

THE EXPERIENCE OF SINGLE FATHERS AS PRIMARY CAREGIVERS

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ABSTRACT

Single-parent households are on the increase in our society and especially single-father households where fathers are fulfilling the role of both parents in rearing their children. In this qualitative study, three single fathers who are primary caregivers were interviewed regarding their experience of primary caregiving, adjusting and coping with the transition to primary caregiving and their needs and concerns for their children's future. This study utilised a phenomenological approach to look at single fathers as the best and most informed individuals to explore and describe their lived experiences of being primary caregivers. The rationale for using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is that it is concerned with individuals' subjective reports and assumes that participants seek to interpret their experiences into some form that is understandable to them. The researcher utilised three semi-structured, in depth, face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection. Each interview focused on eliciting different sets of data, firstly the researcher look at identifying the participants' experience of primary caregiving, then moved onto their adjusting and coping with the transition and finally focused on the primary needs and concerns of participants with regards to primary caregiving. The sub-themes that emerged from the study include the loss of a partner, shifts in the role the fathers play as parent, dealing with children's reaction to the "loss" of a mother in the home, good parenting: biology vs upbringing, social construction of men and woman, the value of self-care for single fathers, where self-care incorporates both physical and mental care, internal support from family or friends, external support from the community, relationship between fathers and children and sibling relationships. These led to the various super-ordinate themes. The super-ordinate themes and categories that resulted from the analysis of the material include: (1) The transition to being a single-parent and primary caregiver was difficult, (2) Parenting is not biological it is cultural and fathers can fulfil the role, (3) Self-care is important, (4) Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare, (5) Close family relationships are formed.

Keywords: Fathers, single-parent, caregiving, parenting

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Single fathers have definitely reshaped their position in society in the 21st century as not only providers but primary carers of their children. Many social trends have led to the change in the way fathers are viewed or shaped in society. According to Carpenter (2002) stereotypes of the Victorian father have been portrayed as an authoritarian structure that was unconcerned with nurturance and aimed to fulfil the sole role of family provider. Due to the many historical periods fathers have slowly been removed from the direct care of their children to fulfil the role of breadwinner. It is only in the last century that fathers have slowly been regaining their place as a nurturer and carer in the home.

Although single fathers constitute a minority of one-parent families, over half a million men in the USA are rearing their minor children alone (Mendes, 1976). Single fatherhood is not entirely a new phenomenon, in recent years, the phenomenon of single fatherhood has changed (Mendes, 1976). As early as 1976 custody issues were being raised where mothers were automatically granted custody of their children, now a genuine decision to be made about which parent should have custody of the children (Mendes, 1976). Now an increasing number of fathers see, or otherwise obtain custody of their minor children. They do so, however, at a time in history where extended families do not readily assume the kinds of responsibilities they assumed without question in the past (Mendes, 1976). In today's world, fathers have had to manage caring for their children on their own. Consequently, fathers who attempt to rear their children alone must do so without clear guidelines or prescriptions for performing that role. Their struggles have, by large, remained undocumented (Mendes, 1976).

By definition, a single parent family consists of one parent and dependent children living in the same household (Orthner, Brown & Ferguson, 1976). The parent fulfilling the role of primary caregiver may be single due to widowhood, divorce, separation or non-marriage (Orthner, Brown & Ferguson, 1976). A single father, by definition, is a man who was rearing his minor children, without assistance of a co-parent.

Research conducted on fathers have shown the significance of this shift in the last century as the role and influence of fathers in childhood development has proved to be pivotal for the cognitive, psychological, educational social and emotional wellbeing of children (Rosenberg & Bradford Wilcox, 2006). As previous studies thought, fathers add more than the genetic makeup to their children and their role and influence play a significant role in the development of the child.

This change occurred in South Africa in the last century where fathers are being recognized for the role they play in their children's lives and these changes have been amended in the Children's Act of 2005 (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The changes in the act have attempted to give biological fathers equal rights and access to their children.

Although single fathers constitute a minority of one-parent families, over half a million men in the USA are rearing minor children alone. However, not as high as in the USA, in South Africa this phenomenon is on the rise especially since the amendment of the Children's act of 2005. These fathers must make special emotional, psychological, social and physical adjustments in order to function as single parents (Mendes, 1976).

The overall goal of this study is to explore and describe how single-fathers experience primary caregiving, how they adjust and cope with the transition to primary caregiving and what their concerns and needs are and the support systems available to them. An interpretive phenomenological approach will be used to look at primary caregivers as the best informed

authority to explore and describe their lived experiences of primary caregiving. It is hoped that the data collected will provide a detailed account of the experiences of single-fathers as primary caregivers and that this will spark an interest in further research.

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review of the present study. The literature review broadly looks at defining certain terms central to the study. It also looks at fatherhood from various angles. These include the evolution and social construction of fatherhood, redefining fatherhood by western perspective, fatherhood from an African perspective, the rights of fathers, paternal influences on child development and previous research.

Chapter 3 comprises an explication of the research methodology that was followed in the present study. This includes an overview of the research question, design, participation selection criteria, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation and the ethical consideration that were adhered to.

Chapter 4 comprises a detailed discussion of the results of the data analysis and interpretation process. The super-ordinate themes that emerged from the various sub-themes resulted from the data processing and analysis will be explored. In terms of the experience of single-fathers as primary caregivers reference will be made to the five themes identified which include: (1) The transition to being a single-parent and primary caregiver was difficult, (2) Parenting is not biological it is cultural and fathers can fulfil the role, (3) Self-care is important, (4) Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare and (5) Close family relationships are formed.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the themes identified in chapter 4 and makes use of present and past literature on single parenting and single fatherhood.

The final chapter summarises the major conclusions that can be drawn from the research findings. Recommendations and suggestions are made for future research in the field of single-parenting and primary caregiving and a reflection on the researchers experience is included.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to explore the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers, to identify their transition to being a single parent, how they have adjusted and coped with the change and the hopes and concerns they have for their children's future.

The 21st Century has been characterized by several important social trends that have fundamentally changed the socio-cultural context in which children are raised, reared and developed (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000). At the forefront of these social trends is the increase of single-fathers as primary caregivers of their children but also as the legal guardians with full custodial rights. According to Cabrera et al. (2000) social and historical contexts shape both popular and scholarly conceptions of children, families and parenting. These views have definitely changed over the years especially regarding the notions that defined what constituted a conventional family consisting of a father, mother and children.

Ultimately this would be the perfect description of a nuclear family, where traditionally the key role of the father, according to Callister (1995), has been that of primary income earner and the role of the mother that of primary caregiver. This has led to the implicit assumption that father-child relationships had little impact on children's development as fathers, according to Lamb (1975), were described as the forgotten contributors to a child's development. These ideas are being challenged by rapidly changing economic conditions and shifting ideas about the roles of both men and women (Callister, 1995). Fourteen years into the 21st century social changes have forced adjustments in both popular and scholarly conceptualizations of fathers, mothers and families (Cabrera et al., 2000). We have seen a tremendous shift and evolution from the conventional father as solely the breadwinner, to the modern more involved father, to the father as co-parent and ultimately in some cases to the

father as primary caregiver. Captured in literature, as I am aware of, single-parent fathers, in the second half of the 1900's, have been rearing their children and due to this it can no longer be considered a rare social occurrence (Smith & Smith, 1981, p. 411).

In trying to understand and make sense of this new trend and fathers' new role in society, the researcher will begin by defining some terms that will be relevant to the study.

2.1 Definition of Terms: Primary Caregivers and Single Fathers

Before defining these terms it is important to note that not all primary carers and single parents are the biological parents of their children. However, for the purpose of this study and for the inclusion criteria to be met the single parents and primary caregivers of the current study are the biological parents of their children.

A caregiver is defined as a family member or paid helper who regularly looks after a child ("Caregiver," 2009). For the purpose of this study, "primary caregivers" will be defined as the biological parent of children, who serve as parental figures, are solely responsible for their day-to-day care and maintenance and who have full custodial rights.

Single parent families can be defined as families where a parent lives with the dependent children either alone or in a larger household, without a spouse or partner ("Single parent families," 2009). Single fathers, for the purpose of the study will be defined as the biological fathers of children who have become the sole and primary provider of their children. They are defined as single as they are not married or cohabitating.

2.2 Evolution of Fatherhood

As important as it is to understand this new trend of fatherhood it is equally important to understand the evolution of fatherhood. There have been considerable discussions about the role of fathers in the family and in society in general. Most discussions centre on the importance of fathers for the health and development of their children. Differences in the parenting contributions made by mothers and fathers are often on how to increase the participation of fathers in the family (Geary, 2008). However, the question that these discussions should actually centre on is, Why is fatherhood found at all in humans?

In understanding this question, one would have to understand fatherhood across different species. Humans are among only 5% of mammalian species in which the males invest in the well-being of their offspring (Geary, 2008). Geary (2008) states that to understand the evolution and proximate expression of men's parenting, it is necessary to consider the relation between this investment and the following factors related to male parenting in other species. These factors include benefits to offspring, cuckoldry risk and the lost mating opportunity.

The evolutionary history of men's parental behaviour has almost certainly been influenced by the same cost-benefit trade-offs associated with paternal investment in other species (Geary, 2008). In understanding the social organization of fathers Geary (2008) argues that the possibilities can be guided by comparative analyses of evolutionary related species. Studying gorilla's was one way of comparing our species to the male species of gorilla's and what they found was that with the exception of strong male coalitions, the family groupings among these gorillas are very similar to the embedding of polygamous and monogamous families in human male kinship groups that is found in traditional societies (Geary, 2008).

The important point Geary made is that the family structure that includes mothers and

fathers and high levels of paternal investment has been part of our evolutionary history for millions of years.

2.3 Social Construction

Apart from the evolution of fatherhood, the construction of fatherhood is also greatly influenced and determined by personal experiences within a social context. Traditionally motherhood and fatherhood were asymmetrical roles. Mothers nurtured while fathers were more a simple presence in their children's lives than parenting fathers (Drakich, 1989). The "traditional" father is often defined by a variety of characteristics such as authority, breadwinner and emotionally distant. In today's world the more "modern" father, is seen as a friend to his children and shares in the nurturing, caretaking and household chores (Smidova, 2007). Smidova (2007), also argues that there are many other models of fatherhood such as the absent, divorced, new and active father, all described by various attributes. It is always important to consider the relationship of fatherhood to motherhood as gendered expectations have been challenged by images of motherhood and fatherhood in other cultures, different periods in history and even by the plurality of its form within different social strata (Smidova, 2007). Men can adopt or resist different models of fatherhood during their paternal life, depending on their social environment and the expectations placed on them. According to Smidova (2007), both men and women's roles and actions within the family follow patterns of expectation and stereotypes associated with social gender roles. Ultimately it is important to keep in mind that the role of fatherhood does not stand in opposition to the role of motherhood but the roles can change and sometimes blend regardless of the sex of the nurturer (Smidova, 2007). Research on the construction of fathers found men's definitions of themselves as fathers are constructed and determined by personal experience within a social

context (White, 1994). The study found that the negotiation and construction of the activities and definitions of fathering were structured by men's recollection of their relationships with their own fathers, as well as various aspects of masculinity and the power relations which it entails (White, 1994).

Most of the writing on gender differences and parenting is clearly individualistic which believe that by adulthood men and women have developed very different individual characteristics. Individualist theories would predict that single fathers lack both the internal motivation and the expressive skills to provide the intense intimacy necessary for nurturing children. In contrast, structural theories suggest that human behaviour, including family roles, is determined by the social context in which people live (Risman, 1986).

The current research will be informed by two broad constructs; the evolution of fatherhood and the social construction of fatherhood. In tying evolution and social construction together we find that both play an integral role in how fathers have become constructed and defined within society and that to a large extent the very definition we look to is based on a western perspective of fatherhood. For the present study, these two constructs allow us to understand fathers in terms of their structural characteristics and the shifting nature of understanding fatherhood, from evolution to social construction.

2.4 Redefining Fatherhood by Western Perspective

According to Carpenter (2002) the stereotype of the Victorian father is captured within portraits of that era where the father figure appears authoritarian, impervious and detached; the backbone of the family, an imposed structure that was unconcerned with nurture. This was the legacy of the nineteenth century. An important time in history, the Machine Age, that marked the revolution and redefined the father in his current image as economic

provider, friend and male role model, all rolled into one. Gaining an understanding of the reconfiguration of fatherhood during the Machine Age requires an understanding of fatherhood prior to the industrial revolution. The modernization of fatherhood had a ripple effect on a variety of “fatherhoods”. The root of the transformation did not affect every cultural group but rather a particular group. It was during this period that modernization played a part in the social construction and reification of the standard family and where the birth of the fathering discourse emerged (LaRossa, 1997).

Although fathers were expected and reprimanded to play a role in their children’s life they were not forced to fulfil the roles of mothers. However, the problem with this era is that it assumed and continues to assume that men had wives and women had husbands. The Victorian era definitely marked a remarkable change in the role of the father in the family and household. The era itself has become defined by gender-role contrasts and separate spheres in which men and women came to inhabit quite distinct worlds of culture and behaviour (Popenoe, 1996). Men, according to Popenoe (1996), distinctly withdrew from direct-care and parenting to specializing in the provider and breadwinner role. This led to fatherhood being seen as a part-time activity and redefined as having the wife as the assistant in the running of the home to the man being considered the part-time assistant to his wife (Popenoe, 1996). In the last century, fatherhood has redefined itself from the strict patriarchal model generated by the Victorian era to a more acceptable father figure that is softer, more liberal and one who acknowledges the need to get in touch with his feminine side (Carpenter, 2002). Patterns of fatherhood have changed and varied throughout history. Firstly men were farmers and craftsmen and worked from home and were more involved with their children. Then came the industrial revolution which changed this and sent fathers away to work in factories, keeping them apart from their children. Now once again times have changed and more men are working from home, increasing their contact with their children (Carpenter, 2002).

Interestingly enough this new age father is being praised for his new role and although it may have been gratifying for men in the late twentieth century to believe that they are the first generation to change a diaper or give a baby a bath, the simple truth is that they are not (LaRossa, 1997). This may be disappointing to many but what might be even more disappointing is the knowledge of not having what historians would call a usable past. LaRossa (1997), states that just as women have been denied the true knowledge of their ancestors and history they have had to argue as many women before them and have had to reinvent the wheel over and over again, generation after generation. It seems that the same thing has happened with respect to the history of fatherhood. According to LaRossa (1997, p. 3) historian John Demos stated that “fatherhood has a very long history but virtually no historians”.

Ultimately the point that LaRossa was trying to make was that fatherhood is not a new concept that has been invented by twentieth century fathers and nor is it the transformation of fathers into nurturers. The underlying truth is that fathers have been denied the value of knowing that there were others before them, others that shared the concept of what good fatherhood meant. And just as activist woman, activist men without a valid sense of history have been forced to reinvent the wheel endlessly repeating rather than building on what has come before (LaRossa, 2007).

The Western Perspective has definitely shaped and influenced the role and definition of fathers in the 21st Century, particularly in South Africa and other parts of the world. However strong its influence, it is only one perspective to the many other definitions and roles that fathers play in society.

2.5 Fatherhood from an African Perspective

Defining or understanding fatherhood from an African perspective implies restoring or understanding what it means to be a father, by understanding what was damaged by colonization, migrant labour, apartheid and employment. In African context, the notion of fatherhood has been undergoing fundamental transformation after the influence of apartheid.

There is a worldwide change occurring in the way men's roles in the family and the care of children are conceived. This change according to Ogbuja (2008) is partly due to post-industrial economics and globalization as well as changes in the nature and composition of families and finally changes in people's value for life (Lesejane, 2006).

In West African culture, fathers are considered the head of the family. They are considered provider and protector. More than 75% of African men would rather work extra hard to provide for their children and their mothers and most attribute changes in careers to the desire to provide a better life for their children (Ogbuja, 2008). African culture is considered a hierarchical and patriarchal society. In the African culture according to Franklin (2003) mothers represent softness, caring and gentleness while fathers represent strength, energy, hardness and toughness. Studies have shown that the two parents balance children's developmental equation and it is believed that children who grow up without either parent will grow to their ultimate dysfunction (Franklin, 2003).

