncle served in a special unit that went behind enemy lines and disrupted their communication. They always went in pairs. Several times my uncle would return alone, his partner having been killed on the mission. The
last time he went out they found his partner hanging from a telephone line. He survived but his partner didn’t. My uncle had a nervous breakdown and was sent home. I often remember seeing him just staring into space in a catatonic state. I was afraid that if pushed about my father’s war experiences that he too would be like my uncle. I remember that I didn’t want to cause my dad any more pain than I knew he already had. If he wanted to tell me, he would tell me on his own terms.

Both D-Day and Hong Kong made a huge impact on his life. I think what he learned was to see things in terms of black and white. He never had time for trivia and that you don’t fool around with the crap. When you are in action, you don’t think about what you’re going to do or not do, you just do it. You don’t have time to sit and ponder. Of course this thinking caused my father and I great hardship in my teenage years.

Dad never showed emotion either. I think some people probably thought he was devoid of it. The only time I saw any emotion was when I saw mom and he interact. My dad never showed any emotion to me, he kept me at arms length. So I used to think well how come I don’t measure up? Like what do I have to do to prove to this guy that I’m O.K.? I think the war had a lot to do with this. I think that he feels that if he were to really get into what he felt and really thought about what he saw, he would not be able to cope with it.

Showing emotion is something that I have struggled with in my life also. On one hand what I have learned from my father has served me well in terms of doing things because you commit to them and doing things without knowing there is some kind of reward at the end of it. On the other hand showing emotion has been a problem for me in my personal relationships, especially in my marriage. With my children, I have had to
make a conscious effort to be close to them despite my old habits of being reticent from time to time.

Had my father not been in the war, I know our relationship would have been different. I am not sure how but it would be. My younger brother has had great difficulty with my father. My brother never got over trying to prove himself to my dad. My brother has always tried to live up to what he thought my dad wanted him to be. He always felt that he never measured up. Only now in his late 50's is he getting to the point where he is willing to talk about it.

I hope at some point, although I know it may never happen, I would like to hear my father say that he loves me, even at my age. I don’t think he will. He just can’t do it. He does not like to show any visible sign of emotion. He just doesn’t like to.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

I think if I went back and looked at it from that point of view, it would be having spent more time with him, and having a closer relationship and more open communication with him. That’s what I would have imagined it. It would have been nice.

Question 2:

I might not have been as driven to prove something. I might not have been as closed or as guarded in relationships. I would have been more open and may have been more spontaneous. Relationships may have been a lot easier to develop and make. Certainly friendships would have come easier. Life would have been perhaps a little less serious and a little more fun.
Had I had a closer relationship with my father, I may have stayed at home longer and I probably would have attended university. My career choices may have been different. Had the relationship been different, I may have pursued a career in Education.

Analysis: Rob

Rob’s narrative is one of proving his worth to his father while at the same time trying to find his own voice. It speaks too, of a struggle that turned to anger at the realization that it would not happen. Rob tells of his struggle to find his identity and how it didn’t happen until well into his twenties. He talks about when he was a child how much he admired his father, “I wanted to be like him.” However, as he entered his teens his father’s structure, rigidity and discipline caused a major fault in their relationship, “I totally rebelled to the point where there was open hostility between us.” Rob commented on how he tried so hard to prove his worth saying, “The funny thing is, now that I think back to those times, I realize that I had no identify.” Hero worship and wanting recognition from our fathers is a powerful motivator. Rob, until he was into his twenties, had difficulty letting that go. He states that his father’s war experience ended his youth and the realization of how quick life can end impacted upon his father. “I think what he learned [from his combat experiences] was to see things in black and white.” Rob went on to say about his father,

“When you are in action, you don’t think about what you’re going to do, you just do it. You don’t have time to sit and ponder. Of course this thinking caused my father and I great hardship in my teenage years.”
Because of this war experience his father became emotionally shut down. "My dad never showed any emotion to me, he kept me at arms length. So I used to think, 'How come I don’t measure up?’

This was an emotional point for Rob as he relayed that even today he would like to hear his father say that he loves him. On the other hand, Rob spoke very proudly of his father, not only of what he did in the war but also about his father’s accomplishments after the war. Other themes include his father’s emotional distance and lack of direction/support in Rob’s early years, and Rob’s attempt to be noticed by his father was to become like his father.

Other important themes that emerged were what one may call the generation gap. The generation gap for Rob started at fourteen and created a large wall between father and son that went on well into Rob’s twenties. Rob credits his father’s combat experience and loss of youth for making this wall so strong. Another was his father’s reluctance to say anything, unless in humour, about what he did in the war. Here there is a sense of Rob protecting his father from what Rob feels may do him more harm should he pursue speaking to his father about the war.

Finally, and similar to John, is Rob’s awareness that his relationship with his father is very similar to his relationship with his daughters. He stated, “I have to make a conscious effort to be close to them.”
Peter's (age 50) Narrative

I grew up in a family of six. I was the third child. I have an older sister and above her is my brother, the first-born. The three of us are close in age with about a year between us. There is a gap between the first three and the second three. For the most part, I grew up in one of the small suburbs of Vancouver. My father was an architect so we lived a reasonably good life. During the summers we would go to our cottage located out in the Fraser Valley. Dad would come up on the weekends then go back to work for the week. It was pretty average.

The first thing I remember about my father being in the war was seeing his old uniform kicking around the house. He had his leather flying jacket and other boxes of stuff that we used to rummage around in and play with. He also had a scrapbook filled with cartoons about the war and he kept a diary about it. He was a very good artist. There were also a few pictures around the house too. I remember we would ask if that was him in the pictures and all he would say was, “Yup, that’s me.” We would ask him if he flew Spitfires and he would say, “Yup.” “Did you shoot down any planes, dad?” “Some, yeah.” That was it. He never would say any more. He didn’t appear to get upset about the questions, but we knew, because of his short answers, not to push the issue further. Dad would always go the Remembrance Day parades and then go the Legion and I can always remember his marching down the street during the parade and saying, “Hey, there’s dad!”

The Legion was a big part of his life. He received a lot of work from them after the war, and he spent a lot of time socializing there too. That was one good thing he got from being a veteran, all the architectural contracts to build new Legions. I remember him
getting it from mom quite often because he had come home late after going to the Legion after work. The Legion he went to was just down the street so it was very easy for him to stop in two or three times a week on his way home. I think that the Legion was important to him because of being in the war. The Legion was a big part of his life, but he kept the Legion part of his life away from us. I think it allowed him to relive his twenties during the war, the boys, the gang and the camaraderie.

Dad was an only child and he came from pretty strict parents. He was in university when he enlisted in the RCAF and, as a Spitfire pilot and an officer, I think he really came into his own. The war became quite a social thing. If you look at his scrapbook and read his cartoons, they’re just hilarious. They’d come back after a mission and it was right to the pubs. Dad was a very good piano player, so he’d sit down at the piano and never have to buy a drink. I get a sense he was very popular that way. I think the Legion was an extension of that. He could go to the Legion and sort of relive that part of his life. Then as dad got older he started to attend some of the Air Force reunions and pictures and books about the war started showing up around the house.

Dad never spoke about the emotional side of war, like how it might have been for him to engage in air-to-air combat or to strafe the ground. There was never any mention of it not only to me but also to the others. I know he would have had to do some of that stuff. He was there before D-Day and was there until the end of the war. I can see him enjoying it sort of like playing a video game. It would be fine until an enemy fighter showed up then he would be out of there. I do remember him speaking to friends who also had been in the war and I would listen at a distance. I thought some of those stories were pretty interesting, but he would never say anything to us. I don’t know if he was
ashamed or just didn’t want to talk about it. I suppose I never really asked about why he
didn’t want to talk about it. I remember seeing a lot of movies about the war and it didn’t
occur to me to think, “That’s my dad flying by there and dropping a bomb.” Yet, in a
way, it is difficult to actually see him doing some of the things that he would have had to
do like strafing ground troops or convoys. It doesn’t really fit his character.

I am not really sure that the war had any impact on his parenting. Again, I think
that being an only child may have influenced him more. My dad was always the centre of
attention and as a father it was more of what he wanted to do. He was self-centered. Most
of the parenting fell onto my mom’s shoulders. Dad just wasn’t around and bringing up
six children and running a small business, he just distanced himself from us. I think
joining the RCAF did him some good. I think he was spoiled as an only child, so the
services may have taught him discipline and to “shape up.” It is likely that the air force
would have appealed to that spoiled side of him. The air force was seen as more of an elite
force and that fit with his personality and I can’t imagine him in the Army doing hand-
to-hand combat and getting dirty.

My father and I had a pretty rocky relationship and part of it was based on his
drinking. Alcohol got in the way of our relationship. We didn’t see eye to eye either, and I
think it may have something to do with how similar we were. He was very stubborn, as
am I, so we locked horns quite a bit. Despite our similarities dad was just hard to get
along with. He wasn’t a good listener. It was my way is the right way, whether you were
right or wrong. You couldn’t debate with him. He wasn’t open to hearing any other
point-of-view. He didn’t like my attitude so I was out of the house by eighteen. I had
another bone to pick with him too. He sent my older brother and sister to university, but
he wouldn’t send me. It hurt a bit that way. I was left to fend for myself even though I received a high school scholarship. I had to use it so I went to a local college for a year.

Dad never gave me any direction. I remember I was about 13 or 14 and he enrolled me in Air Cadets. It was very interesting and I enjoyed it. Over time though, because dad would have to drive me, I stopped attending because dad wouldn’t drive me. He often told me to walk even though it was several miles away. If he did drive me, he would get me there late. Eventually, they told me that if I couldn’t be there regularly or be there on time to go home. Dad set me up. He got me into something I had no control over. Dad had also wanted me to go to Royal Roads. I think that was more to get me out of the house. He never pursued the idea of going to military college with me and had he I would have gone. I did the Cubs and Scouts thing, but that was because the church was just down the street and we didn’t need to rely on him to get us there.

Religion was another big part of our lives. We all had to go to church. We didn’t have a choice. We eventually had big fights over going because I didn’t want to go. He would yell. “You’ve got to go to church!” It’s interesting now that none of us except for my mother goes to church.

Dad was a real yeller and generally wanted things his way. As I look back, we all sort of rebelled against him in our own ways. My older brother worked for dad as an architect until he couldn’t take my dad’s control any more. So, my older brother moved provinces to get away from him. My older sister really barked back at dad. The other three also didn’t take too much of dad’s self-centredness. The big difference between the first three kids and the last three was that dad was getting older and running out of steam. It slowed him down but it didn’t stop him. Yelling was something that I took into my
family when I got married until I realized what it was doing to my children and I stopped. I learned from him what I didn’t want to do.

The other side of dad was that he had a great sense of humour. In a group of people he would be the one telling the jokes or playing the piano or whatever. He had a real talent for being the centre of attention. He was very popular in his peer group. He would often too, want to sit down and have a few beers when I was older and brought friends over. Even when he was in his seventies he would still want to party with us. We would have to tell him to quit drinking. I recall conversations going like, “Dad, if you have another beer, you’ll fall over.” “I can drink with you guys!” “No, you can’t!” I think that he always wanted to stay young and this was a way of doing it. It bugged my mom a bit, and if he was out with a lot of people and he wasn’t clowning around telling jokes and carrying on, there was something wrong with him.

About five years before he died, he really started to mellow and he tried to reconnect. I think he really enjoyed being a grandparent and really wanted to be around his grandchildren. He was much easier to approach and he wanted the interaction with us. He apologized for not having been involved and doing more things with me and said that if he had to parent all over again he would. Throughout our lives though, it was mom who held it all together. I really have her to thank for providing the emotional support for us and for being there when we needed something.

As I look back, I am surprised that he didn’t talk about the war more. Again, looking at his scrapbook it would seem that he had a great time. He never had to buy a beer, he was singing and playing the piano and just loving it. I think he actually enjoyed it. It would seem he had a good thing going being a Flight Lieutenant and all that went
with being an officer, and the pubs and the parties. I think that his social habits were one thing he learned from being in the war. He tried to carry that on to the Legions after the war, but it didn’t work with bringing kids up. I am not sure having a family was something he really wanted. So, I wonder why he quit after the war, but I think his parents put pressure on him to go back and finish university. I remember the story of his father taking his service revolver that dad brought back home and throwing it off the Lion’s Gate Bridge. I was never sure why that happened. Perhaps it speaks about his relationship with his father. However, dad never flew again after he was discharged. I think he could have if he wanted to and I am surprised that he didn’t. I think the government would have paid for it. So if he had that much fun during the war, why didn’t it spill over into his family life? It didn’t and I wonder why. I do think though, had he not been in the war he would have not become an alcoholic. His mother would have never let him drink.

Dad never spoke about the combat he was engaged in and how he felt about it. Of course, as I got older and our relationship became strained, I didn’t broach that with him either. I could have when he was dying and he would have been open to discussing it, but I didn’t. Had I asked when I was younger I suspect his response would have been, “Why do you want to know,” “It’s none of your bloody business,” or “I don’t have to tell you.” Which again is interesting because of his involvement with the Legion and Remembrance Day. He even has the RCAF crest on his head stone. What I would like to do now though, is get a hold of his logs and scrapbook and really read them. I think it would be fascinating to do.
Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

*What would I like to have had?* Doing things that were more of a duration with him rather than a half hour here or a half hour there. It would have been nice to have a bit more support rather than dropping me off at Scouts or soccer to be under someone else’s care. There was no real guidance or support about which way to go.

Question 2:

*Well, he didn’t have much to say about which way to go especially between the years of 15 to 21.* It was all sort of on my own. Even as far as where I used my athletic scholarships he didn’t really care. I think I would have done well joining the services because it did intrigue me, but he didn’t approach it. After the scholarships ran out, I was on my own. It’s like he said, “You want to go, you pay for it.” There was no leadership or pushing. But I am happy with what I followed.

*As far as relationships are concerned,* that probably came more from my mom. I didn’t like the way dad viewed women. The sort of old view of, “they have a purpose and that’s that.” So I took the opposite view. He didn’t have any input into my relationships. He didn’t have a thing to do with that at all.

Analysis: Peter

Peter’s narrative suggests elements of distance, anger and disappointment with his father evidenced in phrases such as “he just distanced himself from us,” “Dad just wasn’t around,” and “My father and I had a pretty rocky relationship.” Anger is exemplified by, “we locked horns quite a bit,” “Dad was just hard to get
along with," and "he didn’t like my attitude so I left at eighteen.” Disappointment comes out of not giving Peter any direction as he speaks about the possibility of attending a military college and not providing direction about Peter’s use of his athletic scholarship. As Peter stated, "he sent my brother and sister to university, but he wouldn’t send me.”

Other themes that emerged from Peter’s narrative include his father’s unwillingness to talk about what he did in the war unless it involved humour. Peter makes a very powerful statement, "If he had so much fun during the war, why didn’t it spill over to his family life? I don’t know and I wonder why” There is also a hint of Peter trying to get a mental picture of his father actually involved in combat either with another plane or strafing enemy ground troops. It’s as if his father fits well into the piano playing, good time, drinking beer and suave pilot, but not the pilot trying to kill the enemy. Alcohol, the other important theme, played a big role in his relationship with his father. “Had he not been in the war, he would have not become an alcoholic.”

