

# FEMINISTS RESEARCHING FATHERING: WHAT DO WE SEE THROUGH A RECONCILIATION LENS?

*Deborah E. Connors*

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A reading of fathering discourses in the North American equality feminist communities and profeminist fathering communities reveals conflicting interests and beliefs, despite a shared goal of “gender equality.” This article argues that identity conflict and reconciliation theory has application to this epistemological conflict and can illuminate the challenges and potential for the adoption of a feminist research approach focused on reconciliation. Theoretical understandings emerging from peace and conflict literature provide a powerful tool to reveal new insights regarding research on fathering. By extension, we can postulate the relevance and power of peace and conflict theory to analyze other gender conflicts and constructively address the issues involved in the reconciliation of these conflicts.

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## INTRODUCTION

Oppressed identity-based groups justifiably put their energy and resources toward righting the wrongs they have experienced, but this can lead to seeing the issues as purely external. A review of reconciliation literature would suggest that resolving identity-based conflict also requires a look inward. This article presents an attempt by a long-time feminist activist, Andrea Doucet, to undertake such an inward examination using identity-based conflict and reconciliation theory. The case study chosen for this exploration concerns North American social science discourses on involved fathering, discourses that usually focus on mothering. Feminist goals of gender equality are taken as the starting point in these discourses;<sup>1</sup> this allows the analysis to focus on

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