The function of the father through the ages; in promoting a responsible and disciplined male identity and the consequences of the decline of the authority of the father in Western culture, have caused a lot of damage to the family and to the role of fathers in African culture (Lesejane, 2006). The current problem facing the African patriarchy has become distorted and a new patriarchy without obligations or reciprocity has emerged. It gives men power but imposes few duties (Lesejane, 2006). Whereas before, fathers were seen

as married men, honoured for their role as heads of the household, biological contributors to their children and respected.

2.6 Rights of fathers in 21st Century

In South Africa, fatherhood falls in the domain of family law, with family law being divided into two main sections; the law of husband and wife and the law of parent and child. Apart from the legal aspects of fatherhood, fatherhood also constitutes care, support, guidance, love and affection (Gallinetti, 2006).

Parental power, according to Gallinetti (2006), refers to the rights and duties of parents in relation to their children and it is acquired by the birth of a child, by a valid marriage or by an extra-marital child.

Each parent assumes parental power over their child unless otherwise stated by the High Court of South Africa. The following terms are categorised as important aspects of parental power and the parent-child relationship:

Guardianship: This is often confused with custody although custody over a child is an aspect of guardianship. The term generally refers to the legal duties that a parent has in respect of their child but does not necessarily have custody (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

Custody is an aspect of guardianship and, ordinarily, both parents have custody over their child. There are two dimensions of custody; physical and legal. Most often when someone thinks of obtaining custody of a child, they refer to physical custody. This refers mainly to the parent whom the child spends most of their time with and is generally referred to as sole physical custody (Meyer & Garasky, 1993). The parent with legal custody of the child is generally the one who makes any major decisions for him or her. It is more common for parents to have joint legal custody of a child than it is for them to have joint physical

custody (Meyer & Garasky, 1993). The high court historically passed custody orders that followed the principle that the mother is the most suitable parent to care for the child on a daily basis. This approach has, however, been eroded over a number of years and has essentially been replaced with the best interest of the child principle (Gallinetti, 2006). This principle was passed in the *Fletcher v. Fletcher* case, which places the best interest principle at the fore (Gallinetti, 2006). In *Van der Linde v. Van der Linde*, the court decided that mothers are not necessarily the better parent to be the daily caregiver of the child (Gallinetti, 2006). Furthermore in the *Madiehe v. Madiehe* the court stated as follows: custody of a young child is a responsibility and privilege and it has to be earned, it is not a gender privilege or a right (Gallinetti, 2006).

In South Africa fathers, up until 2005, have been disadvantaged throughout the entire custody litigation process (“Fathers Rights,” 2009). The children’s Bill, that went before Parliament in 2003 replaced the Child Care Act of 1983, as it aimed to provide a more holistic approach to the rights of all children. Initially mothers were seen as the primary caregivers of their children, especially in divorce situations or where children were born out of wedlock, but after fathers’ rights groups and the *Fraser v. Fraser* in the Children’s Court Case, fathers have gained much more power in respect of their children. This became evident in the Children’s Act of 2005, which clearly states that the biological father has full parental responsibilities and rights in respect of the child (Children’s Act 38 of 2005). Ultimately the *Fraser* ruling was in favour of out of wedlock fathers gaining custodial rights of their children and the significance of this, impacted greatly on the legal rights and stance of fathers in South Africa (“Fathers Rights,” 2009).

2.7 Paternal influences on child development

The study of fathering has matured in recent years and researchers have identified the growing need for richer, broader measures of the construct of father involvement (Hawkins, Bradford, Palkovitz, Christiansen, Day, & Call, 2002). There is no doubt that parent involvement is integral in the family support field and that fathers should be considered as engaged as an equally important parent in positively impacting the lives of their children (Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, & Pruett, 2005). This is an area that has been under-researched until the 21st century and the reason why few scholarly articles and literature has been written on fathers as primary caregivers. According to Hawkins et al. (2002) in order to mature, the field needs a focused effort among family and child development scholars to match their measure of father involvement to the rich and complex concept it seeks to understand.

Research has shown that having a father present improves the outcome of pregnancy but it is also directly linked to the enhanced development of children. In contrast, the lack of paternal involvement results in long-term negative effects on children (National Healthy Start Association [NHSA], 2010).

Rosenberg and Bradford Wilcox (2006), state that fathers are far more than just a second adult in the home. Involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other is likely to bring. There is a direct connection between fathers' active involvement and child outcomes, including cognitive ability, educational achievement, psychological wellbeing and social behaviour (Rosenberg & Bradford Wilcox, 2006).

Fathers affect their children directly and indirectly. Directly they affect them through their behaviour, attitudes and the messages they convey particularly as a source of emotional and instrumental support to other people, principally mothers (Lamb, 2004). The impact of the mother-father relationship plays a significant role in a child's outcome. According to the NHSA (2010) fathers indirectly influence their children; they influence their children in a

large part through the quality of their relationships with the mother of their children. Fathers who have a good relationship with their children's mother, whether they are together or not, are more likely to be involved with their children and these children are more likely to be psychologically and emotionally healthier. In a study conducted by the NHSA, a nurturing involved father is associated with better verbal skills; intellectual functioning and academic achievement as well as promoting emotional security, confidence and the ability to explore surroundings as they grow older (NHSA, 2010).

2.7.1 Fathers role

Popenoe (1996) proposes that fathers have a valuable role in the development of their children. Initially the first role fathers assumed in human evolution is that of a protector and provider for women and children. However, protection and provision only scratches the surface of what fathers do in modern society. They bring something quite different from what mothers bring and their contributions are strongly related to successful child outcomes. Among the many contributions that fathers make the most important include being a role model and the impact of their parenting styles.

One of the most significant qualities that fathers have is serving as a role model to their children. Imitation and modelling is one of the most valuable learning processes that children experience and as Popenoe (1996) state, children want to see a sermon, not hear it.

Fathers are role models for both their sons and daughters and teach their children valuable lessons that they would not be able to acquire from their mothers. Through identification and imitation boys learn appropriate masculine traits from their fathers such as independence, assertiveness, discipline and responsibility (Popenoe, 1996). Popenoe (1996) also states that sons that experience rejection or absent fathers grow up with a highly

conflicted sense of masculinity which has been defined as the wounded father within.

For girls, the presence of a father implies that they experience the pathway to adulthood a lot easier than boys and do not need to separate themselves from their mothers but learn from their fathers how to relate to men. Although girls differ in sex to their fathers they learn how to appreciate their own femininity, they learn about heterosexual trust, intimacy and difference (Popenoe, 1996). They also learn the value of independence, achievement and develop skills for coping in a still male-dominated world. Popenoe (1996) argues that fatherless girls generally experience the disadvantages of an absent father far later in life than boys but the effects is no less severe.

2.7.2 Parenting styles

The second quality is the impact of their parenting styles. Parenting styles is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child rearing. There are many different theories and opinions on the best way to rear children, however, according to Diana Baumrind (1967), four common patterns of parenting styles have emerged. These patterns are based upon two aspects of parenting behaviour: control and warmth (Kopko, 2007). Parental control refers to the degree to which parents manage their children's behaviour (Kopko, 2007). While parental warmth refers to the degree to which parents are accepting and responsive of their children's behaviour as opposed to being unresponsive and rejecting (Kopko, 2007). When these two aspects of parenting are combined in different ways, four primary parenting styles emerge:

Authoritative Parents who are warm and firm, they encourage children to be independent while maintaining the limits and controls on their actions (Westman & Costello, 2011). Authoritarian parents display little warmth and are highly controlling. They are strict disciplinarians who use a restrictive and punitive style of parenting (Westman & Costello,

2011). Permissive parents are very warm but undemanding. They are passive and indulgent and believe that the only way to understand and control their children is to give in to their every wish and desire (Westman & Costello, 2011). Finally uninvolved parents are not warm and do not place any demands on their children. They are often defined as being neglectful because of their un-involvement (Westman & Costello, 2011).

Research suggests that single fathers' parenting is different from the way single mothers raise their children. Parenting and being the primary caretaker is a unique phenomenon and fathers do not possess a unique style of parenting (Mendes, 1976). In fact according to Hilton and Devall (1998) there is no difference between how single fathers and married mothers raised their children. Doucet (2006) also state that men can mother and much of the concerns that mothers have regarding their children are shared by single fathers.

Studies on parenting actually suggests that single fathers are more willing to instil independence and to allow their children the opportunity of engaging in activities with their peers and on their own (Hilton & Devall, 1998).

Good parenting is not sex specific or sex- related, although it is strongly associated to mothering, the connections are cultural and not biological (Mendes, 1976). It therefore is evident then that fathers in the 21st century do not only contribute half the genetic makeup of their children but that their physical presence and involvement impacts greatly on the emotional, psychological and social stature of their children.

It is important to note that the parenting styles mentioned above focus mainly on conventional families with traditional fathers because of the focus of the research. However, it is important to acknowledge other family constellations such as gay and lesbian families where other variables complicate parenting and parent-child relationships. Research has found that despite the constellation of what constitutes a family, children developed in

healthy ways and parental sexual orientation did not seem to affect development (Telinger & Patterson, 2008).

2.8 Previous Research

Since 1976 fatherhood has been receiving increased attention in the popular and professional literature (Orthner, Brown & Ferguson, 1976). However, research on the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers is still a growing area in South Africa.

Many studies in the South African context have focused on fatherhood and father involvement rather than on single parenting from a paternal perspective. Studies that is available on parenting either focus on the mother's role as a single parent or on the role and effect of the absent father. Internationally research on single fathers began in the late 1960's in the United States, Canada, England and Australia (Risman, 1986). The research thus far has been primarily descriptive and based on predominantly white, middle-class fathers.

The demographics of single fathers that emerge from studies in Australia indicate that male primary caregiving is a phenomenon involving the middle-class male with flexible working hours or those experiencing structural change – which have been retrenched, fired or disabled at work (Grbich, 1997). This suggests that fathers are pushing the boundaries of traditional arrangements. Common themes that emerged was that fathers experienced isolation in the home position, common to the female caregiver, this was exacerbated by the fact that support services for parent and child are heavily dominated by and directed towards woman (Grbich, 1997). Similarly studies conducted in the UK found that fathers became primary caregivers because of their employment situation, the absence of alternative child care or societal values, paternal health, family history and ideological values (West, Lewis, Ram, Barnes, Leach & Stein, 2009). In most of these studies it became evident that fathers

sought support, felt that self-care played a significant role in parenting and that caring for their children led to deeper and closer emotional bonds (Shelov & Hannemann, 1997; Doucet, 2006 and Dowd, 1997).

Other studies conducted on single fathers suggest that intergenerational transmission of attachment can occur in father-child dyads when fathers act as sole caregivers of their children (Bernier & Miljkovitch, 2009). The research also found that father's become their children's primary attachment figure; this reiterates the importance of fathers in children's socio-emotional development (Bernier & Miljkovitch, 2009). This was evident in a study conducted that showed fathers who care for their toddlers and older children became the central emotional figure in their children's lives (Streuning, 2002).

The most common studies that date back the furthest has been conducted in the USA where several different findings can be identified (Gasser & Taylor, 1976). Firstly the idea of role adjustment arose as fathers either found themselves in the role prematurely due to the death of a spouse or were able to adjust to the role over time due to divorce. The results indicated that although the transition and adjustment to single parenthood was difficult initially, fathers were familiar with roles in home management and childcare. The study also revealed that fathers handled the responsibilities of management alone or with their children and the difficulty of the transition stemmed more from the over-burdening of roles than from unfamiliarity with the tasks facing them (Gasser & Taylor, 1976).

It is clear that reconceptualization's of both men and women's familial and work positions are occurring within these families and are being maintained over longer periods of time than have been evident in previous research on fathering (Grbich, 1997)

2.9 Present Study

The motivation for the present study in the South African context is based on the fact that most of the previous research conducted on single fathers rearing their children are based many years ago and more commonly in America. There is very little literature on single fathers raising children in the South African context. Most literature found in the South African context deals with the absence rather than the presence of fathers in their children's lives. In the new Children's Act 38 of 2005 custody of parents has changed to parental responsibilities and rights. In accordance with this change the implications is that parents no longer gain custody of their children but rather are assigned contact and care of the minor children. In the past mothers were mostly given custody of their children, however, with the new children's act the "best interest" of the child is taken into consideration. This is important because fathers are now able to gain care of their minor child which was not the case in previous years. As a result of this the increase of single father households is on the rise making this study relevant for the South African context.

Finally it is also important to note that the scope of the research report and the focus of this study does not allow for a full discussion of the role and influence of absent mothers. However, literature tells us that children are extremely vulnerable after the loss of their mother and the absence of a mother had increasing effects on the mortality of children (Manfredini & Breschi, 2008)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research aims to understand the experiences of single fathers as primary caregivers of their children. The unique phenomenon of having single fathers, who have lived with and cared for their children for several years provides valuable insight into the lived experiences, the challenges faced and the concerns they have for their children's future. This chapter aims to provide a rationale for the study and looks to provide insight into the participants that have contributed to the findings.

3.1 Research Questions

The primary focus of this research project is to provide an in-depth exploration of the experiences of single fathers as primary caregivers. The purpose of the research is, therefore, threefold. Firstly, this research aims to understand the phenomena of single parenting from a father's perspective, through analysing their experiences of raising their children. Secondly, the research aims to explore the transition to single fatherhood and identify any challenges faced by single fathers and methods to overcoming these challenges. Finally the research aims to look at the primary concerns and needs of single fathers and their hopes for their children's future.

For the purpose of this study, the following research question has been formulated: "How do single fathers experience primary caregiving, adjust to the transition and cope with being the primary caregiver of their children?" The following secondary questions were asked to explicate the primary research question:

1. How do single fathers experience primary caregiving?
2. Are there any challenges that primary caregivers encounter during the transition phase in relation to them establishing daily routine, disciplining their children and obtaining education and day-care?
3. What are the coping mechanisms that have been effective if the transitional phase became challenging?
4. What are their primary concerns and needs for their children?
5. What are the support systems available to single fathers, in need, who are primary caregivers of their children?

3.2 Research Framework

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method of enquiry dedicated to the detailed examination of human lived experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The approach, IPA, essentially is based on three philosophical principles and these include phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.

3.2.1 Philosophical underpinnings: phenomenology

The approach is phenomenological in that it involves detailed examination of the participant's life; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. One of the key values of phenomenological philosophy

for psychologists is that it provides us with a rich source of ideas about how to examine and comprehend lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

3.2.2 Philosophical underpinnings: hermeneutics

The second major theoretical underpinning of IPA comes from hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Originally hermeneutics represented and attempted to provide surer foundations for the interpretation of biblical texts (Smith et al., 2009). Subsequently, it developed as a philosophical underpinning for the interpretation of an increasingly wider range of texts (Smith et al., 2009).

Hermeneutics in IPA implies that a two-stage interpretation process is involved. This two-stage process involves participants trying to make sense of their world and the researcher trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Thus, consistent with phenomenological origins, IPA is concerned with trying to understand what it is like from the point of view of the participants. However, as much as IPA tries to take the participant's side, it can also involve asking critical questions.

3.2.3 Philosophical underpinnings: idiography

Thirdly idiographic approaches focus on the detailed analyses of particular experiences, contrasted against nomothetic approaches which are concerned with making claims at the group or population level and with establishing general laws of human behaviour (Smith et al., 2009). Within IPA there is an idiographic focus on the detailed examination of particular instances and the recognition that individuals can provide unique insight and perspectives on their involvement in a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Idiography can also refer

to the commitment to the single case in its own right or to the process which moves from the examination of the single case to more general claims (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The current study is based on and conducted according to these principles of IPA which is evident in the research methodology to be discussed further.

3.3 Research Design

The nature of the study is qualitative and phenomenological in orientation. The phenomenon of placing the participant under examination in IPA, merely expressly places participants as the expert of their own lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Exploring single fathers' experience of raising their children is consistent with the use of IPA.

Qualitative researchers rely on interpreting and conducting detailed examinations of cases that arise in the natural flow of social life. They try to represent authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific social-historical contexts (Neuman, 2006).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis is concerned with participants' own experience and engages with the meanings that experiences, events and actions hold for participants (Chapman & Smith, 2002). IPA, in particular, was chosen because the aim of IPA, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world and the value that particular experiences, events and states hold for them. According to Brocki and Wearden (2006) IPA is concerned with individual's subjective reports and assumes that participants seek to interpret their experiences into some form that is understandable to them. The task of the researcher is to describe the participant's phenomenon as accurately as possible. Brocki and Wearden (2006) acknowledge that the researcher's duty was to reflect and analyse the data collected in a way that best captures the participant's experience as articulated by them.