Finally, there is regret that Peter did not ever sit down with his father and talk about the war, “I could have broached the subject when he was dying, but I didn’t.” There seems to be a lot of confusion about this. Peter suggests that the war was perhaps a significant social event for his father and wonders why his father would be reticent to want to speak about it. Yet there is his father’s vehement and almost hostile reluctance to speak about it echoed in, “Why do want to know,” It’s none of your bloody business,” or “I don’t have to tell you.”
The paradox of Peter's narrative is that to some extent, Peter wanted to be like his dad and join the military. He also mentioned an interest in flying. None of these happened. Yet his father seemed to be very connected to his past life in the military, attending Remembrance Day parades, belong to and frequenting the Legion, and having the RCAF emblem etched on his tombstone, not to mention the work that was given to him after the war by the Legion. In all, it would appear that the war had a large impact on his father. A large impact that he choose not to share with his son.

Corky's (age 48) Narrative

I was born in 1952 and I am the oldest child of two. There was never a time that I can recall that I didn't know my father had been in the war. He had his leg amputated just below the knee so it was pretty obvious to me as a kid growing up. I remember asking him about how it happened. He would usually say that he was in a jeep that drove over a land mine and that's how he lost his leg. It wasn't until I was much older that I found out how it really happened. My dad never spoke about what he did in the war. I do know now that he was in the Royal Canadian Engineers in Italy and was in the front line. I did ask him as I got older and even when he was dying I asked, but he always said that he didn't wish to speak about it. I always respected his wishes and never pushed him. What I know about my dad and what he did, I have had to piece together myself.

I would say that I had a pretty typical childhood. My dad was the disciplinarian and of course that caused a lot of problems for me as a teenager. My father was not an affectionate man. He was rather standoffish. A handshake was about all I ever got. Still he
was very supportive of me. He had a very subtle way of motivating me and always encouraged me to keep my grades up in high school. My father was a very hard worker. He came back after the war and started out as an office boy and by the time he retired, he had a staff of over 75 that he supervised as an administrative supervisor. My father worked for the BC Forest Service and through his own determination rose to that height that he did. His drive, stubbornness, and self-motivation are clearly evident after his discharge from the Army in 1945. Despite his handicap he continued to snow ski, took many different courses at B.C.I.T. and U.B.C., and became the National President on the War Amps of Canada in the 1980’s. He even coached my soccer team.

Dad was always there for me even though I kind of hated him for a while. I don’t think he had a clear idea about how to be a father so he played sort of a father role rather than being himself. He was quite different in social circles than when he was at home. He was quite outgoing and social. As I grew older, I started to see a different man. I do remember his spending a lot of time with my sister and me. It seemed different than what other fathers did with their kids at that time.

The one thing that sticks out for me when I remember my father was the seemingly constant pain he was in. My mother would often say to us not to bother your dad because he is not feeling well. I am not sure whether that was the truth or my mother was trying to control us. Mom was very different. She was emotionally distant and dad would often comment saying, “Mom loves you but she has a hard time expressing it.” I think mom and dad had a pretty distant relationship too. I don’t remember seeing any displays of affection between them. I think mom would use dad’s pain as a way of getting
us to stay away from him not that he wanted us to, but because mom wanted us to. I think in some ways dad was ineffectual in dealing with mom.

I did the regular things boys did growing up. I went through cubs and scouts then I joined Air Cadets and stayed with the cadets until I was 17. After high school I went to U.B.C. to study science. I didn’t do very well in first year math so I looked around at other faculties. Finally, I settled on Forestry. I’m not sure it was because my dad was in forestry, but it worked out that with what I had at the time and the Faculty of Forestry was building its numbers that I pursued that career. Once I graduated and started on my career, I would often call my father for his advice or would call to consult with him. He was much better in his dealing with people than I was. I have remained close with my father. He was an important part of my life when I started my own family. He came from a close-knit family and I think that it was important for him.

Unfortunately he died too young. He was only 68. I think it would have been very beneficial for my son to have more time with him. I remember how important it was for me to know my grandfather.

Dad came for a large family. He was the second youngest of 12. He was very close to his older brother. I think they were closer friends than they were brothers. My father had joined Army cadets (Vancouver Seaforth Highlanders) before the war started. Then at the start of the war he enlisted. He was 18. Shortly thereafter he was sent to England and then in the fall on 1943 he was sent to Italy. In December of 1944, dad was building a bridge when they came under heavy German machine gun fire. He was hit in the leg a few times then rolled into a ditch for cover. In their retreat however, the Germans had thrown small schu mines in the ditches so when dad rolled into the ditch his leg hit a
mine and the mine mangled his leg and they had to amputate. The wounds were bad but
dad also lost the brother he was very close to. He also had joined the Army. His brother
was sent to France and was killed in action. Dad also lost another brother in the Queen
Charlottes in a logging accident logging Spruce to make airplanes during the latter part
of the war. I think it was very hard for dad to come home to those losses. So here is a guy
who leaves at 18 with his family and himself physically intact and returns some 5 years
later without a leg and to the loss of 2 brothers, that has to be pretty hard to take.

Had dad not been in the war, I think he would have not married my mother. I feel
that his self-esteem took quite a hit when he lost his leg. He was a very good looking man
and very athletic before the war. I think he may have had his pick of women had he come
back in one piece so I think his thinking was who would want to marry a one-legged
man? I think he sort of settled on my mom. Dad did his best but I don't think he was
happy. Had he been happier, he would have lived longer. With all dad went through, I
think he was emotionally whacked. He hid his emotions all his life. The war redirected his
life certainly, but I am not sure how, but the person he was I think remained the same.

Many people never knew he had an artificial leg. I remember him climbing trees.
He would even try to ski and would often have to be carried down the mountain because
he broke his artificial leg. I think dad tried to over compensate. As I think back to some of
the conversations I heard about some of the men who were in the war but never fought,
talk about the good times and everything else, and then my father who was in terrible
pain who never talked about the good times or the bad, it was quite a difference. In all I
think he tried to put the war and the losses of his brothers behind him and get on with his
life. What else could he do? I was told that he had made a pact with God that if he
survived his wounds, he would help other war amps. He did. Despite his injuries he tried as best as possible to live a normal life.

When dad died I was very emotionally upset. As I mentioned he died too soon. We had planned an Alaska cruise. It was about that time that I started to get interested in what he did in the Second World War. I have tried to retrace where he was and what he did. I have spoken to a few of his Army buddies. I also got involved in doing war enactments where many of us have old uniforms, guns and vehicles and such and put on displays. It is a way, I suppose, of keeping my father alive. I see my father as being special. I am proud of him and what he did. I think that he was able to cope with what happened to him. I know he carried the emotional scars, but he never let it show.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

I think it would have been the warm, loving relationship that I had as an adult with him. As a child I would have liked him to be more understanding and sympathetic. Things like giving me a hug. I understand why now. Firstly, it was the emotional trauma that he'd gone through and the second reason I call the “Leave it to Beaver” syndrome. Everyone tried to raise their sons like the Cleavers. But his emotional trauma got in his way.

Question 2:

I wouldn't have been so scared of girls. I was always very, very shy of girls and other people. I don't think it had so much to do with parenting, as it was the type of person I was. But had dad been more emotionally and physically involved with me it may
have helped me get over it. I think had he been more involved in my life my relationships with females would have been better. From a career stand point; I don’t think it would have been that different. Generally here, he was supportive.

Analysis: Corky

This narrative presents two different pictures. The first is one on a typical family modelled after the Cleavers. He speaks about his father’s involvement with him and the subtle encouragement that his father gave, how he coached soccer and how successful he was both in his job and as a member of the War Amp’s Society. Corky also comments on how outgoing his father was in social situations and how well others liked him. The second picture, Corky talks about his father’s emotional and ever present physical pain from his wounds and subsequent loss of this leg just below the knee. Corky also tells of how his mother was a very strong force in the family and how the marriage appeared to be distant. Interestingly, he comments that had his father not been wounded, he may not have married his mother. Finally, Corky said that his father died too soon because of his father’s unhappiness.

It would seem that in some way, Corky is trying to protect his father. Clearly, his father did very well after the war. This speaks well of his father’s ability to put the war behind him and move on with this life. Yet, if as Corky suggests, his father “settled” on a marriage that was emotionally distant, hid his emotions, never ever spoke about the war either in a good or bad way and was not happy. This might suggest that it was difficult for Corky to say anything
that tarnished his father's memory. Moreover, Corky originally states that he had a close relationship with his father, however, towards the end of the interview and in the follow-up questions, he states that he would have liked to have had a closer emotional relationship with his father and the consequences of that may have helped him in developing his own relationship especially with females.

There are several themes that emerge from this narrative that include emotional distance between father and son, having a strong mother, dad never speaking about the war, dad’s personality change because of the war (in this case both emotionally and physically), Corky’s curiosity about what his father did in the war and his interest in the history of war, how his father was different socially than how he was at home, and finally Corky’s pride in what his father did. There is also the theme of son following the father’s career path. Corky, although not in a parallel career, chose a similar career in Forestry. Furthermore, Corky’s involvement in putting on public enactments of World War II is a way, according to Corky, “To keep my father’s memory alive.” It is interesting, like many other participants, that Corky chose that part of his father’s life in which to be involved. It is as if we want to know that side of our fathers that was never revealed.

Lesley’s (age 60) Narrative

I was about 8 or 9 months old when my father went overseas and I was five, five and a half when he returned home. Up until he returned, my mom, her sisters, and my grandfather raised me during the time my father was gone. My grandfather was also in
the military but he was too old to go overseas. He was an important male role model in my life during that time. I did not know my father when he returned. All I knew was the picture of him. Even after he returned I would still kiss his picture before I went to bed. Of course I was very protective of my mother and I remember throwing pieces of wood at my dad or spraying him with the hose when he got close to my mother. It wasn't until my sister was born that I felt a sense of connectedness with the family. My sister became something that I could take care of and as a result we became very close and still are today. My brother was born a few years after my sister. My brother became the son my father never had.

My brother, and in some ways my sister too, became the focal point of the family in terms of my father. My father coached hockey and my brother was a very good hockey player. He could have had a professional career, but never followed it through. The one attempt my father made to involve me in sports was a disaster. One Christmas he gave me a pair of soccer shoes and shin guards. He had played soccer as a child and where we lived soccer was the sport. I was not interested in soccer so that ended that part of the relationship. Looking back on the relationship he had with my brother and sister, I feel somewhat cheated.

The only thing dad and I did was to go hunting and fishing together. I am very thankful for that time as it taught me a great appreciation for the outdoors. It taught me the values of respecting wildlife and, while hunting and fishing are sports, you only take what you need. Dad was not a handy man at all. He was more of a cerebral type of person so he could not teach me the skill of carpentry or what have you. There was little in the way of spending time together where he would teach me things.
Dad stayed with the Army for a while after he returned home. It wasn’t until the late forties that he took a job with the Civil Service. We were transferred to Ottawa and then to Nova Scotia where we lived on a munitions storage compound. Dad got quite sick there. He had been wounded in the war. His tank took a direct hit from a German tank and he suffered shrapnel wounds in his neck and lungs. We were transferred back to Ottawa.

By the time we were transferred back to Ottawa, I was in my late teens. I had decided after attending college to do a business degree to start ROTC and join the military. My father was very proud that I was kind of following his tradition. Then it dawned on me, “Why am I doing this”? Of course I never told him, but I realized whom am I living my life for? Was I fulfilling his ambitions or was I going to follow my own career path and make my own decisions? I wanted a job that used my brains and I wanted a paramilitary job. I still wanted my father’s recognition and acceptance, but I did not want to follow in his footsteps. If I had followed a military career, I think I would always be wondering and asking what would my father do in this situation. I would never be able to be myself. So I decided to join a police force. I admit that there was an influence and I was putting on a uniform so that he would look up to me and be proud of me, but I was making my own decisions. He was very proud of me and followed my career closely. It has only been since I have retired that he and I have really got to know one another. Now I think the roles have reversed somewhat where I am the parent and he is the child.

The relationship my father and I had was one of aloofness. If I didn’t approach him, he would not approach me. My father was a strict disciplinarian and very formal on
manners such as “only speak when you are spoken to, call everyone sir or madam.” Dad was intolerant of sloppiness, carelessness and laziness. Anything you would find in the military atmosphere, I was brought up under. He could be quite cutting at times and often didn’t listen. I went the other way. So we found it best to avoid one another and stay out of each other’s way. He was also very closed about his war experiences. He never spoke about how he felt or how it affected him. I know also, that this topic was somewhat off limits. If he wanted me to know, he would tell me. Despite this, I lived under my father’s shadow for many years. I would always default to him. I would phone him and ask his opinion or get his advice. He never told me to figure it out for myself. I finally took a transfer away from him and it wasn’t until I got that distance that I got out from underneath. The aloofness was always still there because I would always be seeking his approval. We didn’t broach the real topics. We both knew better than to go there.

I think to some extent I carried this aloofness into my personal relationships too. It wasn’t until I started college that I was able to reach out to others. This happened because I joined a political party and became quite involved so I became a team player. Another thing I learned from my father was a very strong work ethic, a very military work ethic. I carried this into my job where my job came before my family. Unfortunately, the family fell apart.

I have spent a lot of time researching my father’s background. A few years ago the two of us went to England and did a family research. My father came from a very broken home. Stepparents raised him during the depression. The war gave him a chance to prove himself, to make something of himself. It gave him the opportunity to get out of a very bad situation. He survived, did well and left the Army as a junior officer. His time at war
was not easy though. When he left Canada for England his troop ship was torpedoed. Only thirty some odd out of 300 were saved. Then in France he saw some very nasty things. He lost one of his tank crew when his tank was hit. Had he not been Canadian, the German tank commander would have likely finished them off. My father was shell shocked and ill when he came home. Actually, he had to spend several months in a hospital because of his wounds before he arrived home. For years I remember him sleeping with a loaded gun under his pillow and I remember finding a live grenade under the front stairs. He had a terrifying time trying to relate civilian life in those first few years. He had a difficult time and it took its toll on our relationship. I think this was a big part of the aloofness between us. I think he came back with the belief that life is precious and so fragile. I feel that this may have impacted on the way he parented me. Had he not gone to war, I think I would have had the same kind of relationship I perceived my sister and brother had. I don’t think he would have been as cold and aloof. I think he would have been open to showing more affection towards me and initiated things with me.

Through all this though, my father is a survivor. Despite the number of heart attacks he has had, he continues to fight. I think that’s what’s kept him going. I remember him saying, “I have seen death so many times and they’re not going to get me.” He also said to me that, “When I die, I will die with my boots on.” I think he still fights those battles today. The military is still a big part of his life, in fact all his life. His whole life is surrounded by directing people, arguments with people, fighting battles with people, fighting causes with people. He is very involved with the Legion and will continue to do so. That’s his thing.
I am proud of my father. He is not a hero in the hero sense. He did his job the best way he knew how. He is a kind man and he has had a big influence on me. I remember him coming to my defence when I was bullied in school. He would teach me how to defend myself. Looking back I can really appreciate the toughness I grew up with. He gave me the values of dedication, loyalty, honesty and openness. I have wanted to know more about my father’s war experiences, but those are still private matters for him and I don’t want to bring up any bad memories for him. I don’t want to see him hurt. I wanted to see Saving Private Ryan because that’s the closest thing that I could have experienced that was perhaps similar to what he went through.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

What would it be like to have the relationship I always wanted? It would be delightful. He’s the type of man that would encourage me, show me things and get me to do things. The flip side of that is that he himself would learn to do things he’d probably never done. Had we shared that we would have been close. It would have been nothing but benefits all the way through.

Question 2:

I think I would have stood on my own two feet a little bit more than I have. Made some of the decisions concerning my career or my life without seeking approval. I think I would have been far more independent. Independent in thought, not action. Not seeking approval and making decisions on my own without asking him, “Is this the right decision?”
Analysis: Lesley

Lesley’s struggle for approval, separation and individuation from his father is a constant, reoccurring theme in this narrative. It speaks of Lesley wanting his father’s attention by attempting or pursuing a similar career path as his father in hopes of being recognized by him. This theme is similar to Rob’s, Peter’s and Corky’s. Curiously, it is not until Lesley made a conscious decision to both join a paramilitary organization, instead of the military, and to put considerable distance between him and his father, did Lesley discover his own sense of self. Lesley is very clear about the effects combat had on his father and how, in turn, it affected their relationship. Lesley’s father, who is one of the few living fathers in this research, is still very reluctant to discuss his experiences with his son and Lesley’s reluctance to pursue the topic. “I have wanted to know more about my father’s war experiences, but those are still private matters for him and I don’t want to bring up any bad memories for him. I don’t want to see him hurt.”

There is a powerful theme of emotional distance and of being cheated out of a relationship with his father in this narrative. His narrative suggests a father who had poor health and PTSD like symptoms that impacted the family. Lesley also speaks about growing up in a very disciplined environment that he credits his father’s military training for. He also states how he rebelled against it and how that caused even more distance between them.
Another important theme, which is also similar to Rob's, is Lesley's dialogue about how he carried the aloofness that existed between him and his father into his own relationships. He credits the break-up of his first marriage, in part, to this aloofness. Relationships that fathers have with their sons appear to be carried over into the son’s relationships.

Other themes that appear in this narrative are pride in what dad did, “I am proud of my father. He is not a hero in the hero sense. He did his job the best he knew how,” a historical interest in his father’s personal background and war experience, “I have spent a lot of time researching my father’s background.” Another theme speaks about his father’s personality change because of his combat experience. Lesley states that if dad hadn’t gone to war, “I don’t think he would have been as cold and aloof.” While not explicit in Lesley’s narrative, there is a sense of trying to understand what his father went through. This exemplified in the statement, “I wanted to see Saving Private Ryan because that’s the closest thing that I could have experienced that would have been similar to his experiences.”

For many, there is a deep need to know and understand what it was like for their fathers to be in combat.

**Big Bear’s (age 48) Narrative**

*I was born in the early 50’s in Berlin, Germany. I am the older of two sons. We immigrated to Canada in 1957, first landing in Montreal then moving to Toronto. My Father moved to a small northern town to find work wiring houses. My parents were*
sickened by what they went through in the war and decided to leave Germany. They had
the opportunity to go to several countries but chose Canada because it did not have a
draft. My parents didn't want us to go through what they went through. I will never
forget them for having the courage of leaving their country and moving to Canada
without knowing the language or without having a job. They did this so my brother and I
would never have to experience war or the military draft.

When we settled in Toronto, my father first worked as a janitor then got
employment as an electrician wiring houses. He was an electrician by trade in Germany.
The town he lived in was a resource town and there was much building going on in the
early sixties. When I was 31, I moved to the west coast where I live today. My father died
in April of 1999 in Ontario. My father was a wonderful craftsman and woodworker. He
made some very beautiful pieces of furniture. He made my daughter a lovely dollhouse
that even had European shingles on the roof. Each shingle was hand crafted. Dad also
enjoyed reading especially philosophy. He was very good at being able to quote German
philosophers such as Goethe and Schiller. He was a very skilled artist and a sensitive
man. My father and mother divorced when I was in my twenties.

During the Second World War my father was an aircraft wireless operator in the
Luftwaffe flying in Junkers 88 and Messerschmitt 110's. He served on two fronts, the
Russian front and the Italian front. My mother lived in Berlin during the war. I first
remember seeing my father's medals. I was attracted to them because of the brightly
coloured ribbon attached to the medal itself. I also remember seeing pictures of him in his
flying suit with all the leather and fur to keep him warm at high altitudes. He used to say
that it got very cold in the plane and that they needed heavy jackets and hats to keep them
warm. He would often tell stories of the war. Mostly they were humorous ones. I remember listening to them as if he were a great storyteller telling of all his wondrous adventures. Sometimes during a story he would stop and say, “That’s enough.” I knew that he could not be prodded into saying more. I recall too, that on the way over on the boat, my father took his medals and threw them overboard.

I remember hearing one incredible story about my father. He was on the Russian front and the Russians were advancing. He had been sick and in a hospital that was very close to the front. The German army was retreating and trying to move the sick and wounded. I understand that many of those that could not be evacuated committed suicide because of what the Russians were doing to the captured Germans. My father, rather than riding with the convoy as he knew the convoy would be an easy target for Russian aircraft, walked back to Germany. He hid during the day in snow caves he made and walked at night. I was never too sure of the total distance but I am very proud of my father for what he did and the courage he showed.

The Italian front was the hardest on my father. He was captured on the ground by British troops and sent to a prisoner of war camp on the Mediterranean. He told me stories of how it was in the camp. He said that they were treated well by the British but that many Germans during their recreational swims simply swam out to sea and drowned. I guess the despair was too great for many men.

My father was in Italy when the Italian government capitulated to the allies. Many of the Italian soldiers and civilians now started to fight the Germans. The allies dropped arms behind the German lines for civilian partisans to use. Italian civilians began shooting at my father. In turn, and in self-defence, German soldiers shot back
killing women, children and old men. I think that really destroyed my father. I think too, just the fact that he had served on two fronts and had seen so much that fighting civilians was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

Dad saw Saving Private Ryan with a friend in Ontario and I asked him if that was what war was like. He said it was much worse. In Private Ryan, you knew who the enemy was. They wore different coloured uniforms and they presented in a military fashion, in other words, you knew who was shooting at you and who you were shooting at. In Italy, you didn’t know who would fire the next shot, a boy, a woman or anyone else. You didn’t know where it would come from. You had to be on constant guard.

I remember my father saying many times that he lost the best years of his life. He lost all faith in God. He often said that if there was a God, he would have never let the Second World War happen. My father was so totally devastated from the war that he became an atheist. I felt my father’s pain and anguish while at the same time feeling empathy and compassion for him. As I look back, his war experience had an enormously deep impact on his life and was responsible for creating an enormous impasse between he and I to the point that we could never really connect, and we never did.

I had a life-threatening illness when I was eight after which I started my spiritual quest. I started asking many philosophical questions about life and it’s meaning more so perhaps than most others my age. I naturally believed that my father could and would answer these questions or at least engage me in conversation about them. To my horror I found that my father would not. I remember sitting on the porch of a summer cottage that belonged to my father’s friend. They were all drinking. I asked a philosophical question and was berated by my father’s friend for asking a question that was deep and not in
keeping with the “party” atmosphere. My father never even came to my assistance or
defence. It shattered me. For a long time I suffered deep grief and realized that my father
was not going to be the one who could teach me.

My father and I would often have fights over God. I would often say how God
gave us the choice to be beasts or angels. My father would have none of it. He would
default to his usual position of what happened in the war. He would often get very angry
with me and cut me off. My belief in God became strong, as I grew older. My father never
went to church. Whenever Jesus Christ was mentioned, dad spoke with great contempt
and hatred. I recall dad saying, “This long-haired hippie running around in sandals, and
it’s ridiculous that he was the Son of God, it’s absolutely ridiculous. This guy was
crazy.” I always hoped that he would modify his views, as I would have loved him to
understand and perhaps even embrace God. I wanted this because I believed that had he
done so he would have found peace. I think he died without an attachment to God.

My mother too, was traumatized by the war. She lived in Berlin during the war
and suffered from the bombing and at the hands of the Russian soldiers who liberated
Berlin. I remember as a small child visiting my relatives on my mother’s side. They were
well off before the war. I remember seeing a huge bomb crater on their property. It was
one of many. I remember too, walking home one day with my mom. We lived in the
French sector. There were allied tanks on the street and I was fascinated by the marks
they left in the pavement. I didn’t know what a tank was. My mother, upon seeing them,
became terrified and panicked, grabbed my hand hard and ran across the street like we
were going to be killed. Although I didn’t know what that machine did, I knew it
terrorized my mother. I feel that because of my mother’s war experiences she too, was
unable to emotionally connect with us. I remember her telling my father, she was the stronger of the two, not to hug me because it was a homosexual act. I pretended that she would show me affection, but now I hold a lot of resentment and anger from the way our family interacted and from the lack of affection shown directly to my brother and I.

As a child growing up in Toronto, my brother and I were subjected to a lot of teasing because we were German. Other kids often made fun of my name and called us Nazis. I didn’t even know what a Nazi was. There were also Jewish kids that went to our school and they would call us names too. My father never even tried to help us or show us how to protect ourselves. It was a very hard time. I carry too, a huge sense of guilt and shame over being German and what the German people did to Jews and others in the death camps. I was very moved when I saw Schindler’s List. It feels like I am carrying a big, big burden.

The war has really left a mark on me. It destroyed my relationship with my father. I still feel a deep, deep grief for him. It was a stupid waste of life. It was a waste, and I feel deep grief that he, as a young man, lost the best years of his life. I know that there were many, many stories that he never told because they were much too painful. His war experience didn’t allow us to become close, but I am angry with him too for not teaching me how to defend myself and stand up for myself when I was in school. So I carry a lot of anger, which probably contributed on my side to the break-up of my marriage. The Second World War has had long-lasting, far-reaching damaging effects on my life.
Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

*There wasn’t any depth of emotional attachment. He just wasn’t comfortable with it. So, I would have wanted an emotional relationship. He just wasn’t comfortable with it. It wasn’t uncommon for men of his age, or men of his vintage. They were conditioned or programmed by the society of the time that being emotional or showing emotion was unmanly. So it was kind of a sign of the era really, but I would have wished for that. I wished I could have talked to my father. I believe his war experience had a lot to do with it. In some ways my father was very supportive. If there was anything I wanted, like something built or whatever, he would always be there, but in terms of a path or direction, he wasn’t there.*

Question 2:

*I remember when I brought home a classmate that I liked, female, my father was totally uncomfortable and kind of freaked out. I had never seen that before. I grew up not having social skills. I basically had to develop them on my own. They weren’t modelled. I still feel shy occasionally. My father was a very inhibited man. So yes, if I had had a closer, warmer relationship with my father my choices – relationships would have been different. Absolutely. I wouldn’t have passed up a lot of opportunities that I had both socially and otherwise. Missed opportunities with women that I just didn’t pursue, and a lack of direction in terms of a career. There was a lot of floundering, a lot of floundering. My father didn’t, wasn’t capable of giving me a strong foundation that I notice that a lot of kids that were pretty successful had. I think, I know, I shouldn’t say I think,*
the war had an incredible, devastating effect on him. He lost faith in humanity. He saw
the dark side. I think it really screwed him up. Overall though, I don’t resent it. I am
happy with the way things were and that I wouldn’t be the person that I am now if it had
been different.

Analysis: Big Bear

Big Bear is the only participant whose father fought for the Germans. It is
important to point out that Big Bear’s story reflects more than dealing with his
father’s combat trauma. His mother lived in Berlin during the war, and was
subjected to the near annihilation of that city through constant Allied bombing
and subsequent occupation by Allied and Russian troops. He tells of how he and
his mother came across some tanks in Berlin prior to them immigrating to
Canada, “My mother, upon seeing [the tanks] became terrified and panicked,
grabbed my hand hard and ran across the street like we were going to be killed.”
Moreover, Big Bear comments on how it was to be discriminated against after
immigrating to Canada in the 1950’s because he was German, “as a kid growing
up in Toronto, my brother and I were subjected to a lot of teasing because we
were German. It was a very hard time.”

Big Bear’s narrative is one of sadness, loss and anger. “As I look back, his
war experience had an enormously deep impact on his life and was responsible
for creating an enormous impasse between he and I to the point that we could
never really connect, and we never did.” This theme is consistent throughout his
narrative. Big Bear wanted guidance and direction from his father, a theme not
unlike other participants, but realized that his father could not or would not provide it.

“To my horror, I found that my father would not ... I suffered deep grief and realized that my father was not going to be the one who could teach me ... but I am angry with him too, for not teaching me.”

In the follow-up interview, Big Bear commented further on the lack of direction from his father saying that he spent a lot of time floundering and searching.

Other themes that emerged from Big Bear’s narrative speak about dad’s loss of youth and subsequent personality change, dad telling only amusing, humorous stories of the war, father’s general unhappiness, and how the everyday parenting fell to his mother. It is also tells of how the anger and frustration in his relationship with his father was carried over into his own relationships with women.

Zeke’s (age 49) Narrative

I was born in England in the early 50’s and moved to Canada in the mid-fifties. I am the second born and the oldest male. My family consists of two families really. My older sister and I are close together, but there is eight years between me and my other two siblings. My family was typical for that era. My dad worked and my mom stayed at home to raise the children, but she did work outside the home sometimes. I think our family went through many of the same kinds of struggles as most families did, the struggle to raise a family, pay the mortgage, buy groceries and go on camping trips. I did what most kids of the 50’s and 60’s did, played war, belonged to cubs and scouts and watched TV. I remember seeing a lot of war shows during that time and there were lots of war toys. I
don’t recall seeing any uniforms or other things like pictures of my father in uniform but I remember that the expression “what did you do in the war” was a common phrase and a topic of conversation. What really stands out for me during that part of my life was the move to Canada. We left grandparents and an extended family in England. I remember my parents not having many friends for quite some time after our move to Canada. I grew up without knowing my grandparents, aunts or uncles and I missed that.

I don’t have any real recollection of my father being in the war, I suspect I just always knew. As I mentioned, it was a large part of the society at the time. It wasn’t something I really thought about. It wasn’t until I got older that I realized that the war had an impact on him. I remember seeing the Vietnam War, when I was in my late teens early twenties, on TV and thinking that my father was doing similar things when he was twenty. That was hard for me to imagine. It seemed almost alien. I can’t imagine what I was doing when I was twenty. There were times when I asked about what he did during the war, but he was never forthcoming, nor did he ever willingly volunteer information.

I didn’t really have a close relationship with him. He was a rational man who approached life from using a rational prospective. Life problems were meant to be solved without asking a lot of questions. He was very good that way and he expected the same level of efficiency from me. I remember much of our relationship centred on a teacher/pupil relationship. We spent a lot of time at the kitchen table solving mathematical or astronomical problems. Those were great fun times, but it very much typified the rational kind of relationship we shared rather than an emotional one. My father was not one to go out and kick or throw the ball. He wasn’t into sports. He saw life as more black and white.
This often got us into battles. I think that I could become lazy just because it would get him mad; show some emotion. It got a reaction from him. He often got mad too, when I tried things on my own instead of learning from the mistakes of others. He believed that you learn from the mistakes of others so that you don’t repeat them yourself. I became interested in the Communist Party in the late 60’s and remember he became quite angry over that. As I look back I think all this had something to do with his being a soldier. Part of his duties as a soldier was to solve problems and solve them quickly without direction. He had to learn quickly. Of course fighting Fascism and fighting in Italy, he hated anything to do with Communism.