For this particular study this was achieved through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews composed of open ended questions. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), the best way to collect data for an IPA study is through semi-structured interviews. Open ended questions are also an added advantage as it enables the researcher to study complex experiences whereby the participants may explain or clarify ambivalent or contradictory responses (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2002).

3.4 Participants and Sampling

Sampling methods for IPA, according to Smith et al. (2009), are influenced by idiographic principles that focus on the particular, contrasted against other endeavours which are influenced by nomothetic approaches. IPA studies mainly aim to offer in depth, nuanced analyses of lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). In IPA research small homogenous samples are a way of providing rich contextualised data about a particular shared experience (Smith et al., 2009).

According to Smith and Osborn (2008) IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes because a distinctive feature of IPA is its commitment to a detailed interpretive account of the individuals' lived experience and many researchers are realising this can only be done on a very small sample. There is no right or wrong sample size, it partly depends on several factors namely: the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of individual cases and the constraints one is operating under (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher opted for only three participants because the aim of the study was to provide a detailed analysis of the perceptions and understandings of a particular group rather than making a more general claim for larger populations. According to Smith and Osborn (2008) three is an extremely useful number for the sample as this allows sufficient in-depth

engagement with each participant and it also allows a detailed examination of similarity and difference, convergence and divergence.

The study used a purposive strategy to elicit one participant and then snowball sampling was used to identify the other participants. The researcher initially used purposive sampling because it is appropriate to select unique cases that are especially informative and this type of sampling allows the researcher to identify particular types of cases for an in-depth investigation (Neuman, 2006). Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher opted for snowball sampling, as an alternative method, for identifying participants with the same or similar phenomena (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). As the research is based on individual's experience of their phenomena and because of the small sample size which, according to Smith and Osborn, is appropriate for this type of study, the participants are not representative of all single fathers as primary caregivers in South Africa, and the findings cannot be generalised to a broader population but can be generalised to fathers who share a similar experience. All three participants were located in East London. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms will be utilised in the place of the participants' names. Initially the first participant was recruited through an advertisement, placed on a local church in East London's bulletin board, and the remaining participants were recruited by directly approaching them (see Appendix A).

Permission to conduct the research was approved by the Rhodes University Psychology Research Projects and Review Ethics Committee and individual consent was obtained from the participants (See Appendix B and C).

Inclusion criteria were single fathers between the ages of 40 and 70 years old who are the biological fathers and primary caregivers of their children for over 10 years. Two of the fathers became single parents through divorce and one was a widow but this criterion is not relevant for the present study. A minimum of ten years of primary caregiving was deemed a

necessary inclusion criterion, as this allowed the researcher to identify the role and impact that primary caregiving has had on fathers over a fixed period of time. Additionally, proficiency in English, being able to engage with the researcher, having full custodial rights of their children and being from various socioeconomic strata and races was required (to speculate if similarities or differences exist in participants experiences across social strata).

One participant is Caucasian, one is from Indian descent and one from mixed racial descent. The racial mixture of participants allowed the researcher the opportunity of identifying potential comparisons across different cultures, opening the way for further detailed research. Participants were informed of the procedure of their participation, the nature of the study and they were also informed that participation was voluntary, anonymous and confidential (see Appendix B). All participants agreed to the digital recording of the three interviews. An inclusion criterion of the sample is simplified in Table One.

Pseudonym	Age	No. of years as single parent	Reason for being single parent	Race	No. of children	Language
M	47	10	Divorced	Indian	2	English
R	70	11	Widow	Caucasian	3	English
A	42	10	Divorced	Mixed Race	2	English

Table One: Inclusion criterion for single fathers

Exclusion criteria included single fathers who were not the biological parents of their children, did not have full custodial rights and had not been the primary caregivers for a period of ten or more years.

3.5. Data Collection

The information for this study was collected using three semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with each participant, as a method of data collection. The main aim of the in-depth, face to face interviews is to give the participants the opportunity to express their lived experiences in their own words (Willig, 2008). According to Smith and Osborn (2008) semi-structured interviews is the best way to collect data in IPA as it allows the researcher and participants to engage in a dialogue where the participant is able to express their lived experience and the researcher is able to probe on areas or topics that may arise. It is a discursive style of interviewing, which does not follow a rigid schedule but recognises that the interview process is a communicative event where both researcher and participants co-construct the knowledge produced (Kvale, 2007).

For the purpose of the study the researcher collected the information in the interviews by means of transcription and with the assistance of a tape-recorder. Audio-recordings of the interviews were made with the informed consent of participants (see Appendix B). The assistance of the digital recorder helped the researcher recall responses that were easily missed by the transcribed notes, as well as, assisted in establishing rapport and ensuring the smooth running of the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and formed only a part of the analysis which included taking into account participants body language, subtle hints and cues during the interview process. This is consistent with IPA, which assumes a person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and assumes a chain of connection between people's talk, their thinking and emotional state (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

In this study, each participant was interviewed over a series of three separate interviews of approximately 45minutes each. A semi-structured guide (see Appendix D) was drawn up for each interview which acted as a mere guide for the researcher rather than

dictating the course of the interview. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it facilitates rapport/empathy, allows a greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas which tend to produce richer data (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The three interviews were each focused on different but specific areas of importance as highlighted below.

The first interview focused solely on the life story of the participant and their experience of parenting up to and including the point of where they became single parents and primary caregivers. The second interview focused on the transition to single parenting and whether this included any major challenges and how they learnt to cope with this transition. Specifically the aim of the second interview was merely to identify the effect of the transition to single parenthood across various areas of functioning, such as the establishment of daily routine, finding after school care, discipline and the general care and needs of growing children. The third interview explored the efficacy of available resources and support systems if these were needed by participants and whether the concerns regarding the future of their children remained or changed since becoming primary caregivers.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews was transcribed and analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The researcher ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of participants by using pseudonyms and the digital recordings were erased after the completion of the study. All the interviews were recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Fundamentally the analytic focus of the research is based on the process of analysis outlined by Smith et al. (2009). This method merely prescribes an

iterative process where the researcher flexibly engages with the data as opposed to using a more rigid system (Smith et al., 2009).

The first step of analysis involved reading and re-reading of the transcriptions and listening to the audiotapes in order to identify themes from a psychological perspective and with a focus on the phenomena being researched (Murray & Rhodes, 2005). The process of repeated reading allows for the representation of the overall interview structure to develop and allows the researcher to understand the connections between the narratives within the interview in order to ensure that the participant's experience is the focus of analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

The second step involved identifying a number of themes that emerged within the transcriptions through analysing exploratory commenting. This process of identifying the connections and interrelationships between exploratory notes according to Smith et al. (2009) is a criterion that will enhance the study. Fundamentally the themes should reflect the participants thoughts and words of the experience but should also include the researchers own interpretation of the participants' experience as seen by the participants' themselves.

The third step involved identifying patterns between the themes that emerged to develop sub-themes that would lead to the super-ordinate themes that encapsulate the participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith et al. (2009), abstraction and polarization are two methods used to identify and link patterns between emergent themes. Abstraction involves linking concepts across emergent themes that are similar while polarization involves examining the transcriptions and linking concepts across the emergent themes that are opposed or different (Smith et al., 2009). For example, in the interviews all three the fathers had identified challenges they had faced when they become primary caregivers and this was clustered under the theme "The transition to being a single-parent and primary caregiver was difficult". In terms of polarization although the fathers identified very

different ideas of how to look after yourself and the role that plays with regards to their children, this was identified as a cluster which developed into the theme of “Self-care is important”.

The final step involves merely seeing connections across cases (Smith et al., 2009). Here the researcher basically compared the cases to identify which themes proved relevant to the three phenomenon’s being researched that fall under the umbrella concept of the experience of single fathers; the transition, the challenges and the concerns for the future. Once this was completed the findings were organised into this research report.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in qualitative research, according to Rabinowitz (2011), have aimed largely to conform to the rigour and empiricism of the scientific method so as to be considered trustworthy. According to Trochim (2006), Guba and Lincoln have proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and explicitly offered these as an alternative to the more traditional quantitatively-orientated criteria. They felt their criteria better reflected the underlying assumptions involved in much qualitative research. The four criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as more appropriate to qualitative research than its positivist counterparts of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity.

Credibility according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) refers to the “confidence” in the truth of the findings. In other words it involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since establishing credibility can only be determined from the perspective of the participants, they are the only ones who can judge the credibility of the results (Trochim, 2006). This was

achieved in this research project by offering participants copies of the final report and accepting any feedback constructively.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results obtain from the research can be generalized or transferred to other context or settings (Trochim, 2006). The researcher ensured that transferability of the research was achieved through the use of participants' from different socioeconomic strata and races. This ensures that the findings can potentially be generalized to populations from different races and economic statuses.

Dependability is the traditional quantitative view of reliability and is based on the assumption of repeatability (Trochim, 2006). Basically the idea of dependability is to emphasize the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. Dependability generally refers to showing that the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was displayed through the various interviews conducted by participants on the same topic which indicated that despite a change in the environment certain themes still emerged.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2006). The researcher achieved confirmability by documenting the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study.

The researcher made use of these four criteria to legitimize and demonstrates the integrity and trustworthiness of the research (Rabinowitz, 2011).

3.8 Ethics

Psychological research involving human participants are required to be guided by certain ethical principles and procedures. These principles and procedures ensure that the involvement of human beings is to promote human welfare and not for the exploitation of human beings (Kvale, 2007). As qualitative research involves exploring the private life of

participants it was the role of the researcher, for this study, that certain ethical practices were adhered to as stipulated by the Rhodes University ethical committee. The project was also approved by the Department of Psychology Research Project Ethics Review Committee and the Humanities Faculty's Higher Degrees Committee, as stated earlier, thus was peer reviewed. Furthermore, the following ethical considerations were adhered to:

Informed consent: Participants were provided with a detailed cover letter and consent form. The cover letter and consent form clearly stated that participation in the study was voluntary and that each participant had the right to withdraw at any point. Further information on the nature and aim of the study, the use of audio-tapes during interviews, referral information for distressful situations and issues of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were also addressed (see Appendix B)

Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality: The names of the participants were known to the researcher but did not appear on any of the data records, analysis sheets or results records. The researcher used pseudonyms in the publication of the research report and all transcribed notes and audiotapes were stored in a secure place during the study and destroyed upon completion of the study. The researcher obtained consent for the use of audiotapes and for the appendices of the interviews that were included in the researchers Master's thesis (see Appendix B and C).

The researcher also anticipated that the nature of the questions would elicit some degree of discomfort and because of lack of research of this particular phenomenon in South Africa the researcher ensured that the following ethical considerations would also be adhered to:

Potential risk for emotional distress: The study did not pose any direct risk of harm, embarrassment or offence to participants; however, because of the nature of the study and the reasons behind becoming a single parent, the potential for emotional distress during

interviews was identified. The researcher took precautionary measures by informing participants of the potential emotional risk in the cover letter and provided participants with referral information for counselling and containment in the event that they may require such assistance. Furthermore, the researcher debriefed and ensured that participants were contained after each interview process.

The right to withdraw from the study: Participants were also informed in the consent letter of the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Feedback to participants: A summary of the main findings of the study was offered and sent to any participants that requested feedback.

This ensured that the ethical standards and guidelines of Rhodes University and qualitative research were adhered to and ensured the overall protection of the members who participated in the research project.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter comprises a detailed discussion of the results of the data analysis. The themes and categories that resulted from the data processing were grouped into five main super-ordinate themes that consisted of several sub-themes identified under each super-ordinate theme. The super-ordinate themes include (1) The transition to being a single parent and primary caregiver was difficult, (2) Parenting is not biological it is cultural and fathers can fulfil the role, (3) Self-Care is important, (4) Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare, (5) Close family relationships are formed. Table two below summarises the findings further into the various sub-themes found under each super-ordinate theme.

The use of personal experiences of single fathers as primary caregivers has not been examined with the South African context. Most of the research examined has focused merely on the absence of fathers and the effects of their absence on their children's lives. This research aims to bridge this gap in South Africa and to inspire further research in the area of fathers that are present and the implications this has for men and for their children. The main aim of this project is to understand the experiences of single fathers as primary caregivers, to understand the transition process and any adjustments to the transition and to explore the concerns of fathers for their children's future. A thorough analysis of the participants' experiences has revealed a series of key themes. One way of remaining true to IPA and bringing out the essence of participant's experiences is incorporating extracts from the participant's interviews. The extracts utilised are rooted in what the participants are actually saying and therefore the use of lengthy verbatim quotations is necessary to substantiate the findings (Smith et al., 2009). Table Two below is a summary of the main findings.

Super-ordinate Themes	The transition to being a single parent and primary caregiver was difficult	Parenting is not biological it's cultural and fathers can fulfil the role	Self-Care is important	Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare.	Close family relationships are formed
Subthemes	<p>Loss of a partner.</p> <p>Shifts in the role fathers play as parent.</p> <p>Dealing with children reaction to the "loss" of a mother in the home.</p>	<p>Good Parenting: Biology vs. Upbringing.</p> <p>Social construction of men and women.</p>	<p>The value of self-care for single fathers.</p> <p>Self-care incorporates physical and mental care.</p>	<p>Internal support from family or friends</p> <p>External support from the community</p>	<p>Relationship between father and child.</p> <p>Sibling relationships.</p>

Table Two: Main Findings

4.1 The transition to being a single-parent and primary caregiver was difficult

This theme is a super-ordinate theme that is built up from the following sub-themes. These include the loss of a partner, shifts in the role fathers play as parent and dealing with the children's reaction to the "loss" of a mother in the home. This super-ordinate theme includes a discussion of the transition that took place from having two adult caregivers in the home to one single parent. It looks at the significance of fathers in their new roles as nurturers and the sole carers of their children and attempts to understand the significance of being a male single parent who is the primary caregiver.

All three participants reported that the transition from being a single-parent to primary caregiver was a difficult process. It seemed that there were many aspects of the transition that was difficult. These include: the loss of a partner, homemaking and the emotional needs of the children.

4.1.1 The loss of a partner

Throughout the transition period it was evident that the loss of the partner and second adult in the home was a big adjustment for both father and children. For example:

A: “Biologically children need both parents that is what we are taught because of tradition it’s been implanted in relationships.” (Interview 1; Line 49-50)

M: “Initially it was very challenging, obviously when you just get divorced it’s a challenge because the children are used to having both parents and I am use to having a wife”. (Interview 1; Line 4-5)

R: “Well you know the difficulty is when your partner is around”. (Interview 1; Line 4).

4.1.2 Shifts in the role fathers play as parent

Although it became evident that the loss of a parent in the household was a difficult transition for the single fathers it became evident that most of them did not believe that this loss influenced the loss of what it meant to be a good caregiver. This was evident in the following extracts where the single fathers knew that they were expected to be nurturers, carers and provide emotional support to their children for example:

A: “I think primary caregiving you can associate with nurturing, guidance umm. I think being there emotionally to understand the child.” (Interview 1; Line 17-18)

M: “My understanding of primary caregiving is all the early stages of care that children need in terms of physical protection, love, warmth, feeding them and providing for them.” (Interview 1; Line 7-8)

R: “Their needs, schooling and upbringing must be at all times what they are used to.” (Interview 1; Line 13)

4.1.3 Dealing with children’s reaction to the “loss” of a mother in the home

It is important to note that this loss was felt by the fathers because the tasks and caretaking of their children became their responsibility. However, it is also important to note that the children also felt the loss of a mother and nurturer in the home and this proved to be a very difficult transition for them too as depicted by the fathers. For example:

A: “Umm, from what I experienced with them it was difficult for them. They went through a lot. They didn’t cope at school.” (Interview 1; Line 57-58)

M: “Initially I think it was a huge challenge for them.” (Interview 1; Line 29)

R: “It was very difficult for them. You know they spent all that time with their mom and suddenly she is not there. It is very hard. It is a massive loss that they will never get over.” (Interview 1; Line 34-35)

4.2 Parenting is not biological, it is cultural and fathers can fulfil the role

This super-ordinate theme explores the notion behind what defines parenting and the fact that mothers can only fulfil the role of a nurturing parent. It also looks at fathers stepping up and assuming this new role and sharing the same concerns for their children's future as mothers do. This super-ordinate theme includes the view of whether biology plays a role in good parenting and the social construction of men and women.

4.2.1 Good parenting: Biology vs. Upbringing

Parenting and especially good parenting to the fathers was defined as more than just the sex of a person. All three the fathers found that the sex of the parent did not matter but rather the upbringing and the needs of the children were the most important feature of parenting. For example:

A: "From a personal point of view because society sees a mother as the nurturer because she biologically carries the child. I think from that point of view it is supposed to make a mother more emotionally attached from a biological point of view. I have learnt it can be the other way around. From a male point of view, a male doesn't have to biologically carry the child to be emotionally attached. I think there is no difference it depends on the type of person and upbringing." (Interview 1; Line 106-111)

M: "Times are changing fathers are as soft as mothers and I think kids enjoy that. You know there is too much precedent we set. We can change that, it depends how you raise your kids. But for me, my personal experience was when you are thrown in

the deep end, you're not really worried about your role as a father or a mother, you get stuck in the challenge of whatever is needed." (Interview 1; Line 64-68)

R: "Absolutely 100% if you care for your children you will do exactly that. Put your needs aside and care for your child." (Interview 1; Line 52-53)

4.2.2 Social Construction of men and women

Interestingly the social construction of men and women assume that women because of biology are necessarily the nurturer and primary caregiver who is solely concerned about her children's wellbeing. Taking into account this was a predominant discourse among these fathers because they were raised in generations which assumed the man as head of the household who was concerned with the financial stability of the home while the women would worry about the home and the children. However, the present study showed that fathers also share the same concerns, hopes and dreams for their children as mothers do. And it is more evident when you're raising a child by yourself. For example:

A: "My main concern is that they make proper choices. My main concern is that they, they can still be able to say no when they are in vulnerable situations and that they choose people that respect them and surround themselves with positive people so that they can become successful." (Interview 3; Line 52-55)

M: "My main concern is... I have told them they should marry when they are mature and have a base so they can provide. You learn from your mistakes as a parent and pass that on. At the end of the day it's their life and their choices. It's important to try and cultivate umm... umm... something called... it's a choice and you must always be at peace with your choices and you will get the best return. Amongst us guys we

have a code. I think we have a style and conducts where we say if we are really battling then we get down to it and I like that they are still young and growing.”
(Interview 3; Line 37-43)

R: “To be honest with you, I hope that they find decent partners in life. That is my main concern because everything else in their life is good. They are good kids, they have good friends. They are supportive, you know so I want to see them happy in their marriages. I don’t want them to pick the wrong person. Their mother was a wonderful person and I want them to find someone as close to their mother as possible.” (Interview 3; Line 40-44)

4.3 Self-Care is Important

The importance of self-care; physical, psychological and emotional self-care is explored. This super-ordinate theme consists of the value of self-care for single fathers and self-care incorporates both physical and mental care. For the primary caregivers it is important to ensure the smooth transition for the children and ensuring that their physical, psychological and emotional needs were met. Their self-care was also important to ensure the best possible upbringing for their children.

4.3.1 The value of self-care for single fathers

It became evident from the study that as much as the fathers valued taking care of their children and ensuring that their needs were met it was also important to ensure that they took care of themselves. Self-care was valued among fathers because they believed that their

children would model their behaviour so this proved an important lesson for children that taking care of others is as important as taking care of yourself. For example:

A: “I am trying to focus and do things for myself (Interview 2; Line 29-30). I would say I had to start with myself first because it wasn’t for me and my importance and my well-being I would never be able to execute the nurturing and emotional side, comforting and loving them. I had to love myself firsts.” (Interview 3; Line 22-24)

M: “Absolutely because your kids need to see you taking care of yourself. Because that is how they get confidence enough to look after themselves.” (Interview 1; Line 44-45)

R: “It’s very lonely in there so it was important to find friends and become active. To find socially, people that you can interact with in any way in any form of life. It was important for me to get away from the house.” (Interview 3; Line 11-14)

4.3.2 Self-care incorporates both physical and mental care

Self-care was defined as keeping well both physically and mentally. The fathers felt that it was not enough to be looking good physically but not being mentally healthy as children are able to pick up on emotions and negativity and this has adverse effects on them. It also implied vice versa that a sound mind was not good enough if one’s body was run down and drained. A bigger factor that contributed to maintaining one’s body and mind was influenced by the company kept and the people you surrounded yourself with as these people would also have an impact and influence on your children’s lives. For example:

A: “I have learnt to surround myself with positive people. I have learnt to make better choices.” (Interview 1; Line 96-97)

M: "... Umm the experience also made me... take a new approach to who my friends and acquaintances are and to surround myself with positive people who are good for me and my family. So I think I got selective on people who I associated with. Subconsciously I realised if I associate with good people it's going to be good for the kids. So I cut out a lot of toxic people." (Interview 3; Line 9-14).

4.4 Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare.

Support as a super-ordinate theme is based on the sub-themes of external and internal support or support from families and friends and support from the community. This super-ordinate theme focuses on the support from outside parties and the important role this support played in the lives of the primary caregivers and their children. Support came in many forms from families, to friends, to colleagues and even clients; however, social support from community members was rare or non-existent.

4.4.1 Internal support from family or friends

Support is a very rare occurrence especially for single-fathers and this was evident in the study. Support in any form, however, was valued and played an important role in helping the fathers to adjust to their new roles as primary caregivers and nurturers. For example:

A: "Umm, yes my mother, she would sort out meals, do washing and ensure that our rooms are clean (Interview 2; Line 31-32). Informal, if I can categorise my clients in that category because I work in the service industry." (Interview 3; Line 37-38)

M: “Yes people care. I have wonderful friends and the kids have wonderful friends who have wonderful parents.” (Interview 3; Line 33-34)

R: “There was one particular friend of M. They were very close and she looked after M when she was sick you know... and she helped me a lot. She took the pressure off at the shop with the admin and that for me to do my work.”(Interview 2; Line 33-35)

4.4.2 External support from the community

Social support from the community was non-existent and was a big disadvantage to the single fathers as many of them felt that the community had let them down mainly because of tradition and because society is still on the side of the mother as a nurturer and primary caretaker. For example:

A: “Umm, firstly I don’t think single-fathers are supported because of tradition the law is always on the mother’s side.” (Interview 3; Line 41-42)

M: “No community support that I know of.”(Interview 3; Line 33)

R: “In my case my children were my support.” (Interview 3; Line 24)

4.5 Close family relationships are formed

Close family relationships forms the sub-ordinate theme of two major sub-themes. One of the sub-themes that emerged has been the relationship between parent and child and the other the relationship between siblings. Close family relationships was a direct outcome of primary caregiving and how this new role of each member influenced the dynamics of all the family subsystems. Primary caregivers share the roles and increased responsibility of themselves and

the children and how this influenced a closer bond between parent and child and how it led to the maintenance of the family structure.

4.5.1 *Relationships between father and child*

One of the positive factors that emerged from the loss of a second adult and mother in the home was that closer relationships were formed between the fathers and the children.

Although these relationships were implicit but absent before, after the loss of the spouse it became evident that the children and fathers formed stronger emotional bonds. For example:

A: “A plus in a sense was that they could see I was there emotionally.” (Interview 1; Line 119-120)

M: “I have a good relationship with my boys and they just responded (Interview 2; Line 2-3). We spent a lot of time in sport and travelling and that bonded us and took our relationship to a new level.” (Interview 2; Line 31-32)

R: “Losing their mother brought us a lot closer. Not that we weren’t closer but I was at work and they were with their mom. But know we spend more time together.” (Interview 1; Line 27-29)

Traditionally an emotional bond was scarce among fathers and their children but it seems that despite tradition and society any trauma experienced will bring a family together.

4.5.2 *Sibling Relationships*

Although considerable research is still to be done on the role siblings play in transitions, two alternative hypotheses might be offered about siblings and the transition of their parent’s

relationships through divorce or death. One would be that siblings either become hostile and competitive or they are the resource of support for one another (Hetherington, 1989). As early as 1989 Hetherington identified the main findings in sibling relationships ranged from rivalry to improved relationships, boy dyads represented more trouble than girls and daughters automatically became the caretaker and nurturer. For example:

R: “Well, my daughter was already married so she knew her place. It was fantastic and she looked after her brothers when I wasn’t around.” (Interview 3; Line 46-47)

M: “But they also responded and got on with each other.” (Interview 1; Line 32)

These themes map out the experiences of the single fathers and indicate that although they are from different backgrounds commonalities are evident throughout the races, cultures and social statuses. This implies that although the research may not be generalised to the larger population it can definitely benefit fathers in similar situations that are from all walks of life.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarises the super-ordinate themes found in the study on the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers and are discussed in detail.

Caregiving is defined as a family member or paid helper who regularly looks after a child (“Caregiver,” 2009). For the purpose of this study, “primary caregivers” were defined as the biological parent of children, who serve as parental figures, are solely responsible for their day-to-day care and maintenance and who have full custodial rights. Within the context of South Africa, it is evident that no research exists solely on the experiences of fathers as primary caregivers. Most of the research on fatherhood in the South African context has aimed at the effects of absent fathers. Research conducted internationally on single fathers dates back to the seventies and focuses on the role adjustment of single fathers, how single fathers obtained custody and became primary caregivers, single fatherhood in general and the attachment style that develops between fathers and their children as noted in the literature. A vast amount of research also exist on the reasons fathers became primary caregivers but these papers focused on married fathers who were not single primary caregivers to their children but who decided to stay at home while their wives worked (Doucet & Merla, 2007).

An exploration of the experience of single fathers who are primary caregivers entails an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, experiences of the transition and any challenges faced in the transition period and the support and concerns for their children’s future. This study provided an opportunity for understanding solely the experience of single fathers from their own perspective. The super-ordinate themes identified and represented in chapter four from the various sub-themes contributed to a better understanding of this phenomenon. It is evident based on the literature research presented in chapter two and the

themes discussed in chapter four that there is a correlation with previous studies and the present study.

5.1 The transition to single parenting is difficult

Single parenthood is not easy for parents or children. It generally means less income and a lower standard of living. Without another person to share the day in, day out job of raising the child and maintaining the household, you may find yourself isolated from other adults (Shelov & Hannemann, 1997).

Single-parent fathers rearing his children can no longer be considered a rare social occurrence (Smith & Smith, 1981). The notion that a nuclear family is the perfect ideal in traditional society would imply that children born and raised in a household with a mother and father present would be considered the ideal for raising children. Thus, it was impossible to expect that “normal” children would arise from single parent family situations (Schlesinger, 1996). However, in a society where single parents and specifically single father households are on the increase, adjustment to such situations proves to be a difficult but not impossible task. It is generally agreed today that children from broken homes can be well adjusted (Hetherington, 1989). According to Gasser and Taylor (1976) it would assume that the adjustment of the custodial or remaining parent to his or her new socially undefined role as a single parent could have a profound effect on the subsequent adjustment of the children.

It is also quite possible to assume that the adjustment of the custodial parent to his new socially undefined role as a single parent could have a profound effect on the subsequent adjustment of the children (Gasser & Taylor, 1976). However, the process of and the progress of adjustment from a two-parent family to a one-parent family depends upon a multiplicity of variables, including such aspects as the ages of the children, the intimacy of family members

and the events that led to single parenting (Hetherington, 1989).

According to Cabrera et al. (2000) the timing of fatherhood sets men on many different life course trajectories and in comparing the transition to fatherhood for adult males the transition to parenthood is more likely to either constitute a crisis or to signify little beyond the event itself. With social change there may be confusion in regard to role expectations and the single parent father is often left without clear guidelines for performing the new role he has accepted (Smith & Smith, 1981). According to Bowden and Greenberg (2010) the single parent may find it difficult to maintain social relationships as a result of time and economic constraints. They are also expected to provide most of the emotional support and sustenance of their children and will have to overcome feelings of inadequacy, guilt, anxiety, grief or loneliness that accompany any other major transitions. In the case of the study it was evident that the single fathers knew exactly that they were expected to be the nurturer, carer and provide emotional support for their children.

For children personal and emotional challenges of a single parent household affect both the child and the parent. Most children take about 2 or 3 years to adjust to living in a single parent home and the transition period for most children is stressful economically, socially and emotionally (Thies & Travers, 2001).

5.2 Parenting is not biological it is cultural

Single fatherhood is not an entirely new phenomenon, however, single-fathers often received considerable help from family members and extended kin, so that in the past it was rare for them to perform the role alone (Mendes, 1976). Parenting and being the primary caretaker of their children was a unique phenomenon, however, fathers do not possess a unique style of parenting. In fact fathers who parent alone do so like mothers – they nurture. Good parenting

is neither sex-specific nor sex-related. The attributes of good parenting are strongly associated with mothering but the connection is cultural, not biological. When men are primary parents, by choice or by circumstance, they parent as well as and like women. The present study found that fathers consider themselves as good a parent as a mother and that gender or biology did not affect parenting style. Interestingly to note was that the fathers found that the sex of the parent did not matter but rather the upbringing and needs of the children were the most important feature of parenting.

Research on fatherhood has mainly found that fathers and mothers both see the provider role as the primary role for fathers. In the present study most fathers ranked themselves as a provider but saw this as a necessity to parenting. In most cases fathers were forced into the position of primary carer due to divorce or loss of a spouse. However, times have changed and for the fathers in the present study who stepped up and deciding to care for their children, meet their needs and fulfilling the role of the lost parent, was an important and natural process. Today single fathers typically assume their role because they have “stepped up” in difficult and unforeseen circumstances. Whether single or married, poor or financially better off, fathers as primary parents report fighting stereotypes as odd, un-masculine or weak (Lamanna, Reidmann, & Strahm, 2010). Single fathers in today’s world rear their children without clear guidelines or prescriptions.

The focus is really on whether men can mother or whether they can mother as good as women can. This is largely due to the idea of gender differences or incompatibility which denotes the discourse that places men and women into certain positions in society and sees women as the mothers and men as the breadwinners (Doucet, 2006). The position that men can and do mother is rooted in equality feminism and has developed mainly in the work of sociologist researching gender divisions of labour or primary-caregiving fathers (Doucet, 2006). In the present study it was evident that the single fathers were capable of rearing their

children and have the same concerns, hope and dreams for their children as mothers do. Although not much research on father-headed single parent households have been studied often or in much detail, many of the concerns of single mothers are shared by single fathers (Martin, Emery, & Peris, 2004).

5.3 Self-care is important

Self-maintenance is self-care. According to Shelov and Hannemann (1997) when you are under stress, the child may sense and share this stress. It is easy to become tired and too distracted to become emotionally supportive or consistent about rules and discipline.

Important too for your family's sake as well as your own, is to take care of yourself by eating properly, and getting enough rest, exercise and sleep. Setting regular times for when you can get out of the house and away from the children is important. Relaxing and engaging in adult social activities is healthy for the single parent and child (Shelov & Hannemann, 1997). Children at times may not understand the need for parents to care for themselves but it is your duty as a parent to care for your own well-being (Chalkoun, 2010). This isn't selfish, it is extremely necessary and it is your responsibility. If you are not well, you will be unable to take care of your children properly and if you want to give them a happy and functional parent, it is crucial for you to take care of yourself (Chalkoun, 2010).

In the present study fathers highlight the importance of taking care of themselves and how it affects their children. A part of self-care is keeping well, both physically and mentally, in order to stay positive and to keep believing in yourself. Some of the few ways of doing this is by surrounding yourself with positive people who have a lifting effect on you and your children and spending at least 15 minutes doing something that you enjoy (Margow, 1999). This was evident in the results section discussed in chapter four.

5.4 Support comes from family and friends but social support is rare.

Support is defined in a variety of ways. Some view support as information which reassures subjects that they are loved and cared for, esteemed and valued and part of a network of communication and mutual obligation (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981).

Another type of support is social support which comes from community members and the community you live in.

During times of stress and crises extended family members are likely to offer many resources to support the family. The extended family model suggests that the role of the partner can, in single parent families, be replaced by the presence of a strong support network (Dowd, 1997). This does not mean that it is as easy as that and that a support structure will replace the second adult in the home it merely means that the support system will fill in the gaps that have developed since the loss of the second adult in the home. The support structure as backup is also the dominant structure of single parent families and support mainly comes from extended family or friends, or from intimate partners. In single parent families, children are less likely to experience developmental problems or delays if their parent receives strong support from other adult family members (Dowd, 1997). The importance of support networks and the use of support networks is a distinctive practice of single parent families (Dowd, 1997). In the present study the single fathers identified how important support from family and friends were. Sources of social support, as valuable and needed as they are, tend to be lacking for single-parent families.