My father was twenty when he first saw combat. He stayed with his unit all the way through Italy. I know for sure that he did not have the chance to have a late adolescence. He grew up quickly and experienced and saw things that most people could not imagine. It’s hard to see him as a soldier. I see him more as an individual than as part of an Army. When I think about what he had to do and under the conditions he had to do them in I get a sense of someone who had to rely on their own initiative and judgment. I am sure he came under enemy fire often. Even though he was part of a field engineer squad, he once told me that he was always a soldier first, so I know that he was never far from his gun and that he would have fired it. He also told me that he became a good ducker. This fits more my image of him. He would get down and stay down until the shooting was over. I can’t imagine how it would be for him to know that he would have actually killed someone. I can’t imagine how it must have been for him to see his friends killed or injured, as I am sure he did. I am sure it would have also been hard on
him to hear his friend’s stories about what they went through. My father is a sensitive man.

I believe that I got his sensitivity. I spent a lot of time alone as a child because of my sensitivity. Kids tended to pick on me because of it. I sensed at a young age that my father hurt, and as I grew older, I wanted to protect him from hurt and pain. In my adult life I would often not challenge him about his attitudes or beliefs because it would hurt him. I know the war played a large part in his hurt. He never got a chance to integrate his war experiences with his civilian life. He came home to a hero’s welcome and then was expected to carry on with his pre-war life. He simply buried the emotion and hurt and got on with his life. I sensed it was always never too far from the surface and if the dam ever broke it would be hard to stem the flow, so he never let it out. Instead he built a protective wall around the emotion to keep it hidden. The only time as a child I remember him mentioning the war was when he met a German fellow worker. I remember that they shared similar stories as they were both in Italy at the same time and at the same places.

I think he foreclosed early on a career and on a marriage after the war. Had he not gone to war he would have stayed with the family business that had been in operation already for a couple of generations and would have stayed in England. I also think the war played a part in our moving to Canada. There was again, this pressure to get on with your life quickly after the war was over even despite the fact he stayed with the army for a couple of years after. After the war it may have been that he was unsure of what to do so staying with the army became a good idea. He finally left the army in 1947.

There was another side to my father too. Besides doing well at his chosen work, he was outgoing and often considered the life of the party. He was very active in the
community as he belonged to several social/service groups where we grew up. He was well liked and well respected. He was also well liked by the women. He would often fix things for people; he was good at doing that kind of thing. He never really drank or smoked although he won a trip from a tobacco company and thought it would be in good form to smoke so he took up smoking the pipe while on the trip, but stopped once he returned home. What the public saw though was not what we saw at home. Even with my mom, dad was aloof. My mom was the emotional support of the family. I wanted it from my dad, but learned early on not to expect it whereas I expected it from my mother.

I see myself in him. I like to solve problems and work alone. I also like the spontaneity of trying to solve something in the moment. I enjoy the challenge of having to do something in the moment while others wait on you to finish. I do that for a living. It is similar to what he did in the war, but I can't say for certain that is where it comes from. I also enjoy history and have read extensively on that period. I am more drawn to the European Theatre than to the Pacific Theatre because of my father's involvement. I find that time fascinating especially to think that one man, Hitler, could march so many people to war.

When I think about how my father would have been had he not been in the war, I think firstly, he would have not been so rational. I think he may have been more light-hearted and easy going, more emotionally open and spontaneous. I think too, that what the public saw we would have also seen at home. He may also have been more open in allowing me to make mistakes and to finding my own way. He wouldn't have had this sense of life being so precious and short; that there wasn't time to fool around and make unnecessary mistakes. Certainly, I think he would have been more loving. He wouldn't
have had the detached demeanour he had with me that sort of “yeah that’s nice, that’s interesting.” He would have engaged me more, recognized me more. He may have been able to embrace me and say, “It’ll work out.”

It wasn’t that long ago that we had the chance to sit down and talk about things, life and his war experience. It was great because after we finished talking we hugged. I was happy it happened, I was just sorry that it didn’t happen thirty years ago. Another point that is interesting is that my own son has become interested in the Second World War and has asked my father lots of questions. It is nice for me as a father to watch their interaction. I think it gives my father a chance to talk about what happened. Looking back, I believe that had my father had the opportunity to tell his story after the war, with all its pain and emotion, he may have been able to remove that wall around him and let us in. He may have been able to deal with it at an emotional level rather than to simply dam it up and put it away. Despite what went on in my family, I am proud of my father and what he did.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

I think it probably would have looked similar to what it was – he did quite a lot with us and he certainly was always there for us, but I think it was – it’s hard to say. I mean that was the relationship that I had and it was quite fine. I don’t want to come down and say anything really negative about it. I think though, that there certainly was an undercurrent with him, but – he always, I think he always felt that he had to be working away on something. He was always working away on something or other.
Doing gardening or bringing some work home, or working on the car, working at something. I suspect my part in it – and I was off playing or doing whatever, and when we were together I was kind of there watching him do his stuff.

I guess we didn’t do a lot of throw the ball around type of thing. I’m sure we did, maybe more so than other parents even. It’s tricky because I don’t want to be critical unnecessarily. I would have liked more time to just get to know him better. I think I would have felt that I had someone to – a relationship as an example to use when with other people. I think things might have been easier for me to get along with other people. I think maybe it would have been nicer to be included more in what he was doing. Included more in his life. I think it would have given me more confidence to know what I was thinking and more confidence in my own ideas and so on. Very often, I found it difficult to get my thoughts across.

Question 2:

I probably would have been a bit more secure with my choices. I jumped around quite a bit before going to university. I lacked a focal point. That’s the confidence in yourself. I would have been perhaps a bit more focused in general, but there are a lot of complexities involved here. Had dad not been in the war, I think things would have been different. There was a definite wall to his emotional side. That probably wouldn’t have been there if he hadn’t been through what he went through. They (the British) have a certain thing there anyway, it just manifested itself a thousand fold because of the war.
Analysis: Zeke

Zeke's narrative tells of a theme of struggle trying to get close to his father. He said that in his childhood they shared a student/teacher relationship that Zeke found quite difficult at times. Zeke found it difficult because of his own emotional sensitivity to relate to a father "who approached life from a rational prospective." Throughout the narrative is a sense of Zeke's struggle with seeing his father as a soldier in combat. Several times he said, "I can't imagine." What his father would have had to do is in direct opposition to how Zeke see his father, as he states "it is hard to see him as soldier. My father is a sensitive man."

Other themes that emerge from Zeke's narrative are how his father lost his youth and, as Zeke suggests, perhaps foreclosed on a career and on a marriage. This theme is similar and is found in other narratives where many of the veterans did not have a direction after the war was over. Another theme that is also similar is one of wanting to protect the father from hurt of pain by speaking with them about the war. Zeke alludes to this a number of different times. There is the theme of his father not speaking about the war when asked. Zeke also indicated that his father's personality changed because of combat and how his father was different in social situations than who he was at home. He also told of how his mom was the emotional support who oversaw the smooth running of the household.

What is different in Zeke's narrative that is somewhat different from others is Zeke high level of awareness of what his father must have gone
through. He speaks about the harsh realization of watching the Vietnam War on TV in his early twenties and knowing that his father at his age would have been doing things that were similar. Zeke stated, “that was hard for me to imagine. It seemed almost alien.”

Winston’s (age 49) Narrative

I am the second child of the family. I have an older sister. We were raised on the Island. My father after his service in the Second World War stayed with the Army and retired as a Major. He then worked for about 15 years with Canada Post after a short stint in real estate. We had a pretty normal, average life growing up. I don’t think it was any different than anyone else. I remember going on camping trips every summer and doing regular kinds of things.

As a kid, I remember my dad was high on discipline, had high expectations, and was highly critical of me. He yelled a lot and when I tried to explain myself he would tell me, “Don’t talk back.” I felt very frustrated because I could never explain myself. If I did anything wrong, the hammer came down very quickly. I don’t think I was a bad kid. The worst thing I remember doing was stealing some pop from the store down the street with a friend. The friend’s father was a cop. The storeowner caught us. My friend’s father, who was on duty at the time, and the storeowner dragged us off by the scruff of the neck and deposited me on my doorstep in front of my father. He did nothing to me. I was surprised. But really that’s the worst. I didn’t get into drugs or alcohol. I did the other kinds of things like stay out late or forget to check in, these were often met with his heavy hand. I remember saying to myself, “I’m not a bad kid. I’m a good kid. Why can’t you see that”? 
Dad and I butted heads like crazy. There seemed to be great conflict all the time. It was like you live in my house so you will do as you are told. My perception of that time is that there was no support for me. My sister went the other way. She was a goody-two-shoes and she told me as much. I would get praise for my accomplishments, but if I did anything wrong there was no taking into consideration my accomplishments. I found it quite repressing. It wasn’t until I left home that our relationship took on a more personal nature.

Dad just couldn’t get emotionally close to anyone. I think that is the main reason the he and my mother divorced after he left the Army. Moreover, I think that is what stops him now from having other meaningful relationships. He has a lot of acquaintances, but no close relationships. In fact dad would rather be alone. He is happy doing things alone. He has traveled alone and has lived on his own ever since the divorce. Even when he was living in small towns during his work with the Post Office, he preferred to be alone. He needs to be with a group of people before he becomes involved. He is not antisocial; he just prefers to be alone. Yet, we would go on family outings, have festive rituals like on Thanksgiving and such, and go on camping trips. I remember my parents going to parties where all the kids would go too. He knows all the social graces and in a structured situation he’s fine. But when it comes to more personal, intimate relationships it’s just not there.

I really can’t say with any certainty that the way he is was because of his war experiences. In many ways I just saw him as a military guy. It’s what he did, but the war experiences impacting his life? I suppose it did. I was in a serious car accident and was nearly killed and that was a life altering experience so I can see how what dad went
through was life altering, I'm just not sure to what extent. I don't know very much about him prior to the war. I know he grew up in Vancouver and used to ski at Grouse a lot. I guess you could say he was athletic but I don't know that he did any other sports. He never talked about it.

It wasn't until I was 16 or 17 that I became more aware of what my father had done and where he did it. At that time a person came to interview my dad for a book about a specific area in Italy that he was directly involved with. I didn't hear the interview, but it sort of heightened my awareness. My father never spoke about what he did in Italy before that interview and spoke very little after it. Essentially, he didn't volunteer information and I didn't go there or if I did it was very sparingly. There were a few occasions as a result of the book when he mentioned that he was right in the thick of the fighting and he spoke about people dying, I realized how awful it was.

Later there was another book written about the campaign my father was in. This time there was a whole chapter written about what he did and it was more in-depth and involved. Perhaps because now its public knowledge, I have felt more comfortable broaching the subject with him, but this has only happened in the last five years or so. Dad too has been more open about it. He has attended some reunions and about six years ago he went back to Italy and visited the towns and countryside where they were. This opened doors for conversation also. From my readings and speaking with him I know he was in the thick of it crawling through the night in trenches, dodging behind the walls in abandoned buildings with German soldiers in them. He never said anything about shooting a German, but it doesn't take much imagination to figure out the rest. He also
told of other things like what their objectives were, what they accomplished and other things like what they had to eat at Christmastime in Italy.

It is hard for me to imagine my father as a fighting soldier. He is such a gentle man. I really have a hard time seeing the two together. I think of a soldier in action as one who has to be aggressive, sort of like a rugby player on the field. My father is very proper. He is not aggressive. Yet I know that he had to do many difficult things and make many difficult decisions that may have cost men their lives. It is hard for me to think that all this didn’t have an impact on his life. Piecing his life together is hard because I know so little about him and his personality before the war, I know nothing about what he felt or thought during the war, so all I know is growing up with him as my father.

Dad lacks sensitivity and I don’t think people have a lack of sensitivity of purpose, I think it happens as a result of things that make them keep that inside and it’s safer. Your life experiences are all part of that. It is not a connection I have really made until I started talking about it. It is quite possible that dad desensitized himself and carried that desensitization into his personal relationships. When I think of how he would have been had he not gone to war, I know he would be different. I feel the biggest impact was on his inability to express certain kinds of feelings especially love. It really impacted me and it impacted my relationship with him. I don’t think it is because it’s not inside him, rather I think there are certain parts that are not expressed for protection. It is really hard to get a reading on how he would have been different again because I know so little about him other than being in the military.

The biggest impact for me though is that I have carried the relationship I had with my father into my own personal relationships. It has had a big impact and it’s been a hard
struggle. I learned from my dad to not show emotion. I think I learned that I was not
worthy of being loved, that was a big one. From that I was never comfortable with
expressing my love. Consequently, I have found it difficult to let my guard down and
always having a barrier. I always maintained control by keeping things inside. I have had
to work hard to overcome this and it's only been in the last few years that I have got a
hold of it. I just wish it had been twenty years sooner.

The relationship between my father and I has been a real struggle. Through my
own personal work I have come to accept that much of what my father did to me was not
his fault. I can now approach dad and give him a hug and say, "Love ya" but it is still
awkward not because I don't feel it, but because of all the stuff that has gone on between
us over the years. I know it makes him uncomfortable but I also know how much there is
inside but it can't come out. As far as his war experiences if someone who knew would
say to me that it would be good for your father to talk about the war I would do it. I don't
want to cause him pain or re-traumatize him. He is speaking about it more now and I
really wish he had said more when I was younger, but at least there are now openings to
broach it with him. I know too, that I feel his pain. I didn't want to see *Saving Private
Ryan* because of the graphic nature of the film. He didn't land on the D-Day beaches but
he would have seen and been involved in the same level of intensity and I know it would
have really affected me. It may have been a good movie, but I didn't need to see it.

I am proud of my father and I admire his integrity and his honesty. I can look back
on my life with him with pride, admiration and respect. It gave me good grounding
coming from good stock, so to speak. It is also nice to hear other people say that they
respect and admire my father as well.
Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

The biggest thing, looking back, that I felt was missing was sort of a demonstration of love; that it would be demonstrated, it would be clear. There would be no question as to whether it was there or not. And that's probably the essence of it. I mean, we did things as a family and we were active and that sort of thing, so all of the sort of surface stuff was there and it was good and I doubt that I would change that. I would say that I probably would like that he felt that he could have trusted me more.

I think too, probably less criticism. The criticism made you sort of wonder how he felt about you and made me feel that all he felt was negative [towards me]. There was recognition for when I would do things that were good, but that wasn't [how I] felt as a person.