For some single parents, extended family members are usually the ones who provide an essential support structure to assist in child care, transportation and on-going emotional support (Bowden & Greenberg, 2010). Support also comes from close friends of both the parent and children who assist with meals, transport and parental guidance and supervision. An interesting identification is that there is a lack of social support for single parent fathers

particularly from community members. Parenting and support services according to McKeever (2002) are frequently geared towards mothers rather than fathers often resulting in a lack of social support for single fathers. Social support from the community was not evident and was a big disadvantage to the single fathers in the present study.

5.5 Close family relationships are formed

Single parents often develop closer bonds with their children. When the father is the single parent, he becomes more nurturing and much more active in his child's daily life than most fathers in two-parent households (Shelov & Hannemann, 1997). After a death or divorce, the reorganized, single parent family often bonds itself into a very close unit emotionally (Strong, Devault & Cohen, 2008). In the present study all three the fathers identified that stronger emotional bonds were formed between them and the children.

Men develop bonds to their children by taking care of them and playing the same role in their children's lives that mothers do. According to Struening (2002) research shows that fathers, who care for toddlers and older children, find that those that spend a substantial amount of time with their children become the central emotional figures in their children's lives. This is partly due to the fact that fathers who take on the responsibility of caring for their children understand them better and are more sensitive to their children's needs (Struening, 2002).

Research also found that in most single parent families relationships between children often become stronger or they become rivals (Hetherington, 1989).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

The overall goal of this study was to explore and describe how single fathers experience primary caregiving, what the transition to being a single parent is like, how they adjusted and coped with their new role and their concerns for their children's future. The goal was achieved by conducting a series of three semi-structured interviews each with three research participants, who are single fathers and the primary caregivers of their children. Central themes and categories that resulted from the data analysis and interpretation process were discussed and evaluated as they correlate with and contribute to existing literature. Finally the goals set out from the onset, were met by the study and its outcomes.

6.1 Conclusion

The following conclusions were evident from the research findings:

1. The transition to single parenting and primary caregiving is a difficult process to adjust to and cope with. Caregivers may be riddled with confusion, doubt and anxiety, they may be unsure of themselves and their capabilities as primary caregivers. This transition period, however, difficult it may be for the single father and his children, can be overcome if they work together and each member of the family fulfils a role in the family and in the home.
2. Parenting as difficult as it is; is not biologically predisposed to the mother or female. Fathers just as mothers are able to fulfil the role of provider, nurturer and caretaker.

They have the capacity and the ability to rear their children and meet their emotional, physical, psychological and social needs. The important element is that fathers are able to parent as long as they are willing and able to step up and fulfil the role necessary or expected of them by their children.

3. It is important that fathers who do step up and take care of their children realise that they also need to take care of themselves emotionally, psychologically and physically. A lot of the time single fathers are faced with guilt and neglect their own needs but it is important to realise that as important as it is to step up and raise children it is also important to value yourself and your own wellbeing. This proves to be a great lesson for children and they learn to model the behaviour of their parent.
4. Support of any kind is valued and valuable as this shows single fathers and children that they are cared for and loved by others. Support mainly comes from extended family; however, it is evident in the research that care and love for single parents and children is also extended from friends. As single father households is still a relatively new phenomenon and for this reason support from community and community members is still a rare occurrence.
5. Throughout the transition period it becomes evident that one of the most important occurrences in single father households is the closer bonds formed between father and child and between siblings. Fathers are not normally seen as the approachable or nurturing parent; however, in the present study it was evident that the bonds between father and child became a great source of emotional support.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for future research on single fathers as primary caregivers:

1. Conducting research that is able to take into account and provide generalisations about the larger population. As the present study was not aimed at generalising to the larger population, it may be useful that future research encourages and empowers single fathers with information, resources and the knowledge of what other men in their positions experience and encounter that is similar or different to them.
2. Single fathers may benefit from professionally run support groups where they can share their challenges, concerns and experiences with others single fathers who are primary caregivers.
3. More detailed research should be conducted on single fathers that will contribute to existing literature and provide a mere guideline for men who are deciding to take on the sole responsibility of caring for their children.

Due to the limited scope of the present study the researcher could not generalise the findings to the larger population and attempted to provide a mere understanding of the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers. However, the methodology ensures generalizability to similar populations. Future studies that will be aimed at a larger population will allow for the generalisation of the themes identified and can also take into account the experience of primary caregiving from the children's perspective. This will enable comparisons to be made between parental experiences and children's experience of single father headed households.

6.3 Limitations

The commitment towards an inductive approach in IPA places the participant as the expert of the phenomenon under examination. The researcher and participants co-constructed the reflexive experiences single fathers as the primary caregivers of their children. The limitation with the study is that it focused on a single father from different races and socio-economic groups and although strength in providing a broader identification and description of the problem, the limitation lies in that the researcher is unable to make a generalisation to the larger population or to one particular race group in general. The findings suggest that single fathers from various races and social groups experience similar hardships, trials and tribulations but to say that this affects all Caucasian, Indian or Mixed race single fathers is impossible. The research failed to look at the various groups over a wider spread of participants and circumstances. Although from different social economic groups all three fathers were self-sufficient and able to provide for their children and the research did not take into account fathers who struggle, hold multiple jobs and have to come home and be nurturer, caregiver, disciplinarian and still attempt to live a normal and healthy adult life.

Another major limitation to the research was the availability of current literature on single fathers. Most of the literature dates back as far as the 1960's but very few articles are found in the 21st century.

These are the limitations that can and ought to be addressed in future studies on fatherhood and the role of single fathers in the community and at best the importance of support from family and community members.

Despite these limitations, the present study serves as a first glimpse into the nature and context of the experience of single father families in a South African context. It also aims to bridge this gap and provide greater insight into the experience of single fathers as primary

caregivers. As it is evident that there is a vast amount of research conducted on fatherhood and the reasons why fathers become single parents in South Africa and abroad not much is aimed at researching the experiences of single fathers. It is evident that the present study aims to bridge the gap by highlighting the actual experiences of single fathers from their perspective. This was largely achieved through the use of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of single father's experience of primary caregiving which involved a series of semi-structured interviews that gave participants the opportunity of telling their story in a manner understandable to them. The job of the researcher was to capture the essence of their stories through their narratives, body language and cues.

6.4 Reflexive Journal

The reflexive journal follows the experience and perspective of the researcher during her study of the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers. The aim of this journal is to highlight the reasons why the researcher focused on particular aspects surrounding the research. Researching fathers felt like a sense of duty and necessity because so much of the research in South Africa is based on absent fathers. The researcher felt a sense of duty to fathers in South Africa who fall in the small minority of people who care for their children and go beyond the traditional definition of financial provider. Deciding on a topic of choice was relatively easy as there is no current published research on fathers' experiences so the decision was to focus on a broad area which would spark interest into more specialised areas of father involvement in South Africa as opposed to the large array of research on absent fathers. In this research project, the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers represents a unique phenomenon. Additionally this research may have implications

concerning the difficulty of the transition experienced by single fathers and may provide insight into how fathers manage and cope with this transition despite the odds against them.

Literature Review

The literature review was influenced by two main constructs which have led to the construction, definition and development of fatherhood in modern society. These constructs include evolution and social construction; however, there is a western perspective to the research as a lot of fatherhood today is influenced by a purely western approach. The literature focused more on an international context as a broader area of research and knowledge exists regarding fatherhood in the international world. Although there is an element to the South African context, it was not given priority because of the lack of published research on single fathers and the strong focus of absent fathers in South African journals.

An exploration of evolution allowed the researcher the opportunity of identifying how evolution has shaped modern society, the close links between human interaction and socialisation and that of other mammalian species and the contribution this has made to our definition of fathers and their role in families.

Social construction allowed the researcher to trace from evolution the impact that our changing society has had on our definition and construction of the role of the father in the home and family. An outstanding discovery was how the social construction of fatherhood seems to follow a continuous cycle of the present father, to the absent father and right back to the present father who is involved in his children's rearing and development.

Finally the focus on research already conducted highlighted the strong need to conduct this research on this particular phenomenon as it pointed out the lack of information and research conducted on single father's experiences of primary caregiving. This was evident because all the research conducted in the international market has looked at fathers as primary caregivers who were married and not those that were single and rearing their children on their own.

It is hoped that an appreciation of single fathers as primary caregivers will provide insight into the utilisation of personal experiences and give other fathers in similar context a reference to return too. The purpose was merely to broaden conceptions surrounding fatherhood, to appreciate the nature of sharing personal lived experiences and to thicken the narratives of fathers in South African so that there is an alternative story to their legacy.

Data Collection

Interpretive phenomenological analysis requires small homogenous samples that are able to provide detailed rich accounts of individual's personal experiences. The research was interested in the shared experiences of single fathers who are primary caregivers of their biological children. The researcher had to ensure that the participating fathers had been the custodial and primary caregivers of their children for 10 years or longer. All three participants were found in East London. Permission to conduct the interviews had been obtained from Rhodes University and from each participant.

The first participant was easy to locate and was done through interviewing on a local church bulletin board in East London. The other two participants were found utilising snowballing methods and contacted directly by the researcher. Surprisingly all three participants were very eager and willing to participate in the research. The researcher got a sense from the

participants that finally someone took the time to hear and acknowledge their stories although too proud to acknowledge this themselves all three were truly humbled by the experience.

The utilisation of in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed for the extraction of rich contextualised data surrounding the lived experiences of single fathers as primary caregivers. The method of data collection is compatible with IPA and the use of semi-structured interviews allowed adherence to the prerequisites of IPA research.

Establishing rapport with the participants was extremely easy as it gave them a voice to the absent but implicit new defining role of fathers. The researcher conducted interviews with the participants in East London; these interviews were a fulfilment of the researchers Masters' degree in Counselling Psychology. A total of 9 interviews were conducted, where each participant was interviewed thrice. All three participants agreed to the interview schedule prior to data collection. The first round of interviews focused mainly on the experiences of single fathers, the second on the transition to single parenting and any challenges faced by the fathers and the third round identified the role and value of support to single fathers and their concerns and needs for their children's future.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis followed the guidelines outlined by IPA research. This process is flexible and allows the researcher the opportunity of engaging not only with the spoken narratives of participants but the ability of analysing and taking into account linguistic cues and body language. The difficulty lies in the interpretation of research and not being affected by her own beliefs, norms and value systems. However, the researcher ensured that each transcript received equal attention and that the reflection of themes was a commonality

among the three participants. Ultimately the researcher became the dominant voice used by the single fathers to explore and interpret their lived experiences as accurately as possible.

The process of analysis proved to be difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly the limited literature concerning the experience of single fathers left the researcher feeling like she was running through a maze blindfolded and had to find her way out as best she could with the skills she had. Secondly, it was extremely difficult to get the participants to engage on three different accounts as they were all busy men who had extremely busy schedules.

The use of three participants from different races and social economic strata was aimed explicitly at eliciting differing interpretations in which the experiences are articulated and reflected by the participants with the aim of identifying commonalities despite cultural and economic diversity. The inclusion of particular participant's accounts reflected within the results chapter and signified the shared nature of the experiences among the participants.

Discussion

The structure of the discussion chapter follows the important elements of the experiences of the participants and signifies the homogenous experiences amongst each member. Common themes that emerged during the discussion section include the transition to single parenting, parenting is not biological it is cultural, self-care is important, support is important and close family relationships are formed. The discussion chapter centres on the researchers interpretation of the participant's experiences, where the results chapter focused more explicitly on the participant's accounts of particular phenomenon's that they have experienced. The researcher identified that there was not a lot of literature to support the findings and most of the findings that corroborate the literature had come from studies

conducted on fathers overseas who had chosen to stay at home and care for their children while their wives went out and worked.

However, the utilisation of personal experiences from a South African perspective gives a sense of hope to fathers who are single parents and primary caregivers. In a sense the researcher found that the participants found comfort in knowing their stories would be told and it may just help or be a positive contribution to other fathers who are struggling and feel as though there is no source of support for them amongst family members and mostly amongst society in general.

In the end the researcher found that conducting the research was a truly humbling experience as so often the discourse surrounding fathers is that they are men with “hard” exteriors who are emotionless and often oblige to fulfilling a duty because that is just what it is a duty and an obligation. Surprisingly for the researcher, it was an eye opener to identify and see that there are men out there who have an emotional caring nature and who fight against the discourse they are so often labelled by or forced into.

It was indeed an honour and a privilege to be a part of these men stories and to collaborate with them in trying to tell their story as best as the researcher could highlighting the possibility that future single fathers may read this story and that it may just spark an interest into the investigation of fathers and the new found role they play in their families.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Advert

Appendix B: Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

Appendix C: Consent Form

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

Appendix F: Letter for permission to place the advert

APPENDIX A

ADVERTISEMENT

THE EXPERIENCE OF SINGLE FATHERS AS PRIMARY CAREGIVERS

Local Student from Rhodes University Psychology Department is conducting research on the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers as a requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology.

Participation is voluntary, strictly confidential and anonymous.

Requirements:

- Must be a single parent
- Must have custodial rights
- Must be a primary caregiver for 10 years or longer
 - Between the ages of 40-70years old
 - English Speaking

If you are interested Please Contact the researcher:

Raydene Naidoo

on

076 941 6018 or raydene.naidoo@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent,

I am hereby requesting your participation in a research project that aims to explore how single fathers experience the process of primary caregiving, how they adjust and learn to cope with being the primary caregiver, and what their primary needs and concerns are.

This is an area that is relatively under researched particularly in the South African context. The 21st century in itself is currently characterized by social trends that have fundamentally changed the social cultural context in which children are raised, reared and develop. We have seen a tremendous shift and evolution from the conventional father as solely the breadwinner, to the modern more involved father, to the father as co-parent and ultimately in some cases to the father as primary caregiver.

The study will be conducted under the auspices of the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. A Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology student will be carrying out the research, and the research will be closely monitored and supervised by a member of staff at Rhodes University.

Your participation will take the form of three interviews (approximately between 45 and 60 minutes each) with the researcher who will ask you to share your experiences of:

- **Interview 1:** Transitioning into this new role, raising and rearing your child as a single parent.
- **Interview 2:** Adjusting and learning how to cope with caring for and parenting your children. What was helpful and what hindered the adjustment across various areas of functioning, such as establishing daily routine and homemaking.
- **Interview 3:** The efficacy and short comings of available resources, support systems and the concerns and hopes that remain for you regarding your child.

Depending on your preference, these interviews will be conducted at your home or in the church hall. With your permission and written consent, the interviews will be audio taped. Your responses to the research questions will be kept strictly confidential. The transcripts of all audiotapes will be coded, so that your name does not appear and the tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the research study. Identifying information will also be deleted

or disguised in any subsequent publication of the research findings. Feedback regarding the major findings and recommendations of the study will be made available to you, on request.

In the event that any painful emotions might be triggered during the interviews the following counselling centre may be contacted; Lifeline Counselling Centre on 043-722 2000 or the 24hour national helpline on 0861 322 322.

Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Your help in this project will be greatly appreciated and could make a very important difference to other single-fathers who are also primary caregivers.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact the researcher on 076 941 6018 or raydene.naidoo@gmail.com and complete and sign the attached consent form.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours Sincerely

Raydene Naidoo (Researcher)

Jan Knoetze (Supervisor)

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Dear Raydene

I agree to voluntarily participate in your research study about primary caregivers' experiences of raising their children. I understand that my responses will be reported in an anonymous manner, and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I prefer that you conduct the interviews at **(Please tick the block of your preference):**

At Home	
At Church Hall	

You may contact me at the following telephone number/s to arrange suitable times for us to meet:

Dialling code: _____ Telephone number: _____

Name (PRINT): _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW 1:

THE EXPERIENCE OF SINGLE FATHERS AS PRIMARY CAREGIVERS

- The researcher introduces herself and summarises the aim of the study. Go through information letter with participants and answer any questions that arise.
- Ask participant to complete and sign the consent form

Start Questions with: *What has been stressful about being a primary caregiver... What is your understanding of primary caregiving...What led to you becoming a primary caregiver...How did you experience the transition?*

Questions focused on these broad areas:

1. Biographical Data
 2. What is primary caregiving and how did you become the primary caregiver
 3. How did you experience the transition
 4. How did the children experience the transition
 5. Societies role in defining parents role
- Summarise the main areas covered. Ask participants to share anything else about their experience as single fathers.
 - Arrange time for 2nd interview

INTERVIEW 2

ADJUSTING AND COPING

- Clarify aspects of first interview, if needed.
- Introduce second topic

Start Questions with: *Tell me about the general running of the house... How did you manage daily tasks...Did you encounter difficulties... How did you resolve the difficulties.. Describe the demands placed on you...*

Questions focused on the broad areas:

1. Tell me about the general running of the house?
 2. How did you manage daily tasks?
 3. Did you encounter any difficulties?
 4. How did you overcome these difficulties?
 5. What demands were placed on you?
 6. Was time for yourself important?
 7. Methods of discipline and behaviour
-
- Summarise the main areas covered in the interview. Ask the participant if they would like to share anything else.
 - Arrange a time for the 3rd interview.