Question 2:

I don't think it would have changed my career choices. I always had a sense that my choice of directions was mine. I never had a sense that I was pushed into any thing or was trying to prove myself. I think however, with my relationships it probably would have made a big difference. I think I would have not been so protective of myself. By protective, I mean not letting myself enter a relationship where there was some true feeling. I also think I probably would have been a lot better at being able to express it as well. I was not [raised] in an environment where that was done and was always sort of curtailed from expressing myself, so I learned that it was better to keep it inside.
Analysis: Winston

Reading Winston’s narrative leaves one with a sense of a struggle to be recognized by a father who is emotionally isolated and wants to be left alone. Outwardly, Winston speaks about being a normal family, having family rituals, attending parties and going on vacations, “I don’t think it was any different than anyone else.” Underneath the outward appearance is much turmoil between father and son. Winston grew up trying to gain approval and have his father notice him. Boys want to be noticed by their fathers. They want their fathers to be proud of them. “I remember saying to myself, ‘I’m not a bad kid. I’m a good kid. Why can’t you see that?’” This statement is represented in other narratives. It is a desire of most boys.

Winston wanted to engage his father, not in conflict, but in understanding and support for both the good and the bad. It didn’t happen. “There seemed to be great conflict all the time.”

Winston tells of his father’s wanting to be alone and preferring to be alone, “Dad just couldn’t get close to anyone.” Winston too, in his later life, comments on how he too, chose to be emotionally alone. “I have carried the relationship I had with my father into my own personal relationships. I always maintain control by keeping things inside.” When Winston tells of how little he knows about his father’s life prior to him going to war, it makes sense. He commented, “I don’t know very much about him prior to the war.” Even as a child and young adolescent he knows little about his father’s combat
experiences. It is not until someone comes to interview his father that he becomes aware of his father's combat experience. Winston's father's emotional distance was strong in its impact on Winston.

Other important themes are Winston's struggle with seeing his father as a combat soldier, "It is hard for me to imagine my father as a fighting soldier. He is such a gentle man. I really have a hard time seeing the two together." Winston too is very clear about the impact combat had on his father. "I feel the biggest impact was on his inability to express certain kinds of feeling especially love. It impacted me and it impacted my relationship with him." Also, but not specifically mentioned in the narrative, is how Winston's mother was the emotional support for the family together with being the focal point of the family. Winston also speaks about wanting to know more about his father. He indicated that, as his father gets older, he is saying more, yet there is a sense of sadness when Winston says, "I really wish he had said more when I was younger.

Finally, an important theme that is echoed in other narratives is the one of protection and pride. Winston, despite his relationship with his father, was very clear about not wanting to hurt his father by dredging up old war memories. "I don't want to cause him pain or re-traumatize him." He also said how proud he was of his father and how he admired his father's integrity and honesty. "I can look back on my life with him with pride, admiration and respect."
What moves me in Winston’s narrative is, despite the often times difficult relationship he had with his father, Winston’s love for his father. This is a theme that is quite consistent with other narratives.

**Frank’s (age 41) Narrative**

*I am the 5th of 6 children. I grew-up in a suburb of Vancouver and except for a short time living in the Fraser Valley we stayed in the suburbs. I remember playing with dad’s war stuff as a child. I recall he had a trunk and it contained a lot of his war stuff. Dad also had a scrapbook that is now a family heirloom. It wasn’t just any old scrapbook. Dad was a very good artist and the scrapbook was filled with many of his colourful drawings and other mementos of his time overseas. The scrapbook is really quite artistic and to a young child, was very appealing with all the cartoon like characters. Dad had a very good sense of humour and it often came out in his drawings. The drawings were full of satire about the military way of life. Dad was a Spitfire pilot during the later part of the war. While the scrapbook is full of humour it does not represent what he actually did in combat. That seems to be missing. There are not a lot of the operational kinds of details. My mother has his flight logbook and I guess that is where much of that kind of information would be.*

*Most of the stories I recall about dad being in the war are from overhearing conversations. We had an uncle, who also flew, but I think he flew larger aircraft; anyway, he and dad would often talk about the war. I always remember them laughing. There were some pretty funny stories. He would talk about the war in other situations too, but all the stories revolved around humour. I remember too, the scrapbook was often*
around the house and we would look through it as kids do and ask him about stuff. He would tell us but he would never go into great details. I remember one story he told me was when he and his partner were flying low along a river in Europe. I think they were strafing a bridge. Dad did what he was supposed to do, stay low on the river after the strafing pass. His partner pulled up to go around and make another pass and was shot down by the anti-aircraft guns on the bridge.

I didn't really ask him a lot of questions about what he did in Europe. I think he did see some unpleasant things so I think that he may have wanted to forget a lot of the ugly stuff. Yet, I remember he used to say that he knew how to fly an airplane before he knew how to drive a car. He was very proud of that. After the war though, he never flew again. I am not sure why but I guess embarking on a professional career and raising six children may have been a reason. Over the years he didn't have too much to share about the war and yet compared to his scrapbook, you would think he would have had many interesting stories to tell, but he would never go out and talk to others who were in the same theatre of operation as him. For example, there was a guy who lived in the same area and he was a decorated pilot, but dad never spoke to him about the war. I just got the feeling that he didn't talk about it because he didn't want to, not because it wasn't interesting to him. As I mentioned, he would speak about it jokingly when he was with others he knew in social settings over a few drinks.

I never asked why he chose flying. I'm guessing but it might have been because he was an only child and a bit spoiled and because he had completed two years at university, he knew that once you finished flying school, you became a commissioned officer. That may have had something to do with it. My sense is that officer pilot's sort of lead a
glamorous life, especially if you were a Spitfire pilot. I think that would have appealed to my father. There was a bit of a mystique about being a pilot and they had almost a country club environment. My mother’s older sister was pretty jealous of my mother when she met my father. Here’s a guy who was in architecture school, was a fighter pilot, and was pretty good looking.

My father fit the role of a pilot too. He was a very good pianist. He could play without music. So after their missions all the pilots would go to the Mess hall or pub. My father never had to buy a drink. The piano would be full of free beer as long as he kept playing. He even considered joining a group of people who went around entertaining the troops until he found out how much they were paid. I think that’s where he learned to drink. I think it was the thing to do during that time. There was always liquor around. He also drank a fair bit after the war. I don’t feel that it was a problem at home, but I do remember my mom getting after him a few times. He couldn’t hold his liquor very well so it only took a few drinks to put him over, so to speak. I think he learned to drink during the war. It was what they did when they weren’t flying. Alcohol was a big part of that era. I think had he not been in the war he would have not drank as much. Mom would get on his case when he drank too much.

I think my father benefited in a positive way from being in the war. My father was an architect. When he started his own business, he got quite a few contracts from the Legion to design their buildings. That helped his business grow and I think that he received those contracts in part by being a combat veteran. I feel in some way, that I was somewhat removed from my father’s war experience. I knew what he did and I was always very proud of him. When he died, my oldest brother and I did the eulogy. I
reflected on what dad meant to our family and all the trips and things he did with us. It was a very special day. His gravestone has the RCAF emblem on it and there were representatives from the Legion there too. I really admire what my dad went through. He lived in an incredible time and saw some incredible things.

What I do remember growing up was that dad wasn't around that much. A lot of the regular day to day stuff fell on my mother's shoulders. Dad was often very busy at work and quite often worked late. When he came home he would eat dinner and read the paper. When Mom got mad she would sometimes say, "Wait until your father comes home." You didn't want dad getting mad at you so I think we feared him. I would say that he was not that approachable. Again, I was the fifth child so there were many problems ahead of mine. Dad would however, come out to see me play sports, he was very encouraging of our playing sports and I think enjoyed watching us, but the day-to-day stuff he was kind of distant. Yet on the other hand, I think that he may have enjoyed me more because of where he was financially in his life. I do remember my older two brothers and older sister getting much more of dad's wrath than I. He was a hard disciplinarian on them, but he was especially hard on my second born brother. I have often wondered why him. I think that dad was a little worn out by the time it came to ever disciplining me.

There is a lot I don't know about what my father did during the war that I would like to check out now with my mother. I suspect that even she will not be able to tell me much. Dad was very closed mouth about it and only in his later years did he start to say anything about it. I know that the war changed him. I can't really say how. I think there are both positive and negative traits that came from his involvement. Some of the
positives, I think, were his motivation; he knew he could do things. It probably matured him and gave him a sense of self-assuredness, and the negative side of his being in combat? I am not sure. I assume that there were some things that he was involved with that were not nice and it's hard for me to picture him doing those things. I can't really see him doing it. Again, he would never speak of what he did in terms of times and places and activities. He would never volunteer information openly, if he did comment, it tended to be only to confirm or deny a question that we asked him. I would like to ask him many of the questions that have been asked of me in this interview. However, if it were to bother him, I would not want to pursue it. I would not want to open any wounds, but I don't perceive that there are any. I think my older brothers or my mother might be able to address that more.

I regret that my children will not be able to know my dad. Perhaps he might have been more open with them. I hope that they will take an interest in his scrapbook. I know my interest in the war and that era comes from my father. I have read many books on the subject and if I had the opportunity and money, I would have liked to learn to fly. I have always had a bit of an interest in older airplanes and flying that I believe comes from what dad did in the war.

Follow-up Questions

Question 1:

Maybe spending more time with him one-on-one with reading, and assisting me with homework and things like that especially from age 4 to 10. Doing more one-on-one things. That would probably be something I wished we could have done more of.
I would have liked to talk to him a little more about family history and life before kids. I would have liked to talk to him about life in war, in the battles of World War II, things like that. I don't think we were as close to my father as we could have been. I know that dad and I probably didn't communicate too much on the personal level.

Question 2:

I wished he had kept up his interest in flying. I might have been interested in that a little more had he been interested. One thing, being from a large family and almost the youngest child, I saw that it was more difficult on the oldest three. I think I learned from watching what they went through, like not to get on dad's bad side.

Had dad been more active in my life, I may have pursued engineering or went into architecture, but on the other hand, I am pretty satisfied with my career and the way it has ended up.

Analysis: Frank

Frank's narrative is somewhat different than all the other narratives. Most participants were either first or second born children and seemed closer in time to their father's combat experiences. Frank was more removed and somewhat insulated from his father and his narrative speaks of that. Frank tells of how little he knows about his father during the war. It seems more of a mystery than with other participants. Moreover, Frank tells of the vicarious leanings he experienced by watching the interactions between older siblings and his father and admits that his father may have run out of steam by the time he came along. Overall,
Frank appears to be more at ease in his relationship with his father than do others.

There appears to be a sense of mystery in Frank’s narrative. He tells of how his father’s personality very much suits the image of a World War II Spitfire pilot. One almost gets a romanticized image. The young, good-looking, devil may care officer with a great sense of humour who could entertain the troops in the pubs for hours with his piano playing. All the men and women would be gathered around the piano. The piano filled with glasses of beer as piano player belted out one of the favourite songs of the times. All would be singing and drinking. It is a scene right out of the movies about those who flew. Frank’s comments saying that in some ways, it was perhaps the best time in his father’s life. “My sense [of my father] is that officer pilots sort of lead a glamorous life, especially if you were a Spitfire pilot. I think that would have appealed to my father. There was a bit of a mystique about being a pilot and they had almost a country club environment. My father fit the role of a pilot.”

Alcohol played a role in Frank’s life. He stated that his father learned to drink in the war and the drinking continued after the war. His father, according to Frank, spent a lot of time at the Legion where he could relive those times. Interestingly, Frank states, “I think had he not been in the war he would have not drank as much.”

An important theme that is consistent across all the other narratives is how Frank’s father never spoke about the war and what he did unless it was
funny. Again, there is a sense that Frank tries to understand. On one hand his father wouldn’t speak to him about what he did, yet on the other hand, it played a major role in his life. Significantly his father’s gravestone has the RCAF emblem on it.

Franks speaks about his father being a disciplinarian and how his mother provided the emotional support and was the strong parent in the family. He also commented on how his father was “kind of distant” and wasn’t around much and who didn’t really provide much support. As with many other participants, Franks tell of his interest in history, “I know my interest in the war and that era comes from my father.”

Despite his father never volunteering information openly, Franks stated that “if it were to bother him, I would not want to pursue it. I would not want to open any wounds.” There is something about wanting to protect fathers from emotional harm that seems inherent with exposure to combat. On one side rests curiosity and on the other side rests a sense of some unmentionable horror that does not need to be visited for fear of its repercussions.

Finally, Frank says that the war did impact his father’s life. He stated that it probably matured his father and it brought financial benefits to him after the war, but he was unsure as to whether his father’s combat experience had anything to do with it. He knew his father would have had to do some unpleasant things and regrets not ever really speaking to him about it. “I would
like to ask him many of the questions that have been asked of me in this interview."

Frank is the keeper of his father’s scrapbook and it is he who is in the process of restoring it. It is also interesting that Frank told of his desire to learn to fly and his interest in old planes. There is some about connecting with our father’s war experience that seems powerful.

**Grand Narrative**

Reading across all the narratives produced a grand narrative or a narrative that contains the essential themes of each narrative. It is a process of standing back and examining all the narratives as a whole.

In obtaining a grand narrative, I wanted to know what were the common elements, beliefs and values of each participant and were these consistent with other participants? Where is the commonality of experiences? Were the participants essentially saying the same things? Were my experiences similar to the participants?

My interest in this research reflects my own story. In this sense, I was also one of the participants. My story was also co-constructed as I listened to my participants’ stories. At times, I found it difficult to know when my story started and where their story started. Several times, I heard echoes of my past and the realization that I too, had also struggled and at times still struggle with similar issues. Once I had identified the themes that emerged from each participant’s
narrative, I realized that they also reflected my themes. Accordingly, I included myself once I had completed the grand narrative. Instead of ten participants, there were eleven.

Writing the grand narrative required reading each narrative twice. The first reading was to re-orient myself with the overall plot line of the narrative. In the first reading, I asked myself what themes emerged from reading the narrative? I then wrote the individual themes on the back of each narrative, for example: telling humorous stories about the war or regret not talking to dad about the war. After reading for the grand narratives, I constructed a chart with all the participants’ pseudonyms across the top (see Appendix D). Along the side of the chart, I placed the individual themes. If a theme was consistent with other participants it was kept on the spreadsheet. If it only reflected the individual participant it was removed. In all 21 themes were identified. When a participant had a similar experience, I placed an X in that column. Of the 21 identified themes, 4 were consistent across all 10 participants, 2 themes were consistent across 9 of the participants and another 2 themes were consistent across 8 of the participants. The 8 themes summarize the narratives of the 10 participants and reflect the answer to what it was like to grow-up with a World War II combat veteran father. These themes together with excerpts from the participants’ highlights will be presented.
Grand Narrative Themes

Silent Fathers

The first grand narrative that was consistent across all participants was the theme of dad never speaking about what he did in the war. Without exception all participants mentioned this point and many mentioned it several times. "My dad never spoke about what he did in the war," reported Corky. John commented on what his father had been through. "He was lucky not to have been killed. I think it's amazing. Dad never, ever spoke about the war. Never! He received a lot of medals. We would talk about life and other things but he would never speak about the war." Winston, on the other hand, recounted his story about his father's war experience, "It wasn't until I was 16 or 17 that I became more aware of what my father had done and where he did it. At the time a person came to interview him for a book about a specific area in Italy. My father never spoke about what he did in Italy before the interview and spoke very little after. Essentially, he didn't volunteer information and I didn't go there or if I did it was very sparingly." Winston's words are echoed throughout the narratives. If the sons approached their fathers about what they did in the war, they did it sparingly. None of the fathers was reported to offer information willingly.

Fathers' Changed Personalities

The second grand narrative is a powerful one. Essentially, it is about how the sons feel their fathers' personality was changed because of their combat
experience. For example, Big Bear commented on how he remembered his father saying how he lost the best years of his life. “As I look back, his war experience had an enormously deep impact on his life ...” Rob stated, “When I think back about my father’s war experience the first thing that stands out is his loss of youth. He went from being a kid to being a man overnight.” Lesley was only 8 or 9 months old when his father left for war. As he looks back on his relationship with this dad and when asked about how the war changed his father, he stated, “Here was a man who had just come back. He was shell-shocked. He had a terrifying time trying to relate to civilian life in those first few years. He had a difficult time and it took a toll on our relationship. I think this was a big part of the aloofness between us. Had he not gone to war, I don’t think [our relationship] would have been cold and aloof.” Other sons commented on similar kinds of encounters with their fathers. Others commented on what an important part alcohol played in their lives with their fathers. The sons indicated that their fathers had learned to drink overseas and drinking became a part of their post-war personality.

**Fathers Emotionally Distant**

Emotional distance is the final grand narrative to be consistent across all 10 participants. For example, Rob stated, “My dad kept me at arms length. So I used to think, ‘Well, how come I don’t measure up? Like what do I have to do to prove to this guy that I’m O.K.?’ Throughout the narratives many participants made comments similar to Rob’s. Winston, Big Bear and Lesley all spoke about
the distant relationship they had with their fathers while at the same time wanting more. Similarly, Peter said, “Most of the parenting fell on my mother’s shoulder. [Dad] just distanced himself from us.” Zeke stated, “My mom was the emotional support of the family. I wanted [emotional support] from my dad, but learned early on not to expect it whereas I expected it from my mother.”

Of all the themes that were identified from the narratives, the theme of emotional distancing by the father was the one that moved many participants to tears. For most there was a yearning for that connection while for others a sense of loss that it would never happen. In a very moving disclosure, Rob said, “I hope at some point, although I know it may never happen, I would like to hear my father say that he loves me, even at this age. I don’t think he will.” In a similar manner, Winston stated, “[Because of doing my own work] I can now approach dad and give him a huge and say, ‘Love ‘ya’ but it is still awkward not because I don’t feel, but because of all the stuff that has gone on between us over the years.”

**Humorous and Anecdotal Stories**

The next set of grand narrative themes was consistent across nine of the participants and includes telling only humorous or anecdotal stories of the war, difficulty in imagining dad in combat, and the role of the mothers.

As in any adventure and war when young men get together the sprite of youth provides a stage for comedy. Despite the sadness that many participants told of what their father’s had been through, there were several comical stories
too. Big Bear stated, “He [his father] would often tell stories of the war. Mostly they were humorous ones. I remember listening to them as if he were a great storyteller telling of all his wondrous adventures.” Peter said, “If you look at his scrapbook and read his cartoons, they’re hilarious and when dad got together with my uncle and they started to speak about the war, I always remember them laughing. There were some pretty funny stories.” In a similar vain, Rob stated that he often overheard conversations his father had with some of his war buddies. Rob said, “I recall too, that most all the stories were humorous ones. They avoided the stuff that was not pleasant.” John told of a conversation he had had with his father during Desert Storm. His father had served with the British 8th Army in North Africa. John said his father got quite a laugh out of watching the U.S. troops and all their bottled water.

Mothers

The next grand narrative speaks about the sons’ mothers. This was an interesting theme that emerged that was totally unexpected. While many participants had to be promoted about various aspects of growing up with their fathers, information about the mothers came completely unsolicited. What emerged in nine of the ten participants were comments about how strong and powerful their mothers were in the family. Their mothers were responsible for the bulk of the parenting while many also provided the love and nurturance.

“My mother was the boss, she was very strong,” commented John. Similarly, Peter stated, “Throughout our lives it was mom who held it all
together." On a softer note, Rob told of how much his father was away from home. "I used to spend a lot of time with my mom and became very close with her when my dad was away. My father was almost devoid of emotion and it was only through mom that I received any." For some of the participants the mother was the emotional anchor in the family. A few of the marriages ended after the children had left in part due to the unavailability of the husbands. George stated, "Our life, before he left, I though was idyllic." On his father's return, George commented, "It [the marriage] was totally ruined. They tried hard."

Father as a Soldier

The next grand narrative of "father as soldier" was consistent across nine of the participants. There is no real way of knowing or understanding what our fathers went through. We can watch movies, visit battlefields, speak to comrades or read books. All we really know of our fathers is what we saw and learned growing up with them. Trying to imagine what it was like for them in battle is difficult to imagine. Of significant importance for many of the participants was seeing the movie Saving Private Ryan. Several participants commented on this. One said, "I wanted to see Saving Private Ryan because that's the closest thing that I could have experienced in my lifetime that he went through." On the other hand another participant stated, "I know too, that I feel his pain. I didn't want to see Saving Private Ryan because of the graphic nature of the film. He didn't land on the D-Day beaches but he would have seen and been involved in the same level of intensity and I know it would have really affected me."
This grand narrative theme speaks about how the sons found it difficult to image their fathers in war. For many the thoughts of their father actually involved in killing another human being were difficult. Most often they approached this subject cautiously as if at first denying it then realizing that given the nature of what their fathers were doing it would have happened. The struggle to see their fathers out of the role of father is extremely difficult. Winston, for example spoke about the movie Saving Private Ryan especially around the fighting in the town, said that his father would have done the same and more in Italy. He went on to say that he did not need to see it, as it would only upset him.

Similarly, Zeke stated, “It wasn’t until I got older that I realized that the war had an impact on him. I remember seeing the Vietnam War when I was in my late teen, early twenties, on TV and thinking that my father was doing similar things when he was twenty. That was hard for me to imagine. It seemed almost alien. It’s hard to see him as a soldier. I can’t imagine how it would be for him to know that he would have actually killed someone. I can’t imagine how it must have been for him to see his friend killed or injured, as I am sure he did.”

Similarly, John said, “It’s hard for me to imagine my father in the war and what he had to do. I know he would have seen so many things similar to Saving Private Ryan and as we speak, I realize that he would have been involved in killing. He would have done it too because he would have done his duty, but it is
hard for me to envision." A few lines later, John stated, "He was very soft and didn't like controversy ..."

Pride in Father

The seventh theme was one of pride in their fathers and what they had done. Many said that they didn't see their fathers as heroes. They saw their fathers as "doing their duty." Winston stated, "I am proud of my father and I admire his integrity and his honesty." John said, "I feel sad that I never really spoke with him about the war. I would really like to have him back. I admire him." Lesley commented, "I am proud of my father. He is not a hero in the hero sense. He did his job the best way he knew how. He is a kind man and he has had a big influence on my life." In many ways, Frank sums up the comments made by many participants. "I really admire what my dad went through. He lived in an incredible time and saw some incredible things."

When many participants spoke about the pride they had in their fathers for what they did, and for those whose fathers had died there was a strong sense of loss and sadness with some regret that they didn't have the chance to speak with their fathers about what they had done and how it affected them. There was sadness that that part of their father's lives was sealed forever. Like Frank, Zeke stated, "Despite what went on in my family, I am proud of my father and what he did." George, whose father died some years ago stated, "I admire him and what he did. I would really like to have him back."
Recognition and Relationships

The final grand narrative theme combines two themes. The reason for linking these two themes is that the same participants, who spoke about wanting recognition from their fathers, also spoke about having formed similar or parallel relationship either with adult females or with their own children. This was also unexpected when first speaking about the likely findings of this research. When linked together, these two themes form a powerful image of a child trying hard to please their father and recognizing that it won’t work so instead forming a relationship with their father on their father’s terms.

The theme of wanting recognition from fathers was consistent across six of the participants (Big Bear, Lesley, Peter, Rob, Winston, and Zeke). The second theme of forming similar or parallel relationships in significant adult relationships or with children was consistent across the same participants but also including John, for a total of 7 participants.

Rob when talking about wanting to be recognized by his father said, “I still wanted to emulate my dad and I wanted his recognition and acceptance, so I joined the Navy. I realized that if I had stayed with the military it was because I was angry with my father and wanted to prove something to him.” Similarly, Lesley stated, “I still wanted my father’s recognition and acceptance, but I did not want to follow in his footsteps. If I had followed a military career, I think I would always be wondering and asking what would my father do in this situation. So I joined a police force. I admit that there was an influence and I was
putting on a uniform so the he would look up to me and be proud of me, but I was making my own decisions.” Zeke, when asked how his father may have been different had he not gone to war replied, “He would have engaged me more, recognized me more. He may have been able to embrace me and say, ‘It’ll work out’.”

“The biggest impact for me, though, is that I have carried the relationship I had with my father into my own personal relationships. I think I learned that I was not worthy of being loved, that was a big one. From that I was never comfortable with expressing my love,” reported Winston. Big Bear also spoke of similar concerns he has had with his personal relationships especially with women. Lesley too, stated that, “I think to some extent I carried this aloofness into my own personal relationships too. It wasn’t until college that I was able to reach out to others.”

John, towards the end of the interview after telling how his son had entertained his high school history class with stories he had received from John’s father. “I never really sat down with my son and spoke to him about it. It’s funny that my son and I don’t really talk either. I guess I am more like my father than I think I am.” Similarly, Peter reported that his father was a big yeller when he was growing up. “Yelling was something that I took into my family when I got married until I realized what it was doing to my children and I stopped.” Rob made a very candid statement about how his relationship with his father was carried over into his life. “Showing emotion has been a problem for me in my
personal relationships especially in my marriage. With my children, I have had
to make a conscious effort to be close to them despite my old habits of being
reticent from time to time.”

**Grand Narrative of Follow-Up Questions**

Reading across the first follow-up question illuminates the narrative of wanting to have had more individual time with, and be closer emotionally with their fathers. All ten participants stated this point in one form or another. Nine participants said that they would have liked more direction and support from them. The second follow-up question tells about how the emotional distance impacted the sons’ lives. Many commented on how it was difficult for them to be open and form personal relationships especially with females, while others commented on having more self-confidence had their fathers been more affirming.

**Cultural Context**

Donald Polkinghorne (1988) argues that narrative stories present the values of a culture and that they also pass on certain examples that are common to all personal histories. The popular notion of fathering, according to Lamb (1997) is a social convention, not a biological one. Fathers for example, are associated with playfulness, and social interactions while mothers are associated with caretaking. These are both traditional stereotyped roles that reflect the
popular beliefs of the culture and underlie the traditional divisions of parental responsibilities (Lamb, 1997).

All the men who participated in this study grew up in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. Culturally, these narratives are situated in this post-war, baby-boom era. Popular culture and social roles of that era were based around the nuclear family and such things as owning a home and sex role stereotypes mentioned above. Men went to work and brought home a pay cheque. Wives stayed at home and raised the family. McCarthyism and the fear of Communist attack had people building air-raid shelters while in the background air-raid sirens were being tested. On television shows such as Leave it to Beaver, Father Knows Best and the Donna Reed Show provided an idealized portrayal of family life in North American. These TV families had fathers who had the role of good provider and the just and fair referee of family squabbles. As Pleck and Pleck (1997) put it: “the 1950s saw a new rationale for involved fathering; men themselves would find it creative and enjoyable. In fact, fathering was touted as the best of men’s hobbies, a more meaningful activity than a career or occupations” (p. 43).

The 1950’s image of the father was that of the breadwinner. Childcare and caretaking was women’s work. Many participants said that their fathers were products of the era. To be a man meant to be aloof and unemotional. “My father was typical for that era,” reported one participant. “Living with my father was like living with John Wayne,” was another remark referring in part to his father’s tough guy use of authoritarian discipline. Several participants commented on
their father's authoritarian style of parenting. It would seem that that type of parenting was common in the 50's.

Another indicated that his father couldn't give him what he wanted because men of his father's generation didn't do that. Another spoke about displays of affection, "I had never kissed my father ... in those days you didn't do things like that." Zeke, in his narrative also spoke about the cultural of that era. "I did what most kids of the 50's and 60's did, played war, belonged to cubs and scouts, and watched TV. I remember seeing a lot of war shows during that time and there were lots of war toys. I remember that the expression 'what did you do in the war' was a common phrase and a topic of conversation." All had seen pictures or medals or other memorabilia of their father's war experiences. One cannot help but wonder how it would be for a young boy seeing these things and knowing that somehow these were objects of great meaning.

The paradox here is situated in both the narratives and the follow-up questions. All men wanted more from their fathers than their fathers were capable of giving. Despite that some spoke lovingly about their relationships, at some level it didn't work. For some, their father's emotional distancing had a large impact on their lives, and all stated that the war affected their fathers. Some were able to articulate how their fathers were affected while others said they just knew the war did affect them. It would appear that there is more than simply being raised in the 50s going on. The contrast in the narratives would indicate that on one hand, the cultural influence of the era was evident, on the other
hand, the impact of the war on their fathers tells of something that is more salient than culture. There does remain a constant that crosses the bounds of culture. Boys crave their father’s love and acceptance. Many go out of their way to get it and many more still are crippled by their father’s absence or disapproval (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

In this research two voices, the participants and my own as the researchers were heard. The voices that are silenced are the fathers and perhaps at a different level the mothers. All but three of the fathers were alive at the time of these interviews. Two fathers encouraged their sons to participate while the other was somewhat reluctant. For many it was difficult to speak any ill of their fathers. Some protected their fathers despite the emotional absence they spoke about growing up with them. It is as if that at this stage of their lives, these men feel a large sense of loyalty and pride about their fathers especially those whose fathers had passed away. However, the silenced voices of the fathers, in this research, remain silent.

**Attachment Theory**

Several of the participants stated that their mothers were the “keepers of the house.” A few said that their mothers provided much of the emotional support to them as they grew up. Some commented on the strained marital relationships between their parents. Using the template of attachment theory, it appears that overall, mothers were more involved with and more sensitive to the
needs of the participants as children than were the fathers. This gap appears to get wider as they became older which is consistent with the literature on attachment. Of particular importance to this study is that of Cummings and O’Reily (1997) who suggest that three important pathways contribute to the secure attachment with children to their fathers.

Of the three pathways suggested by Cummings and O’Reily paternal psychological well-being seems to play an important role in this study. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact nature of the emotional distancing that most of the participants indicated their fathers did, however, it does point to their fathers combat experience. It would seem that this fact might impinge on the development of a secure attachment with the father. It may also contribute to the mothers over functioning and picking up the slack, so to speak, and cover for the fathers seemingly lack of emotional support.

Of further importance is the nature of the marital relationship and its relationship to attachment. According to Lamb (1997) the quality of this relationship has a direct bearing on the level of attachment. If through combat experience a father learns to be emotionally distant this would make it difficult in the long term to build a secure marital relationship. This point was touched upon in this research.
There are two sides to the argument about combat trauma and its outcome. The first says essentially, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. The other argument tells a much different story. The important factor in trauma theory appears to be the length of exposure to the trauma. This seems to be the case especially in the area of PTSD. However, in the absence of a diagnosis of PTSD there are many PTSD like symptoms that can come from extended exposure.