INTERVIEW 3

PRIMARY NEEDS, CONCERNS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Clarify aspects from 2nd interview, if need be.
- Introduce the main areas of inquiry.

Start questions with: *What do you feel most uncertain about...What did you need in order to take care of yourself...What support systems or resources are available to single fathers...What are your main concerns...What gives you hope*

Questions focused on the broad areas:

1. What did you feel most uncertain about?
 2. What did you need in order to take care of yourself?
 3. What support systems are available to single fathers?
 4. Did you feel the community supported you?
 5. What are your thoughts about your children's future?
4. What are your main concerns?
 5. What gives you hope?
 6. Has this changed since the loss of your partner?
- Summarise the main areas covered in the interview. Ask the participants if they would like to share anything else.
 - Thank participants for their willingness to share their experiences. Obtain information if they would like feedback on the findings.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

PARTICIPANT A

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Pseudonym:	A
Sex:	Male
Age:	42
Occupation:	Hairdresser
Home Language:	English
Marital Status:	Divorced
No of Children:	2

Prior to starting the interview the researcher went through the information letter that was distributed to participants, with consent form, prior to the commencement of the research. The researcher further explained the aim of the study, the manner in which confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured and asked the research participants to complete and sign the consent forms to audiotape and transcribe the series of three interviews.

INTERVIEW 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A SINGLE PARENT

1. How many children do you have? Line 1

Two

2. What are their names and sex? Line 2

Males, Kyle and Leilan

3. How long have you been a single parent and primary caregiver? Line 3

13 ears

4. How have you experienced been a single parent who is also the primary caregiver? Line 4

It's been pressurising, demanding, challenging, stressful.

5. What about it would you say is demanding and stressful? Line 5- 8

The demanding side is umm, you faced with demands all by yourself and some of the demand you can't meet because you yourself are not fully matured. Sometimes you dealing with situations you don't understand and you don't know how to tackle them and you don't know who to trust when you need guidance on certain issues.

6. What about it has been stressful for you? Line 9-12

To start off with, umm dealing with financial problems as a single parent because your children are under so much peer pressure you can't meet their needs if they want what others have and it's not easy making them understand that things take time to come and umm success for a parent is not overnight it takes quite a while.

It's a lot harder having single parent than two working parents in the household? Line 13-16

It depends on the type of person the single parent is because you can be a strong person, a hard worker and be able to overcome but if you just someone who doesn't care and you leave children to grow up on their own then obviously going to have a bad effect on their future. They are going to take their problems into their relationships.

7. What is your understanding of primary caregiving? Line 17-20

I think primary caregiving you can associate with nurturing, guidance umm. I think being there emotionally to understand the child. Some people say a child needs you most when they are in their teens. But I feel as a single parent I have learnt that a child needs you all the time.

You have always got to be there.

8. Please tell me what led to you becoming the primary caregiver? Line 21-34

Well to start off with when I went through a divorce I had to face the consequences. Fortunately I was a stronger person than the other person so I knew exactly coming from a childhood where it wasn't easy I knew exactly what my role was going to be and how I am going to feature and make my boys better people one day based on what I was taught as a child and my morals and upbringing. The only thing is that as a single parent you have to be more firm and not feel sorry for your children. Sometimes I do feel sorry for them and allow them that extra rope, you know. Umm but I would say being a primary caregiver you learn a lot, you learn, it's a continuous learning process. You make mistakes every day. You pick it up and put it behind you. You move on. It's difficult with children when we speak primary caregiving. Primary would refer to when they are very young. When a child is young everything is perfect, there whole life is perfect and they want to see things either coupled. They don't want to see anything left out. They live in a perfect world and as a parent you have to go through making them understand that things change and they are not always the same.

9. So did you become the sole parent because of the divorce? Line 35-40

Umm yes, they started living with me. I wanted them to live with me because I could see there were a lot of insecurities on the other side and if they were going to go to the other side; beyond the other side they would be neglected. Because going through the divorce and even after the divorce the separation period, when I would go and check up on them, their mother, I wasn't happy with what I saw. There were always other people looking after them. So I rather wanted them to be with me so I could oversee them.

10. So in your opinion emotionally and psychologically you were the better parent? Line 41-42

I would say I was the better parent at that stage and if I look at myself know in that situation I am still the better parent. I'm still the parent who goes the extra mile with them.

11. How did you experience this transition? Emotionally and Psychologically?

Line 43-48

Umm, it was tough. You don't forget about it easily. It's a continuous challenge every day that you work at. As a parent you don't trust people. You become hard. You become stronger. Umm you not only face with looking after those children but know you have to look after yourself as well. It's not easy because umm we do have emotions and feelings. We think mechanically sometimes. But fortunately for me I was able to keep myself together. But emotionally Yoh! I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy.

12. So it was a big adjustment moving from the two parent to just one parent? Line 49-56

Umm, it was a big adjustment in the sense that. Biologically children need both parents that are what we are taught because of tradition it's been implanted in relationships. But personally but how I coped, I coped very well in the sense that I could be mother and father because I knew their where emotional needs and I knew there was myself emotionally that I had to look after. And umm I managed to get around things. I always thought of where they going to be in the future and I always thought of where I see them as a parent in the future. You know and without me as a parent seeing where I am going be in the future, it wouldn't do justice for them if I didn't look after myself emotionally

13. How did the children experience this transition? Line 57-64

Umm from what I experience with them it was difficult for them. They went through a lot. They didn't cope at school. Umm and I always had to run and go and sort things out and I was always the one who got the phone calls. So it wasn't easy for them with coping. Fortunately the younger one was very small so he wasn't that attached or his mother wasn't that attached to him like she was to the first born. So it was basically more concerned about the elder one because he was very close to his mother and I think that is why today he is insecure in where he is going and who he is as an individual. Because know and then it does surface and I do see signs. I suppose insecurities.

**14. Looking back on the experience is there anything that stood out for you?
stood out for you? Line 65-77**

If there is anything that stood out I have learnt to be a better person one. Umm in going through the divorce I kept my side, I ended up the better one of the two even in society because people knew me; they knew what type of person I was. They knew everyone knew me as someone that would go the extra mile, so as a male generally speaking most males would say take your children. I want nothing to do with them. So I definitely proved to myself that I was different from a male point of view, that I could take the challenge that I could work harder. That I could come out on top and I think I am still in the process of still striving to come out on top. It has definitely made me stronger as a person and it is not easy to say that because you went through that situation that you can go through something else that you could go through disappointment. Working with your emotions on a daily basis is not something that you can just push aside. It takes time and it takes a lot of practice. You don't become superman if you have been through a divorce or breaks up you have to continuously strive to better yourself.

15. Stood out regards to children? Line 78-83

Positively what stood out they are better children. They can learn to say no to certain pressures. They show signs of not being failures. That makes me feel proud as a parent. The negative aspects I think they are scared to trust people especially the elder one, he is with the opposite sex, he has a don't care attitude as if he is painting every girl with the same brush. I can't blame him for that but I trust he will deal, I always tell him everyone is the same. With the other one it seems he is a bit weary of getting into things which I respect.

16. Do you feel with the positive strengths it's because you weren't there just physically but emotionally? Line 84- 88

Umm yes, if I would say I was there physically I would give them a hiding and teach them to respect others and to identify bad friends and what qualities to look for in their friends. Emotionally it definitely contributed because I constantly needed to tell them that they are not alone they are loved and will be loved and umm always had to make them understand things will get better. And nurturing and hugging and holding them really helps a lot.

17. Is there anything you would change with regards? Line 89- 94

It depends, umm, I won't change being a single parent or change going back to being married. Sometimes one parent is better than two. Umm because the other parent might not know how to deal with situations and this could have a negative effect on your children. Umm I won't change anything right now because I see things differently and I have learnt not everyone is the same. I have learnt that people have their individual negativities. You have to be careful who you get involved with because people take their childhood through life and if you not careful

18. Do you feel the experience has changed you in anyway? Line 95-99

Yes it has changed me. I have learnt that I can go through life without someone holding my hand. I have learnt to distance myself from negative people. I have learnt to surround myself with positive people. I have learnt to make better choices. It's not easy. I have also learnt to take on negative challenges and to fix things. I am a better person because of the experience.

19. Do you feel there is a difference between single parent fathers and single parent mothers? Line 100

Yes

20. And how is it different or the same? Line 101-104

The only difference is the one is female and the other male. It all depends on the type of male. If you were raised with good qualities there is no way you are going to neglect your children. Same for females. Depends on your individual upbringing and you as the person. How you were raised and principles instilled in you as a child.

21. Society believes mothers should look after children because they are the nurture? Line 105-111

I think a lot that society has. Everything that is based on society point of view is not always true. From a personal point of view, because society sees mother as the nurturers, because she

biologically carries the child. I think from that point of view its suppose to make a mother more emotionally attached from a biological point of view. I have learnt that it can be the other way around. From a male point of view a male doesn't have to biologically carry a child to be emotionally attached I think there is no difference between a male and a female. Depends on type of person and upbringing.

22. Do you think fathers play an important role in their children's development? Line 112-114

Personal point of view. Society predicts that a mother is a role model because of this whole nurturing thing. I believe father plays a bigger role. Children look up to a father as a role model. All about the person

23. Would you say it made it easy because both males? Line 115-118

Difficult to say because you don't know how they are going to be. When I got married I wanted girls because they are successful. To my understanding girls are easier. But fortunately I was blessed with two boys they can be successful. They can walk on right path. Depends on type of parent you are. No difference

24. Easier that they were younger and less se in there ways? Line 119-120

Yes that added in a positive light. If older understood more and more rebellious. A plus in a sense they could see I was there emotionally

INTERVIEW 2: ADJUSTING AND COPING

1. Tell me about the general running of the household when you became the primary caregiver? Line 1-3

Fortunately I had my mother as a mother figure at home. The only thing that was stressful was seeing that things are done on time and that the routine is continued. That they sit with their schoolwork at home and being there at home so they don't feel left out

2. Did anything change? Where there any significant differences other than the loss of your partner in the home? Line 4-8

Umm, yes there was a lot of change. I could see that my children were confused and they did not know what was happening. I was confused because some of the things I did not know how to handle. The communication between them and my parents also had to change. I am trying to understand them better and be more patient with them. Other than spouse not being there they learnt to adjust.

3. If anything was different how it was different from when you shared the household with your partner? Line 9-10

Umm, the only difference was that she was there when I got home. Staying with my parents and her not being there was a bit of an emotional downer because you felt alone and left out.

4. How did you manage daily tasks like meals, bath time, bed time, using the toilet and leisure activities? Line 11-13

Umm, sometimes bath time wasn't on time. Meals were easy because I could pick up a takeaway somewhere. Leisure time, I made sure I spent a lot of time with them, taking them places and taking them to their mother although she was more concerned with herself.

5. Did you encounter any difficulties? Line 14-16

Yes, I did encounter difficulties because when they visited her. The difficulties I encountered when they went to visit their mother was that one would always get hurt. She was not focused on them. I was scared they would come back hurt again.

6. If so, what difficulties? What helped during these difficulties or how did you resolve the difficulties? Line 17-19

I had to just come to terms with the fact that if they get hurt it's going to be her responsibility. I had to fight to keep them away longer. Which people would say is not good but I felt that was the better option.

7. Did you feel that there were more demands placed on your role in home than before? Line 20-22

Yes, I felt that pressure because I had to be both parents. Those demands haven't stopped. Even though there mother can't provide for them, well she can but she decides not too so those demands are still placed on me.

8. Do you feel as though there was demands place on your time and energy? Line22-23

Umm, yes, my time especially because during work, I had to run and sort things out at school. At night I had to sit with schoolwork and help them. So yes definitely

9. If yes, how did you cope with the demands/on your time and energy? Line 24-26

I had to see that I was in bed on time and made time for myself when they were in bed or visiting. It would be the only time I could relax and prepare the routine for when I see them again. It was difficult, it wasn't easy. I don't know how I managed to pull through.

10. Do you feel that it was important that you had time for yourself? Line 27-30

Umm, I see to be the type of person who is not concerned with myself as long as the other person is happy. And, I have changed my outlook on the now because I have brought them thus far and I think there mother can also play a role now. I am trying to focus and do things for myself.

**11. If yes, who or what was most helpful in helping you to cope with these demands?
Lines 31-32**

Umm, yes my mother. She would sort out meals, do washing and see that our rooms are clean.

12. Did you need help? Line 33-37

I felt I needed help to a certain extent but the drive in me to give them better, to work hard for them made me think that I could do it on my own. Which is very tough at this moment but because I am the type of person that wanted things to succeed and want to see my children happy. I sometimes feel I can now handle it alone even though at that time it didn't feel that way.

13. So you felt the physical support was more important? Line 38

The physical support yes.

14. Tell me about your experience in terms of?

**a) Your child's education and day care
while you were at work? Line39-42**

They never had day care. They were a few problems at school because of the divorce they were very emotionally insecure. It was quite tough when it came to getting them to get things

done on time because know they didn't want to tackle things or work in groups. It felt to me like they were very insecure.

b) Did you place an emphasis on getting homework done in terms of enforcing that school work was important to them? Line 43-47

Yes, I placed a lot of emphasis on it because of myself because of where I came from because of what I thought of my schooling, success and way forward. But even though I placed that emphasis on them they had a solid foundation. If I look at the two the one is still more insecure and divorce has taken a toll on the older one who has become more rebellious.

c) Did your mom take care of them after school? Line 48

Yes, my mom took care of them after school until I got home.

d) Methods of behaviour and discipline Line 49-51

I never spoke much. I would discipline them physically because that how I was raised and it made me a better person. I've learnt one thing you can discipline a child but they still have their own mind so it's a continuous process.

e) The impact this had on your role in the home? Line 52-55

Umm, if you referring to the personal impact it was very traumatic because you see yourself as inferior and you start blaming yourself. You start asking yourself why and you start seeing yourself as problematic. You wonder what people are going to think of you when you go through a divorce.

- f) If had daughters, how did you handle significant developmental milestones?
And if so did you rely on anyone to help during these times? Line 56-60**

I took them one step at a time. I made sure when I applied them I would finish them. I made sure I surrounded myself with positive people. I read up on others experiences and behaviour, losses and disappointments. I tried to see things from a higher perspective. One thing I didn't forget was the way I was raised and I listened to my heart and that's what got me through.

- g) In your opinion do you feel that the challenges are the different/same for
single fathers vs. single mothers? Line 61**

The challenges are the same it depends on the person, how they handle the situation.

INTERVIEW 3: PRIMARY NEEDS, CONCERNS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- 1. If you think back to everything you have experience since becoming a primary caregiver, what did you feel most uncertain and alone about? Line 1-6**

There is a lot of things to consider. The one thing that comes to the alone about and concern, you ask yourself why and it is difficult for you to come to terms with the disappointment. So it has an effect on you because you're lonely and you need to find yourself as a person all over again and you need to heal. A lot of things; my children's future. There still is that hanging in the air above your head. Are they going to make it as grown-ups, how would they treat their children and how would they treat the disappointments or situation similar to mine.

- 2. Did you really need help with anything in particular? Line 7-9**

Umm if there is something I needed help with was for people to believe me, that I was the innocent party. And I actually needed people to listen when I needed to talk about something. The other thing is you wish that things could be the same

3. In terms of the children? Line 10-15

It would sound insane but if there was someone or something instant that could make them understand and change their minds automatically. Umm, to make me believe that they will survive, like the fear of the unknown, you don't know what's going through their mind, if there is someone they could speak to, if there is someone that can help in this situation. It is very difficult because all over where you go you have to pay for counselling and therapy and I couldn't afford it at that time and this was one of the difficulties.

4. What did you need in order to take care of yourself? Line 16-21

I needed to make myself understand that I am not the only one and I needed to get over the disappointment not the loss because I always saw myself as a better person and never looked down on myself, I always believed in myself. I have a policy that when you fail you have to get up dust yourself off and start all over again. So, I think it's about believing in yourself and who you are, if you don't believe in yourself, you need to look at yourself in the mirror and find out where did you go wrong.

5. Was that important to you? Line 22-24

I would say I had to start with myself first because if it wasn't for me and my importance and my well-being I would never be able to execute the nurturing and emotional side, comforting and loving them. I had to love myself firsts.

6. Do your feel your priorities changed when you became a single parent? In what way? Line 25-28

My priorities definitely changed. I had to tell myself that I needed to be a success for my children to be a success and for my children to be a role model. I had to establish myself as a more secure person in what I did, in my spare time. I had to make better decisions and break away from the negativity for my children sake.

7. Do you feel that or know if there are resources or support systems available to single fathers in your area? Line 29-32

At that time I couldn't find any. I use to sit and listen to the Christian programme, TBN. I use to listen to them giving advice. I was actually hungry for advice and other people's experiences and how you would handle things from a biblical principle or just from a normal ordinary principle on street.

8. If so what is available and how did you find this? If not, how did this make you feel? Line 33-35

Umm, it made me feel like I'm in everything all by myself, it made me feel helpless, it made me feel like there is no way I could fight back because there was no support.

9. What formal support systems or organisations were available to you? Line 36

No

10. Where there any informal support systems that helped you? Line 37-38

Informal, if I can categorise or place my clients in that category because I work in the service industry. Because I am an open book I always told them how I was feeling.

11. If yes, how did you experience them? Line 39-40

Umm, definitely of positive influence. Although some of them were very angry towards the other person

12. Do you feel that single fathers are supported in your community and how does it make you feel? Line 41-46

Ummm, firstly I don't think single fathers are supported because of tradition the law is always on the mother's side. It's only now with the constitutional rights that men have, that there is an ear for men. Or the law... if I speak from a legal point of view that you know have visitation rights and two parents are now seen as equal. But I still feel that there, there is a massive void because men go through exactly the same as what woman go through.

13. What are your thoughts about your children's future? Line 47-51

My thoughts about their future, I know trust and I know...from the way they have developed. I can see they have become more careful into what they get themselves involved in. They are always on the lookout not to destroy themselves although it might seem shaky at times... like when they with wrong friends. But I believe what I have taught them will surface and they will put that into place. I also believe that they are going to be successful.

14. What are your main concerns? Line 52-55

My main concern is that they make proper choices. My main concern is that they, they can still be able to say no when they are in a vulnerable situation and that they will choose people that respect them and surround themselves with positive people so that they can become successful.

15. What gives you hope? Line 56-58

The way I have instilled the principles in their lives and the way I taught them from small and the everyday speaking to them and guiding them and just trusting. You know I can also say I trust in God and I leave it in God's hands.

16. Have these changed or increased since the loss of your partner? If so in what way? Line 59-60

Umm, my concerns. Its changed for the better and its proved to me that one parent can be better than two depending on the type of parent.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

PARTICIPANT M

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Pseudonym:	M
Sex:	Male
Age:	47
Occupation:	Insurance Broker
Home Language:	English
Marital Status:	Divorced
No of Children:	2

Prior to starting the interview the researcher went through the information letter that was distributed to participants, with consent form, prior to the commencement of the research. The researcher further explained the aim of the study, the manner in which confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured and asked the research participants to complete and sign the consent forms to audiotape and transcribe the series of three interviews.

INTERVIEW 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A SINGLE PARENT

1. How many children do you have? Line 1

2

2. What are their names and sex? Line 2

Jessie, 21 and Alex 20

3. How long have you been a single parent and primary caregiver? Line 3

10 years.

**4. How have you experienced been a single parent who is also the primary caregiver?
Line 4-6**

Initially it was very challenging obviously when you just get divorced it's a challenge because the children are used to having both their parents and I am used to having a wife. But you learn to adjust and cope as you go along.

5. What is your understanding of primary caregiving? Line 7-10

My understanding of primary caregiving is all the early stages of care that children need in terms of physical protection, love, warmth, feeding them and providing for them etc. It's to do with all the basics that normally a mom and dad do. As a single parent I would think the primary caregiving is more because it's one person.

6. Please tell me what led to you becoming the primary caregiver? Line 11-14

Umm, when we had trouble in our marriage, initially the understanding was that the kids would stay with their mom. But umm they actually preferred to stay with me and they mom decided that they would prefer to stay with me and their mom realised that I would be the better parent and give them that primary care that they needed

7. So, it was because you were the stronger parent in terms of caring for their basic needs? Line 15-17

I would think that it was more because of umm, the challenge she was going through as an individual and she saw the possibility that I would probably do a better job than her because of her circumstances.

8. How did you experience this transition? Line 18-22

It was very difficult initially because it was something new. It's different now. When you there as the father and the mom is not there and your kids are also lost. So initially it was very heart-breaking and you're almost powerless to do anything about it because your kids are looking for something new. As the saying goes time does heal and you adjust and you cope. You, I had to be very focused and organized because it's a very vulnerable period.

**9. What would you say was difficult about it other than the loss of the second partner?
Line 23-28**

I think simple things like umm, umm, cooking and having hot meals available when you the single parent. Having the other person there when you busy working. The little things like making sure the basic stuff is done. You miss the little things and you have to, it's a huge adjustment and you battle to change and you have to adapt very quickly. So you had to become a better organiser and planner and focus on the little things because those things are missing.

10. How did the children experience this transition? Line 29-32

Initially I think it was a huge challenge for them but I think they umm, children are very, depending on how they are raised and how their emotional state is, they can take it on as a challenge and support you. And make it work. My kids responded to me and we made it a team effort because we needed to survive. But they also responded and got on with each other

11. Looking back on the experience is there anything that stood out for you? Line 33-37

Umm, I think that would stood out is the fact that you come to realise that your capable of much more as an individual when you're faced with a situation as opposed to when there are two parents. We tend to define our roles as only a husband, father, mother but you come to realise how adaptable and versatile you can be. And you also realise how much more kids can do on their own.

12. Is there anything you would change? Line 38-43

Perhaps the odd one or two things. I think initially when you got little kids you stop your life for them and you wait for the chance when there is more stability and stuff. And now they are going to be 20 and 21. But the quicker you learn to live for yourself, the better for everyone. At that stage it might look selfish but in the long run it's a win, win for everyone. You have to be happy for yourself and your kids. It's a huge balancing act and that's why people battle with it. But I think that's what I would do differently.

13. It definitely sounds like taking care of yourself was as important as taking care of your children? Line 44-47

Absolutely, because your kids need to see you taking care of yourself. Because that how they get confidence enough to look after themselves. It's a balancing act because if you get romantic with someone else you also cant. You have to be aware you handle it in a delicate manner because it could also have a negative impact.

14. Do you feel there is a difference between single parent fathers and single parent mothers? Line 48-52

Umm, I'm sure there is because traditionally you have a lot more single parent moms and that seems to be the status quo. And with a single parent dad it's a bit of a different challenge because you're doubling up as a mom. Whereas if you're a single parent mom you carry on with your primary role as a mom and umm I think if we had to be honest with ourselves mom's play a more subtle role. As a single parent it is different.

15. Do you think your role changed when you became the single parent. You were more involved than when you had a partner? Line 53-55

Definitely, In fact in the lessons I take out. I would sit down with my other half and demarcate exactly what our roles would be. I think the communication. I don't think present people. Don't sit down and discuss it they assume it.

16. Do you think it was easier raising boys because they could relate to you? Line 56-59

I don't think it would have affected me. I think I would have thrived raising a girl because I think you adjust to the situation. I think you adjust to the situation because of your personality and character. I think a girl would have been better because she would have fulfilled some of the roles.

17. Do you feel taking responsibility for the kids was due to the way you were raised? Line 60-62

Umm, to an extent but I think I never had a father, my mom was a single parent. You reflect on your past experience. But I have learnt to move away from that. You need to stay relevant to the times. I give my kids a lot of independence and trust.

18. There is this notion in society that mothers are the nurturers and they provide the emotional and psychological aspects of raising kids. Do you feel that is true or do you feel you have provided your kids with that and that its played an important role in them being raised well? Line 63-68

I think that umm it is just a societal norm that a mother...I think it should be equal that all the soft skills....Definitely nothing can take away kids and their mommy's. Times are changing. fathers are as soft as mothers and I think kids enjoy that. You know there is too much president set. We can change that, it depends how you raise your kids. But for me, my personal experience was when your thrown in the deep end your not really worried about your role as a father or a mother, you get stuck in the challenge of whatever is needed.

INTERVIEW2: ADJUSTING AND COPING

- 1. Tell me about the general running of the household when you became the primary caregiver? Line 1-4**

Initially, umm, actually you tend to overdue things because you are faced with the responsibility. And Your kids also observe that your battling. I have a good relationship with my boys and they just responded. One kid will always be stronger than the other. Alex grounded and structured, whereas Jessi is very chilled and everyone has their own role.

- 2. Did anything change? Where there any significant differences other than the loss of your partner in the home? Line 5-6**

Umm, yes you get a new perspective. You learn to get more structured and you utilised your time and value time more, you get more productive.

- 3. If anything was different, how was it different from when you shared the household with your partner?Line 7-9**

Umm, you learn new things. You have to start cooking and planning and taking care of chores that you didn't need too. And depending on your background, experience and attitude. For me it was a challenge initially but I shared the workload with the boys.

4. How did you manage daily tasks like meals, bath time, bed time, using the toilet and leisure activities? Line 10-13

Umm, luckily for me my kids were grown up with a good sense of knowing their core responsibilities. Their bath times and getting ready for the next day and television watching and homework. The way we were living, we already cultivated some good habits and it was more a thing of me checking up on them now and again. It was a reasonably easy adjustment

5. So the good habits you had, you just needed to maintain them? Line 14-16

Yes, there were one or two things that like adjusting to making lunch in morning. you tend to appreciate the little things more like driving kids to school. The changes was that you got a lot more perspectives.

6. Did you encounter any difficulties? Line 17-20

My biggest difficulty was the fact that Alex was very heartbroken initially. You could see it in his face and it hurt him a lot what happened. Jessi was much easier. The biggest challenge was spending more time with Alex and we developed a good relationship and it developed him. We converted that hurt into positive energy.

7. In terms of the household were there any difficulties that you encountered? Line 21-24

We have always been privileged to have a domestic. Although we missed some of the touches that a woman brings to the home. We quickly adjusted and we had to move on. We moved on to it becoming a place that was comfortable for us. We made it a place that works for us.

8. What helped you during the challenges and how did you resolve them? Line 25-33

One of the positives is that Jessi and Alex friends use to come home. They felt comfortable with me as a person. It's going to be tough for me so I preferred there friends to come over. We use to watch sport and gym together and building up things. Those changes that were introduced built up our structure and focus and direction and enabled us to get through.

SO it's more like you found commonalities: Yes, the biggest thing is utilising time to enhance or do things that will enhance relationships. We spent a lot of time on constructive activities and I got myself involved in all the activities. We spent a lot of time in sport and traveling and that bonded us and took our relationship to a new level. Too many parents get stuck and you have to shift gears and change your mind set.

9. Did you feel that there were more demands placed on your role in home than before? Line 34-37

There were in a sense that you know umm as a parent as a fatherly parental role but then you have to get to the softer side of your skills, You don't tend to show it amongst adult but then with your kids if you need to be there is a part of the moms role that you have to do but there is a part that you would like to do but can never do.

10. Do you feel as though there was demands place on your time and energy? Line 38-39

Amazingly enough it got easier and better. Because, I could be responsible enough to set up the structure. Because they were old it was easier to manage.

11. If yes, how did you cope with the demands/on your time and energy? Line 40-42

You know what I've always been healthy and fit I think that helped me and I included that in the activities. And I accepted the fact that you need to do things that will work for you. Everything worked itself out

12. Do you feel that it was important that you had time for yourself? Line 43-46

Umm, I see to be the type of person who is not concerned with myself as long as the other person is happy. And, I have changed my outlook on that now because I have brought them thus far and I think there mother can also play a role now. I am trying to focus and do things for myself.

**13. If yes, who or what was most helpful in helping you to cope with these demands?
Line 47-49**

You know I think we needed help in the sense that we were lonely and the boys having friends on weekend and our activities during the week and keeping our minds occupied. You miss your wife, mother but you have to work through it and deal with it.

14. And you personally in terms of the household stuff and rearing of the boys. Did you feel you needed help at that stage? Line 50-55

There were experiences that were tough and challenging. You have to just be much disciplined on you approach. And what worked is the fact that you have to keep on top of it and say the same things and rely on the fact that what you say gets through and be patient. I have a lot of patience and understanding and I never put pressure on my kids to achieve at school. Balance is the key. We made sure we had our sport and much of that we enjoyed. We had fun times. We created an environment that met our needs.

15. Is there anyone you turned to or asked for advice? Line 56-61

My best friends that live in Durban. My mom and my eldest brother and his wife and my sister. My family and I have very good friends. We have a very strong cultural relationship with friends and that comes from me. Jessi and Alex grew up with their children and whenever we were around they got what they were missing from them

Support structures were important, we didn't create it when we lost a spouse but it was what we already had from our lifestyle.

16. Tell me about your experience in terms of?

17. Your child's education and day care while you were at work? Line 62-65

When the boys were in school they came home we had a good domestic and I would work such that I would be home by 3. The positives were that it motivated me to work to live meaning my afternoons became my free time so I would be available to them in the afternoons. Even if I worked full days the structure was so good that they knew what to do

18. Methods of behaviour and discipline? Line 66-67

I had one or two challenges with the boys. It was about communicating and when it was needed I did not hesitate to smack them. **Open lines of communication.**

19. The impact this had on your role in the home? Line 68-70

The impact it had was that I changed from being just a father who worked and does the entertainment to I had to take responsibility for everything. But having said that and to be honest. I reckon we were equal and we all had to be guys.

20. How did you handle significant developmental milestones?

And if so did you rely on anyone to help during these times? Line 71-74

Obviously the boys were going through their teenage years and being boys we have our ways and means. I always check up on the kids and put it out there. Being open made it a lot easier. I'm very strong in my views and put it out there but gave them the freedom as it is their own life.

21. In your opinion do you feel that the challenges are the different/same for single fathers vs. single mothers? Line 75-76

I think the challenges are the same but the make-up and response is different because a woman will respond differently than a man.

INTERVIEW 3: PRIMARY NEEDS, CONCERNS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

1. If you think back to everything you have experience since becoming a primary caregiver, what did you feel most uncertain and alone about? Line 1-4

The only uncertainty I have is what every parent would have whether you a single parent or joint parent. You worry yourself that your kids are now becoming young adults and whether they will make the choices that will benefit. And you worry whether they will make bad choices or wrong choices. And I guess that's normal for any parent.

2. Did you really need help with anything in particular? Line 5-8

Sometimes I could sense that Alex and Jessi where needing some affection and they missed their mom. And that was out of my control. And I noticed that sometimes they would get that from their friend's moms. They would go there and good friends of theirs would treat them as if they were theirs and that helped them a lot. My friend's mom and my mom were there.

3. What did you need in order to take care of yourself? Line 9-14

You know what... What I did do was to simplify my life and I... I also... Umm the experience also made me... take a new approach to who my friends and acquaintances are and to surround yourself with positive people who are good for me and my family. So I think I got selective on people who I associated with. Subconsciously I realised if I associate with good people it's going to be good for the kids. So I cut out a lot of toxic people.

4. Was that important to you? Line 15

I think so.

5. Do you feel your priorities changed when you became a single parent? In what way? Line 16-25

Yes, your priorities change because umm, know you got to do certain things... you cannot replace being a mom but you got to do certain things that the other parent got done. And you have too... It wasn't something that you said oh now what do I have to do. You kind of got through things in a sense that you looked at the day and what you needed to do, have that done and you learnt from the experiences. And as the days and weeks and months went by it all kind of cultured itself into what needs to be done and you find your own way of doing things. So to answer your question I would say there are something's joint parents do that you can't do... it actually doesn't become important. You actually realise some of the things they do is a waste of time. You get the urgent things done and umm... something's you never get done to because it's a time factor.