Several studies cited in this research pointed to emotional distancing or emotional numbing, a category in the DSM IV (APA, 1994) under the heading of posttraumatic stress disorder. Most all participants told of their father's emotional distance. All stated that their fathers did not want to talk about their war experiences or avoided talking in depth about them. The quote from Harkness' (1993) study seems to fit here where the Vietnam veteran says that it was important for him to get on with his life and put the war behind him. For reasons unknown to the participants all fathers had a "conspiracy of silence" and many participants knew that the topic of the war was off limits. The conspiracy of silence was perhaps the best way many of these veterans could put the sights, sounds and smells of war behind them. It was perhaps a way to cope and move forward with their lives. I recall my father telling me that putting the war behind him was what was expected. He said there were thousands of others in the same boat so why should he complain, indicating that no one would want to listen.
Several sons, as if protecting their fathers, said that they would not want to cause their fathers further harm by having him talk about it. This raises an interesting point. There is a desire to know what their fathers did, yet the desire to know is overshadowed by not wanting to cause upset or harm by asking questions about the war. So for many sons all they are left with is filling in the blanks.

For some their fathers emotional numbing was contagious. Several sons spoke about their own emotional struggle with close relationships. A few were very articulate about how their relationship with their father affected their own relationships. Some have been able to mend the relationship with their fathers and as their fathers have become older, there have been cracks in the walls that surrounded the stories of war. One of the sons spoke about how he needs to be careful with his offspring so he does not recreate with them the relationship he had with his father.

All spoke about the impact the war had on their fathers. A few spoke of the positive attributes they thought their fathers had gained, but most spoke about the impact combat had on their fathers in a negative way. Despite what has been written about World War II being a "good war" and how Vietnam was a political war that was not supported by the people of the United States, the threads that connect the experiences of these warriors is similar – some positive and some negative.
The intent of this research was to interview sons of World War II combat veteran fathers. There was no attempt to classify or categorize the fathers as having an existing diagnosis of or seeking treatment for PTSD. All fathers whose sons participated in this research would be considered successful in terms of family and career. They all married raised a family and did well after their discharge from combat duties.

In framing this study in terms of combat trauma and transgenerational trauma, there appears to be a solid link between the two. The combat fathers were exposed to the more likelihood of that father carrying some aspects of what was witnessed into their post-combat lives. As such, all sons knew there were certain topics that were off limits while they struggled to have a meaningful relationship with their fathers. The implications for sending men and women into combat have implications for the second generation.
Chapter 5: Discussion

At the 1995 Vimy awards commemorating the extraordinary victory of Canadian troops during the First World War, General Dallaire gave a speech related to the war in Rwanda:

'I have sent men to serious injury and even to their deaths in accomplishing near impossible military and humanitarian tasks. We have seen thousands hacked and dying, mothers holding dehydrated children, children surviving among the corpses of the rest of their family. We have witnessed hysteria driven people to murder, and others throw their children at us for protection as they ran in mortal fear. We have witnessed Dante devils from hell run amok in what was once paradise on earth. I have seen fear in the eyes of officers and watched soldiers cower in mortal dread. I was - as others were - on occasion left for lost in battle behind belligerent lines. Many Canadian military personnel are living these types of experiences ... These peacekeepers are the new breed of full-fledged veterans of Canada.' (Off, 2000, p. 117)

This research sought to gain a meaningful understanding of what it was like for sons to grow-up with World War II combat veteran fathers. The narrative approach based on Marla Arvay's (2000 & in press) collaborative narrative approach was selected as the appropriate method for a project of this nature. The selection of this method was based on four important points. The first point was to provide a rich in depth means of analysis of the taped interviews and transcripts. The four separate readings of the transcripts provided a multi-dimensional understanding of the participants' experiences. The second point was to write a narrative in the first person that reflected the participants' experiences on various levels - meaning the story is not only situated in time and space but also within the culture of that time. The third point, writing the
narratives in the first person, allowed the participants to see themselves and bring a deeper personal meaning to their narratives. The amount of positive feedback from the ten participants attested to the significance of presenting the narratives in this form. Finally, the fourth point is that narrative inquiry provided a strategic means for constructing the grand narratives and themes.

The narrative accounts presented in Chapter 4 are based on a synthesis of conversations I had with 10 participants around the research topic. As there is no research directly related to this topic, comparison to related research is difficult. Moreover, this research study did not attempt to pathologize the fathers in any way. In other words, there was no attempt to ascertain whether the fathers did have PTSD. Interestingly, however it did become clear through the interviews with the sons that some of their father’s symptoms would lead one to make a partial diagnosis of PTSD. For example, in my own case, my mother reported that for years my father would wake up at night yelling and be covered in perspiration. In all cases, the fathers returned from war and outwardly were successful by societal standards. All fathers were gainfully employed and overall, did well in their chosen occupations. Moreover, all the sons who were interviewed also have done well.

**Significant Findings**

Eight grand narrative themes were identified. In order of significance, they are: (a) not talking about combat experiences (n=10), (b) fathers’ personality
change (n=10), (c) emotional distance/numbing (n=10), (d) telling humour or anecdotal stories of war (n=9), (e) difficulty in imagining father in combat (n=9), (f) role of the mother (n=9), (g) pride in father (n=8), and (h) parallel relationships (n=7)/recognition (n=6). These themes support, qualify and extend the literature presented in Chapter II. In this section the eight themes will be examined together with the literature.

Not talking about combat experiences is well supported in the literature. Several studies speak about the reluctance of combat veterans to discuss their combat experience (Elder et al., 1997; Harvey, Stein, & Scott, 1995; McGoldrick, 1993). The etiology of not talking, according to the literature comes from various sources. The main reason is simply not wanting to remember the horrors of what was witnessed. To do so would invite feelings and emotions that have been well buried or repressed (Lilienfeld & Loftus, 1998). McGoldrick (1993) suggested that fathers did not want to talk in order to protect the son from the harsh realities of combat. The general consensus of many D-Day participants was to just avoid discussion of combat horrors with their families. They felt that not talking was the best way to deal with the horrors of combat because others would not want to hear it nor understand it. They also indicated that they would not know where to start (Harvey, Stein, & Scott, 1995). This also suggests too, that there is a fear of the emotional impact that telling may have and the loss of emotional control it might invite. Several participants in this study stated that they would not want to cause their father any emotional upset and knew that by their father
telling his combat stories that may happen. Yet on the part of the sons, there is a
genuine curiosity of wanting to know and the regret of not knowing.

Personality change is the next theme. It too, was supported in the
extensively about how intense witnessing of traumatic events changes people
and their beliefs about the world. Lenore Terr (1990) also speaks about the
preceding personality change after experiencing trauma. For most of the
participants in this study, their father's personality change dealt with their
father's lack of emotional and physical involvement with them. Many stated that
had their fathers not gone to war they wouldn't have been so aloof and would
have been more involved and encouraging of them. Many of the studies cited in
this research on combat trauma reported that the majority of combat veterans
suffered from some sort of depression. Archibald and Tudderham (1965) in their
twenty-year follow-up in World War II combat veterans reported that three
quarters of their study group (n=147) reported that their combat experiences
induced depression and had interfered with family life.

What is remarkable in this study is that all fathers were outwardly
successful in their post-war lives as reported by their sons. Success meant that
they returned from war, became gainfully employed, married and had children.
None of the fathers was reported to have had any mental-health care post-war.
Yet, all participants reported that their fathers had changed because of the war.
This appears to be somewhat consistent with the literature however, most of the
literature deals with veterans who have been identified in some way as having PTSD or seeking treatment for PTSD.

Emotional distancing or numbing is the next theme that was consistent across all the participants. Of all other areas in the literature, this theme is consistent (e.g. Archibald & Tuddenham, 1967; Elder et al. 1997; Rosenhech & Nathan, 1985). It is also consistent with the Holocaust literature (Hass, 1990; Last & Klein, 1984). Fontana and Rosenheck (1994) studied World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans and noted the generality of this experience across all three wars. There is no specific cause of emotional distancing in the literature other than it is contained in a larger view of perceived difficulty in relationships. Generally, however, emotional numbing is reported by the veteran either through self-reports or though various assessment tools. Accordingly, little has been done in the way of researching father/child relationships (Ruscio, Weathers, King, & King, 2002). Ruscio et al. in their study of Vietnam Veterans’ relationships with their children reported that the higher level of the father’s emotional numbing had a greater impact on the quality on the father/child relationship. The variable these authors used to define relationship included misbehaviour, positive sharing, disagreement, contact and overall quality. Throughout the narratives in this research, participants commented extensively on these relationship categories. For example, many said that there was a lack of sharing, much interpersonal disagreement, and limited contact both physically and emotionally. Several of the participants commented on the quality of their
relationship with their father, especially in the follow-up interviews saying how they would have wanted more time and contact with their fathers.

The next theme was telling only humorous or anecdotal stories. There is little mention of this theme in the military literature, in part this is because most if not all the literature focuses on pathology. Many studies are conducted in and around clinical settings and use quantitative instruments to assess levels of pathology in their subject groups. It would be unlikely that the theme of telling only humorous or anecdotal stories would emerge. However, humour and anecdotal stories are often part of professions that involve stressful situations (Avray & Wileman, 1996).

Despite this absence of this theme in the literature it seems plausible given that telling what really did happen could invite intrusive, traumatic memories. However, given the culture of the military and the culture of war, there were bound to have been some interesting and good times (Spiro, Schnurr, & Aldwin, 1997). These times would be easily shared especially in the company of those who also shared the same of similar experiences. Although, as Arvay and Wileman (1996) point out in their study on stress in the trauma field, humour is often a coping mechanism. Taken from this angle, it would make sense to assume that if veterans were to get together one would hear humour and anecdotes throughout their conversations.

The next theme that was identified was the participants’ struggles with seeing their fathers in combat. McGoldrick (1993) commented in his dissertation
on how sons wanted to understand their fathers’ combat experiences. Similarly, Roenheck and Nathan (1985) in their single case study suggest that like children of Holocaust survivors, children of combat veterans “have a preoccupation with events that were traumatic for [their] fathers” (p. 539). While these two studies do not directly relate to this theme, they do bare witness to the struggle many of the participants in this study had with wanting more information yet fearing it might upset their fathers.

Many of the participants could easily discuss their fathers in uniform and some commented on the good times that their fathers had during the war. Almost all participants struggled with visualizing their fathers in actual combat. To some extent, it would seem that at some level they wanted to identify with their fathers as a way to bridge their relationship.

The theme of the mother’s role in relationship with the sons of combat veterans could not be found in the literature. However Nelson and Wright (1996) refer to the role of caretaker in their article on understanding and treating post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in female partners of Vietnam veterans with PTSD. They defined care taking as taking responsibility for household matters and maintenance of the relationship. Accordingly, these authors state that these mothers oversee the caring of their children’s emotional, physical and psychological needs and tend to put their own needs after the needs of others.
Rosenheck (1986) also alluded to an offspring’s relationship with the mother. This study suggested that due to a father’s emotional distance because of PTSD, sons became closer to their mothers.

The role of mothers in this study is important. Some participants stated that their mothers were the ones that held the family together and supplied the emotional nurturance and warmth that was lacking from their fathers, similar to the above studies. On the other hand, some participants spoke of their mothers with derision, while acknowledging the importance of her role.

Pride in father was also underdeveloped in the literature. All participants in this study demonstrated a strong identification with their fathers as veterans and all spoke about their fathers with pride. This fact was unaccounted for in the literature but seems to be an important aspect of the relationship especially as the sons get older.

The final theme is recognition and parallel relationships. Aaron Hass (1990) suggested that many of the Holocaust offspring tried hard to impress their parents but were not recognized nor rewarded for their efforts. He also speaks about parents’ lack of emotional availability as an important factor in shaping their children’s worldview. Yablonsky (1982) also addresses this. He suggests that a father’s perceptions and assumptions are passed on to the son and form the backbone of his son’s worldview. Other studies that support these two themes include Rosenheck, (1986) and Ruscio et al. (2002).
Limitations

There are several limitations that may be considered when evaluating this study. First, the results of this study cannot be generalized to any clear population because of the small number of participants. The participants in this study do not represent a sample drawn from a definable population. For example this study cannot be extended to sons whose fathers had or have been diagnosed with PTSD. Also due to the exploratory nature of this study generalizing to a population was not intended.

The second important limitation of this study is the cultural factor. The image of the father in the post-war era is different than it is today. Several sons commented on their fathers as being a father of the 50’s. How large a part does the culture of the era contribute to this? Without further investigation it is a difficult question to answer. More research would need to be done. Extending this point one step further there was no way to determine the fathers’ pre-war disposition. In other words, did the war really have an effect on the fathers’ personality? If they had not gone to war would the way they parented been any different? As an exploratory study this study did not account for this possibility.

Third, replication of this study would be difficult given the background of the participants and the background of their fathers. There was no control limits set for branch of fathers service be it army, navy or air force. Furthermore, there was no control limits set for the kind of combat encountered. For the sons there were no control limits set on the kind of definable relationship the son had with
the father in terms of either a good or bad relationship. There was also no attempt to control both where the sons were situated in the family, and whether the son was born prior to the father’s combat experience or after the father’s return to home. This may have a bearing on the kinds of relationships that sons have with their fathers, although the results of this study would suggest otherwise. Finally, females were excluded from this study; this was a conscious decision based on time constraints for this dissertation despite several daughters wanting to participate in this study.

Fourth, this study employed only one method of analysis relying entirely on first person self-reports. Self-reports are limited to what the participants wish to tell about their relationships with their fathers. As noted earlier, several sons wanted to protect their fathers and at times, had difficulty speaking about the negative factors of their relationships. Moreover, the voices of the fathers are notably absent from this research.

For further research a greater source of triangulation may be helpful. However, this research did accumulate over 40 hours of interview data. Interpretation of the data was done systematically, developed into a narrative and given back to the participants for their validation to ensure rigor. Four independent reviews were also asked to provide feedback. All four reviews had experience with one of the following: using the system of analysis, working with veterans, having a father who retired from the military, or who is in a paramilitary organization. For future research it may be beneficial to employ
independent reviews who are: a) combat veterans and, b) sons of combat veterans who are not involved in the study.

Fifth, the original system of analysis developed by Marla Arvay (in press) called for the participants to also do four independent readings of their transcripts while the researcher also does the four interpretive readings. Participants then got together with the researcher to collaboratively discuss the interpretations of the four readings. Armed with this information, the researcher then does the writing of the narratives. Modifications to her collaborative narrative approach were necessary because of the larger number of participants in this study together with the amount of time available to complete this study. As Arvay states, "If you don't have the luxury of this kind of time, you could do the narrative method utilizing the four readings without the collaborative element. However, I believe, the interpretive process will be compromised" (p. 271). In part I agree, however, the style utilized to obtain the narrative in this study provided a rich source of data and I would disagree that the interpretive process was overly compromised.

Implications for Research

Several implications for future research can be extended from this study. Given the recent interest in our returning peacekeepers this research has direct application. Using the eight themes found in this research it would be possible to extend these results to both male and female peacekeepers and their sons and/or
daughters. Despite the limitations of this study the utility for further
development of this for peacekeepers is important. The eight themes provide a
foundation on which to develop a program for assisting returning peacekeepers
into assimilating their experiences into the family. This has utility on two fronts.
Firstly, for those peacekeepers who already have a family and are gone for
extended periods of time, and secondly for those peacekeepers that come back
and start their own families. Given the outcomes of this research it may be
prudent to complete further research on the collateral, transgenerational effect of
war trauma.