6. Do you feel that or know if there are resources or support systems available to single fathers in your area? Line 26-29

I don't know about the area. I think... I think... To be honest everyone is so caught up in their own challenges to expect other people to come and help you is really a waste of energy. I think it's down to the individual. Having said that having fostered I have some good friends.

7. If so what is available and how did you find this? If not, how did this make you feel? Line 30-32

I never really looked for any but I can tell you and this is profound... what helped me. My mentor is a Christian author and I subscribed to his readings. The governing principles that helped me was Maxwell.

8. Do you feel single fathers are supported in your community? Community in terms of your friends etc? Line 33-35

No community support that I know off. Yes people care. I have wonderful friends and kids have wonderful friends who have wonderful parents. So I think we were blessed. The community around which is friends and family is a huge reason why.... Strong point.

9. What are your thoughts about your children's future? Line 36

My concern about inviting their mother to events.

10. What are your main concerns? Line 37-43

My main concern is... I have told them they should marry when they are mature and have a base so they can provide. You learn from your mistakes as a parent and pass that on. At the end of the day it's their life and their choices. It's important to try and cultivate umm... umm... something called... it's a choice and you must always be at peace with your choices and you will get the best return. Amongst us guys we have a code. I think we

have a style and a conduct were we say if we are really battling then we get down to it and I like that they are still young and growing.

11. What gives you hope? Line 44-47

I think what kids want to see is their parent happy. If your kid sees you struggling it will affect them. I try to live an authentic, open and honest life but I don't have to tell them everything. You kind of... there are things were you develop a relationship with your children. Certain things you know you need to say

Hope for their future? Line 48-55

When you hear other people. My ex-wife also did this very well. Our kids are grown up with good manners and respect and they honest about life. So I think that respect, manners and a degree of honesty... For me that am the biggest hope I have for them because those are qualities that are fundamental for anything. For me I feel very relieved that those are things that were driven for the last 18/19 years. You know I think those values will carry throughout their life. I have no fear about whether they will have a job, whether they will have my lifestyle. The choices they make, the way you grow them, they will make peace with those things and make it happen for themselves.

12. Have these changed or increased since the loss of your partner? If so in what way? Line 56-60

I do wonder if they look at my lifestyle and whether they will want to be single parent too and they won't have a choice of having a romantic relationship of getting married and having kids. But when I think about it that the usual anxiety that all parents have. Children are powerful, they know what they want and will get what they want if they up to it. So I am learning to coach my mind never to worry.

13. Do you feel that your stress is heightened as more as single parent? Line 61

Most parents overstress over wrong things.

14. Do you find that being a single parent has helped you look at these things and stress less? Line 62-65

You learn to do a lot more introspection on yourself. As joint parents focus on kid and as a single parent you always asking yourself what did I do that we are in this situation. and joint parents keep asking what he or she did. I always take a step back and ask myself. Something I have transferred onto the kids

15. In your own opinion, do you feel there is a difference or similarity between hopes and concerns between single-mothers and single-fathers? Line 66

I am going to tell you something

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

PARTICIPANT R

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Pseudonym:	R
Sex:	Male
Age:	70
Occupation:	Self-Employed
Home Language:	English
Marital Status:	Widow
No of Children:	3
Ethnic Background:	Caucasian

Prior to starting the interview the researcher went through the information letter that was distributed to participants, with consent form, prior to the commencement of the research. The researcher further explained the aim of the study, the manner in which confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured and asked the research participants to complete and sign the consent forms to audiotape and transcribe the series of three interviews.

INTERVIEW 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A SINGLE PARENT

1. How many children do you have? Line 1

3

2. What are their names and sex? Line 2

Female and 2 Males

3. How long have you been a single parent and primary caregiver? Line 3

11 Years

4. How have you experienced been a single parent who is also the primary caregiver? Line 4-12

Well you know the difficulty is when your partner is around the work is delegated. The mother has her part and you have your part. I work and mom takes care, schooling and extramural activities. She makes it her job so I could concentrate on mine. Once she passed your priorities change and your work is not your priority. You have to get other people to take care of your business and make sure you are around because their mother raised them in a good home and you have got to keep that standard. Where's before you were reckless but know your priorities changed. Keep standard of her up bringing. Long and difficult road because you had to adjust because it's got to be done and you got to do it right. You got to do it without complaining.

5. What is your understanding of primary caregiving? Line 13-15

Their needs, schooling and upbringing must be at all times what they are used to. What their mom made them use to. They miss their mom. You got to be very conscious of that and

make sure you don't say anything that would upset them and keep it in good standards.

6. When you say there mom raised them in a certain way what do you mean by that? Line 16-18

She was of good upbringing and their upbringing was good. We had our standards and that's how the kids were raised. So with her missing I had to keep up that standard. She was the teacher, doctor and I had to adjust to that role. I took it for granted and I had to.

7. Was her standard mom, nurturer and you had to fill that role when she passed? Line 19-20

Absolutely yes, constantly remind them that this is what mom would want and not give me a hard time about it.

8. Please tell me what led to you becoming the primary caregiver? Line 21-22

With her gone you got to way pro and cons and see what their needs are and adjust and play the role that she played. Become a more active parent and fill the role more actively.

9. How did you experience this transition? Line 23-29

To be honest, it seemed difficult in the beginning. Difficult in the sense that I use to play a double role. One as a parent and one as a breadwinner. Whole life revolves around the children and not business anymore. It's a big transition. We were brought up that way and it is going to be done. We couldn't say let someone else does it? Children are the most important part of your life. Losing their mom brought us a lot closer. Not that we weren't closer but in the day I was at work and they were with their mom. But know we spend more time together. Difficult role to start but once you care about your children. It makes it easier.

10. Positive thing came out of difficult thing was bond? Line 30-33

100%. I am the only parent they have so they rely on me more. They are much closer to me know. The mother had priority but when mom is not there, their fathers is, and they worry about me. You got to do the right thing you can't be selfish. You got to say that's my family and that's the way it's got to be.

11. How did the children experience this transition? Line 34-36

It was very difficult for them. You know they spent all that time with their mom and suddenly she is not there. It is very hard. It's a massive loss that they will never get over. They knew that I was taking their moms role but I would never fill her shoes.

12. Looking back on the experience is there anything that stood out for you? Line 37

Well, you know besides the great loss and that it brought us closer together.

13. Is there anything you would change? Line 38

No besides that I did my best for her.

14. Anything in terms of children's you would change? Line 39-40

No, they good children. They always hug and love me and we are a close family. I have no regrets. I did everything that I could. I love them to bits.

15. Do you feel there is a difference between single parent fathers and single parent mothers? Line 41-44

I am not talking from personal experience but from the experience of other children. I think children that come from single mothers tend to be more rebellious. Maybe it's just the parent that is not strong enough. A father figure is a lot stronger and stern. Maybe some mothers are at a disadvantage and kids will be rebellious if they are not stern enough.

16. Difference in rearing between the boy and girl? Line 45-47

Well girls are fiery and more stubborn. Boys are easier to handle. Not critically. There is a difference. Girls want that mother figure to relate to. It becomes a pleasure when girls are married and have a child. Boys were easier because we could relate.

17. Would you say it was important to be there emotionally and psychologically and not just physically? Line 48-51

Yes look, the emotional side you got to be more sympathetic. You can actually sense their physical and emotional need. As a reliable parent you have to pick up their need and respond to it. You try to lift them emotionally. Make them feel wanted and happy. Whatever happens I will always be here for you. We are soft inside. We are always there for our family.

18. There is this notion in society that mothers are the nurturers but do you feel that dad could fulfil that role? Line 52-53

Absolutely, 100 percent if you care for your children you will do exactly that. Put your needs aside and care for your child. Annihilate all their fears and doubts if you care for the children.

INTERVIEW 2: ADJUSTING AND COPING

- 1. Tell me about the general running of the household when you became the primary caregiver? Line 1-3**

Well, you know even before M passed away each, each...Ok she was the primacy of the house but the kids use to help. You know with setting up the table and cooking. It just carried on from there the only difference was that we had to cook.

- 2. Did you have a domestic? Line 4**

Always but not to cook just to clean.

- 3. Did anything change? Where there any significant differences other than the loss of your partner in the home? Line 5-6**

Well, Ja, obviously the missing of the person you know. I think that's about it. Everyone missed their mom. That was a big void in their life. That was about it.

- 4. Was there any major changes that occurred in running of household? Line 7**

No, not really

- 5. If anything was different, how was it different from when you shared the household with your partner?**

6. How did you manage daily tasks like meals, bath time, bed time, using the toilet and leisure activities? Line 8-10

Well, that was one thing that I had to adjust to. Umm, but the kids were old enough to know what they needed to do. M was the youngest so they took care of him. Obviously the running around, taking to school, bringing them back I had to do because the others were at school.

7. Did you encounter any difficulties? Line 11

Not really.

8. In terms of the household was there any difficulties that you encountered? Line 12

Obviously, Obviously.

9 .Could you Elaborate? Line 13-19

Well, know you had to get up earlier to see that the kids were fed, that they had their breakfast that they showered and were ready for school. Take them to school. You know make sure you collected the one kid at 12 o'clock and the others at 2 o'clock.

Take them to extramural. So that was all the pressure on me. You know sometimes I would ask someone to pick up the kids if I was busy at the shop. You know because I had a business to run and it wasn't easy but it was done. I fell into the role. Even when M was around and needed help I fetched the kids.

10. Do you feel as though there was demands place on your time and energy? Line 20

Ja, Ja

11. If yes, how did you cope with the demands/on your time and energy? Line 21-23

Well, you learn to adjust. Upon one another. You knew they had to be done so there was no actually, you didn't actually have a choice. Like before you use to take it easy and stay at the shop.

12. Who was most helpful? Line 24-26

The kids actually. Themselves. They were brought up in such a way... they were independent. What they did before... M didn't spoon feed them. They were independent from youngsters. So it just carried on from there.

13. Did you feel like you needed any help? Line 27-32

Ja, there were times when you do, you know. The pressure is heavy. There is a lot less time, all of a sudden, in one day because you're doing like two peoples work and... you feel the pressure, you get annoyed because like you got to drop what you're doing and be at a specific place at a specific time because one of the children have, has too.. Be at extramurals, playing cricket, playing rugby. Because one was younger and there was a girl and boys, there were three different sport, three different schools and three different time schedules.

14. Was there any one particular that you turned to the most when you needed help with anything? Line 33-35

There was one particular friend of M. They were very close and she looked after M when she was sick you know... and she helped me a lot. She took a lot of the pressure off at the shop with the admin and that for me to do my work.

15. Tell me about your experience in terms of?

16. Your child's education and day care while you were at work? Line 36-38

Well, look there... You know if... I use to get help with extra maths... where M use to help them with their homework and I couldn't. I use to get someone or take them to extra maths. People that would help them with their schooling, you know.

17. Methods of behaviour and discipline? Line 39-42

Well in one way I was blessed that I didn't need to discipline them. They were already well behaved. They knew their place and it wasn't difficult in that respect. They still amazing kids, they always were. So I am happy in that respect that I didn't need to punish them in that way. Small reprimands yes, but not serious.

18. The impact this had on your role in the home? Line 43-45

Ja, well that's always going to be a difficult. It still is in a way. Ten years down the line you still think you are know the primacy of the house. You got to do everything; you got to make sure that things are done rights.

19. Because, you had a daughter, how did you handle significant developmental milestones both with her and the boys? Line 46-49

Well, my daughter was already married so she knew her place. It was fantastic and she looked after her brothers when I wasn't around. To cooked for them and to help the little one with his homework. They were already grown up and well taught. They didn't need much coaching to do what they needed to do.

20. In your opinion do you feel that the challenges are the different/same for single fathers vs. single mothers? Line50- 59

Like I said before... it would depend entirely and 100% on the child's upbringing. A mother would have a lot more difficulty with a rebellious child than a father would.

That's pretty obvious. There up brining is very, very important. If they are taught from young that they are loved and well looked after and well respected in their home and disciplined in a proper way. They won't give any problems to the father or the mother. Obviously a problem child will give a mother a lot more hassles than a father. Obviously the mother would handle it a lot more different. A father would be stricter and more controlling whereas mothers are more caring and let them get away with a lot more things than the father. So I reckon the mother would have a much harder time. Like I said it depends on the upbringing of the children.

INTERVIEW 3: PRIMARY NEEDS, CONCERNS AND SUPPORT SYSTEM

1. If you think back to everything you have experience since becoming a primary caregiver, what did you feel most uncertain and alone about? Line 1-5

You know when you have a partner, a lot of things you do together, not only your house, your business, your social life. All that is gone and all that is missing. It will always be missing. Until things settle down years later, it might be different but those things are not in your life anymore. That's not an easy task. You got to get people or things to fill in those voids that are there now.

2. What did you need in order to take care of yourself? Line 6-9

Umm, anything that will distract from the loneliness. From being alone you know. You try and find things... where there are people around. In my case I use to go to the casino every night and sit till 3 -4 in the morning because I didn't wasn't to be alone. You find distractions.

3. Was that important to you? Line 10-14

Well, it was... you know it was easier than sitting in a room where your partner has been all your life. 25 years and suddenly she is gone and you're alone in that room. It's very lonely in there so it was important to find friends to become active. To find socially, people that you can interact with in any way in any form of life. It was important for me to get away from the house. It was the worse time.

4. Other than needing help with taking care of the kids and the household, did you need help with anything, in terms of yourself? Line15-19

Well, the only... if you're talking about... mainly in business the shop I got people to help me. The lady who I referred to, Janet, who was Maria friend. She came to help me in the shop with the books and admin. So that... she was a great, great help. She is sick know so years later you get help, you get the professional and pay them. At the time she was like the best thing that happened to me.

5. Do your feel your priorities changed when you became a single parent? In what way? Line 20-23

Well, your priorities have to change. First of all you set in your ways with the family. You got your wife, you get up in the morning, and you go to work. She goes to her social studies, book club. Once that is all gone and you know you're on your own you have to adjust in any way you can.

6. Do you feel that or know if there are resources or support systems available to single fathers in your area? Line 24-26

In my case my children were my support. My kids were the pillars and my support in every way. I looked forward to being with them, we became closer and we were together every day and it's a big, big help.

7. Do you feel single fathers are supported in your community? Community in terms of your friends etc? Line 27-28

Yes 100%. I mean obviously we belong to the Greek community and they have always been there in a big, big way. It's a cultural thing.

8. So culturally the support is strong? Line 29-33

Always strong. The only... were I found or was disappointed a few times were with people we socialised with now that Maria is not there. I am not part of their lives anymore. This is people we knew very well, we stayed with when we went on holiday or they visited us and stayed with us when they came here. They drifted away because they were more your wife's relatives and friends because you're an outsider again.

9. What are your thoughts about your children's future? Line 34-39

Well we spoke about it. I mean you know I give them every support they need, whatever they need. If Anthony, I support him in the video shop in the club that he has... give him ideas. Mickey, whatever help he needs, Jo whatever help she needs. I will support each and every one of them and help each and every one of them, financially or any way I can. I am happy that they are secured and their mother supported them with the property she had. So that is a priority that, that is okay.

10. What are your main concerns? Line 40-44

To be honest with you, hope that they find decent partners in life. That is my main concern because everything else in their life is good. They are good kids, they have good friends. They are supportive, you know so I want to see them happy in their marriage. I don't want them to pick the wrong person. Their mother was a wonderful person and I want them to find someone as close their mother as possible

11. What gives you hope? Line 45-49

The fact they are with me, love me. Mickey is overseas at the moment and I hear from them every day. It lifts my heart to know his always thinking of me. It's amazing actually. I am the happiest man in the world when I know my kids phone me and ask me how I am doing. You don't understand, it lifts your heart to know that this is the kind of love you have and to know they care for you.

12. Have these changed or increased since the loss of your partner? If so in what way?Line 50-51

No, I don't think so. We had the same path for them and hope for them and its just on me know but nothing's changed.

APPENDIX F

Catholic Church

Chamberlain Road

22 February 2013

Dear Father

RE: PERMISSION TO PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT ON NOTICE BOARD

I am conducting research, on the experience of single fathers as primary caregivers, as part of my Master's degree in Counselling Psychology. I would, therefore, like to request your permission to place an advertisement on the church notice board for any single fathers who are willing to participate.

Please feel free to contact me on 097 941 6018 or email: raydene.naidoo@gmail.com at any time if you have any questions regarding the advert or the research.

I look forward to your response.

Yours Faithfully

Raydene Naidoo