The narrative method used in this research could be changed and
developed into both group and individual therapeutic interventions. This
process could be developed from the actual telling of the story and from the
written narrative derived from the audio taped story. Participants were asked to
tell their stories about their fathers from their earliest memories. As the stories
unfolded, insight into their father’s behaviour often became apparent. Several
participants said that they had never really thought about their fathers as combat
veterans until they started talking about them. After the interview, many said
that the process was therapeutic and if they had the opportunity, would like to
ask their fathers many of the same questions asked to them. There appeared to be
a sense of understanding that came after telling their stories about their fathers. It
was as if there was a sense of realization of what their fathers went through.
Therefore, there is tremendous value in incorporating narrative approach into a therapeutic intervention.

This narrative method could also be incorporated into a program for the veterans themselves perhaps in the form of a life story around what they experienced and witnessed. This could be done either individually, or in a group format. Based on the implications from this research, further work could be done to incorporate both verbal and written narrative as a form of therapy, providing a powerful intervention for both veterans and their families.

In this study, it was extremely powerful to see middle-aged men express their suffering and grief, along with regrets of a type of relationship with their fathers they longed for and were never fulfilled. Having seen and heard first hand these painful life narratives I shudder to think of another generation of fathers and sons experiencing the same patterns of strained, distant relationships. The negative impact of this key relationship appears to spiral into marital relationships, parent child relationships and employment and career direction struggles. The results of this study could be used to educate therapists and counsellors whose clients are returning peacekeepers.

This research could also be applied to the larger context of fathers who have to be absent from their families for extended periods of time, as well as direct application to police, fire, and ambulance personnel who are exposed to trauma on a daily basis. Would men and women working in these environments have similar kinds of themes that were found in this study?
Are females affected the same way males are in their relationships with combat veteran fathers? Several women indicated that they would have liked to participate in this research. Also some of the participants indicated that it would have been interesting to interview their sisters as they experienced similar difficulties in their relationship with the father.

Finally, there were many veterans that did not have problems after experiencing combat. A comparative study of father/son relationships where the fathers had openly spoke about their combat experiences and was not emotionally distant from their sons to explore positive experiences that may come from war. Overall, there needs to be further studies that explore the trangenerational effects of war. This may also inform the area of attachment theory between father and son that seems to be lacking.

**Implications for Counselling**

The process of counselling is to aid in the healthy development and understanding of relationships. In a modest way, this research contributes to the literature on father/son relationships. The impact of the father/son relationship was found to be still powerful despite the fact all the participants were middle-aged and older. The lingering effects of their relationships were very evident and for some, still unresolved. The father/son relationship has a special place in counselling that can easily be overlooked.
The findings of this research inform the practice of counselling in several different ways. All of the participants wanted more from their fathers. All were able to articulate what it would have been like had their fathers been more involved with them. Some carry more scars and regrets than others, but it appears that to some extent all were affected by their fathers’ lack of involvement in their lives. Whether it is the realization that they have created a parallel relationship with their children or that they realize they have had to work through the problems that they had because of their relationships. For others there was a sense of loss and regret for not knowing their fathers better.

From a holistic perspective men are reluctant to speak about their relationships with their fathers or to put down the emotional distance as that is just the way it was. Underneath there is a longing for something more and the emotional residue of what is left from childhood. As men, our relationships with our fathers are important yet there are few venues to express the importance. The counsellor needs to pay particular attention to this relationship. For what drives many men comes from their fathers. As Osherson (1986) states, “There is compelling evidence that fathers remain psychologically very significant figures for men in adulthood” (p. 18).

There is little written about attachment issues in fathers and sons. However, there appears to be some evidence that a son’s inability to attach to his father has repercussions in later life. A counsellor could use this to discuss what it would mean to have a “good enough” relationship with his father. This would
allow the son to explore what he didn’t get from his father but would have liked. This has implications for the son’s relationships with a partner and with his own offspring. We often regret what we longed to have but seldom do we do anything about it.

It was seen in this study that virtually all the fathers’ war experience were hidden. For some sons there were many questions left unanswered. A counsellor could encourage the son to explore the meaning that combat had on their father’s life as well as on their own. My own experience in therapy was that there was little time devoted to that period in my father’s life, yet it had such a large impact on his life and subsequently, on his life with me.

For a counsellor working from a systems perspective, sons are likely to feel their fathers pain more acutely than others in the family. As was the case in this study, some sons will carry that pain into their own lives and it has shaped their choices of marital partners, career choices, and impact on their own children. As these children come into counselling asking about their grandfathers it may shed light on what is happening in the here and now.

Another important factor when working with men is the culture of their youth. What did it mean to be male and grow up, in this case in the 1950’s and 1960’s? This is an important factor that is often overlooked in counselling. For example, during this era the father role was one of being the traditional male so that sons growing up during that time would have had that modelled for them.
Today that role has changed. Many sons try to be different than their fathers. At the same time, however, as sons, we try to unconsciously live up to their image.

The most striking implication for counselling however, is how this research can be used to assist Canada's returning peacekeepers and their families in adjusting to civilian life. It is human nature to not invite memories that are painful and not pleasant. Yet, it is quite natural for those that are close to the combatant to wonder and question about past experiences, but responses that necessarily quell inquiries sets up a relationship barrier. Numbness, emotional distance, and not talking about war experiences shut loved ones out.

An exceptionally powerful example comes from the life of Canadian Brigadier General Romeo Dallaire, chosen in 1993 to head up the UN Peacekeeping mission to Rwanda. The traumatic impact of his peacekeeping experience on both his family and his personal well being is clearly laid out in the book, The Lion, the Fox and the Eagle by Carol Off (2000):

Dallaire's family and friend noticed the changes, even if they didn't come across on the TV screen. Dallaire's wife tried to remain private throughout the difficult times, but Dallaire told his friends that Beth was suffering. Two of their children needed therapy in order to help cope with their father's ordeal. He was overwhelmed. The smell of fresh fruit in the grocery store made him break down and weep. While shopping in a farmer's market with his wife, the sight of ground and cut meat at the butcher's counter almost made him retch (it recalled the image of butchered babies and children). (p. 94)

Establishing small group formats, where returning peacekeepers could talk amongst themselves, would provide the needed opportunity to normalize the numbness and to examine how the numbness can infect those that are close
to them. A group format would provide ways for them to deal with the inevitable questions that surely will come. The group would allow them to see that natural curiosity is human nature and a way that those that are close to them try to understand them. Based on this research the long-term implication of numbness and emotional distance has far reaching effects.

Another important consideration form this research is the need to develop support groups for spouses and partners of returning peacekeepers. These support groups could also include offspring. As seen in this research, much or the burden of running and maintaining the home fell on the wives, and while some of the marriages in this research remained intact, some were unhappy unions and a few ended in divorce. In my experience as a co-founder and co-facilitator of a support group for spouses of peacekeepers in Edmonton, Alberta during 2001-2002, I found several of the themes in this research echoed by these women. All spoke about their partner’s personality change, emotional numbing and distancing, not wanting to speak about their combat experiences, and how the household responsibilities fell on them. They also claimed that with their children, their husbands had difficulty having a close relationship with them. They commented at how quick and harsh they could be with their children; yet tell their spouses how much they cared about them. Overlooking the spouses, partners and offspring of peacekeepers does not support the peacekeeper. In fact, it forces them to seek out and find there own rank and file further removing
themselves from the family. It maintains the military attitude of keeping to yourself.

This research clearly points to the need for such groups especially after peacekeepers are discharged. As this research demonstrated that after discharge there is an implicit expectation to get on with one’s life and put the military experience behind. Carol Off writes, “[Dallaire] is intensely emotional in the video, but ever conscious that this is an educational tool, he urges others to get help for what the military has identified as a crisis within its ranks of post-traumatic stress disorder- almost all of it attributed to peacekeeping missions. ‘If you lose a leg, it’s obvious. You lose your marbles, it’s hard to explain or to get help.’ Breaking down is seen as a betrayal of the codes of soldering” (p. 100). It is in fact difficult to walk away from war and combat exposure and leave as if turning the page to a new chapter in a book. Upon discharge, as was told to me by a discharged peacekeeper, you cannot go back to the fold. In fact, you are not welcome. After being a part of a very insulated organization that takes care of you and for those peacekeeper that have families, you are turned out on your own. Overall, there should be support for families both during repatriation after tours of duty and after discharge.

Finally, there is the consideration of those peacekeepers that are on tour and leave families behind. It would appear more than logical to look at providing these families with support while the member is away on tour. Support groups for spouses and children would assist in a healthier transition
when the peacekeeper returns from tour. It would provide the partners and spouses with a forum to express their concerns, worries and fears about what their partners have endured. It would provide opportunities for them to see that they are not alone in their struggles. Moreover, it would provide a much needed opportunity to share with others what has and has not worked for them in their relationships both from a parenting point of view, and from simply being in a relationship with a peacekeeper.

Summary

This exploratory study sought to understand how it was for sons to grow up with a World War II combat veteran father. Using a modified collaborative narrative approach for constructing individual narratives, this study attempted to understand the kind of relationship that developed over the years between father and son. Three areas in the literature were used to provide a foundation upon which this study is built. They are: trangenerational trauma, attachment theory, and father/son relationships. The existing literature concerning this topic is largely made up of survey, case study, or studies that employ various instruments that assess some level of pathology based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual criteria. Generally these studies have drawn upon a clinical population where the combat veteran fathers or parents have a pre-existing diagnosis of PTSD. The aim of this study however, was to employ a non-clinical...
application to understand the relationship between combat veteran fathers and their sons and to explore the outcomes of that relationship.

For each of the 10 men who participated in this study a narrative of their story was constructed. Each narrative was returned, reviewed and edited by each participant. Each narrative was also subjected to an independent review. From these 10 narratives a grand narrative was constructed where 8 common themes were extracted. Three of these themes were consistent across all 10 participants while the other 5 themes were in seven or more of the participants. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from the individual’s narrative.

Two follow-up questions were asked after each participant received and reviewed his narrative. The nature of the follow-up questions were to gain a deeper understanding of what the sons wanted from their fathers and queried how that may have made a difference in their lives. All 10 participants were asked the same question. A grand narrative was also constructed for each question.

Various aspects of father/son relationships became clear from this research. One does not escape from the relationship once one leaves home. There also appeared to be a sense of sadness expressed by those whose father have died that they never had the chance to really speak to them about the war. The “conspiracy of silence” and under disclosure still haunts several of the participants. Despite this silence and at times emotional distance, their fathers played a critical role in their lives. For the field of counselling psychology this
may generate more of a focus on this area and on the importance of helping to facilitate a dialogue between father and son.


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Appendix A: Questionnaire Cover Letter
consist of validating and collaboration of the post-interview summary created by the researcher.

Your total participation time on this study will be approximately 5 hours, including completing the pre-interview questionnaire, over a two-month time period.

Confidentiality

Any information resulting from this research will be kept completely confidential. Upon signing the informed consent form you will be given a code number to ensure the maintenance of confidentiality. You will also be asked to provide a male pseudonym. The pseudonym will be used to personalize the research findings. The pseudonym will be strictly confidential and only known by you and myself. Participants will not be identified by the use of any other names or initials. Interviews will be taped recorded, transcribed and transcripts given a code number to ensure confidentiality. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Upon completion of the study these tapes will be erased. Transcripts will be kept for a total of 5 years, and then destroyed.

Please note: You are not to put your name on the questionnaire. A completed questionnaire assumes your consent has been given.

Please have the completed questionnaire with you when you are interviewed.
Introductory Questionnaire

Please answer all the following questions as best you can. Feel free to add to this page should you need more room. Also please remember to bring this with you for the interview, and **DO NOT put your name on this questionnaire.** Thank you very much!

1. In which branch of the Armed Forces did you father serve during World War II?

2. Specifically, in what unit (squadron) did he serve and where was it located?

3. What was his rank during his time in active combat?

4. What were his duties?

5. If your father served in specific campaigns could you please list them?

6. As a result of being in combat did anything happen to him and what was the outcome?

7. When did your father return to Canada?

8. What did he do when he first returned?

9. Has your father ever spoken to you about his life in the war? What did he tell you?

10. How old were you when you first knew your father was a war veteran?
List of Possible Interview Questions

This list of possible interview questions is provided to you so that you may get a feel for what the interview is about and to get you thinking about your relationship with your father. **You do not need to answer these questions.** Some or all of these questions may be asked in the course of the interview.

1. Do you feel his being in the war influenced your father's parenting style? How and in what ways?
2. I would like to ask you to think back on your relationship with your father. You indicated that in some way your father's war experience affected your relationship with him. As you think back in what ways did it affect your relationship?
3. Do you remember an occasion when your father's war experience directly impacted in some way on your relationship or an interaction?
4. Do you feel your father's personality was affected in any way because of his war experience? How and in what ways?
5. Do you feel that your father was a hero? Why is that?
6. Have you tried or thought about following in your father's footsteps? For example job, parenting, hobbies.
7. Have you ever thought you would have liked to experience first-hand what your father went through?
8. What is one thing you would like to have from your father that up till now you haven't received in terms of his war experience? E.g. knowledge, emotion, acknowledgement?
9. As you look back on your relationship with your father, how do you feel his war experience played a role in your life?
10. How do you feel about being a son of a World War II veteran?
Appendix B: Letter of Introduction
June 23, 2001

Dear Sir,

My name is Alan Smitton, and I am a Doctoral student in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. One of my degree requirements is to complete a dissertation, and I have therefore chosen the topic “Sons’ Stories of Growing up with a World War II Combat Veteran Father.” A combat veteran, for this study, is defined as a veteran who served in active military combat unit (army, navy or air force) for a minimum of six (6) months, and who was in a position of being killed and in a position of killing. If you feel that your father’s war experience impacted your relationship and your father’s war experience matches that above criteria, I invite you to read on.

This study consists of three parts: a pre-interview questionnaire together with a list of questions that may be used in the interview to assist you in knowing the direction of the interview, one interview and one follow-up interview based on a summary transcript made from the first interview. The first interview will be 90 minutes in length and will be composed of an introduction to the purpose and formalities of the study, a consent form review, and recollections of how it was to grow up with your father. The second interview will be approximately 90 minutes in length and will consist of validating and collaborating the first set of data given during the first interview. Your total time commitment would be approximately 5 hours, this includes the amount of time needed to complete the pre-interview questionnaire. This 5-hour commitment would be over a two-month period.

The information resulting from this research will be kept completely confidential. Participants will not be identified by the use of names or initials. However, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym in order to personalize the research finding. This pseudonym will only be known between you and myself. Interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed and coded to protect confidentiality. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. After the completion of the interviews the tapes will be erased and the transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years.

This is a purely voluntary study. There will be no monetary compensation to participants. There is an opportunity for the results of the study to be made to you. There is very little research on this topic and your contribution will add
Appendix C: Consent Form
Consent

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

I consent to participate in this study.

______________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature        Date

______________________________  _________________
Signature of Witness           Date
## Appendix D: Data Spreadsheet

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Big Bear</th>
<th>Frank</th>
<th>Corky</th>
<th>George</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Lesley</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Rob</th>
<th>Winston</th>
<th>Zeke</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Pride in what he did</td>
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