

Absent parent/s: Psychological implications on children.

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ABSTRACT

The present study intends to explore the psychological implications on the university students who grew up in households where their biological fathers are absent. Most studies associate the absence of the biological fathers with psychological challenges which, among others, include negative emotions such as anger, challenges with maintaining romantic relationships and tend to perform poorly at school. Such research on absence of fathers tends to privilege the biological father discourse in its analysis and often mentions in passing the role played by ‘other’ family members as ‘fathers’. Since during data collection participants kept on referring to the role of other family members or father figures, the study then expanded its scope of inquiry to include this phenomenon.

Semi-structured face to face interviews were used to collect data from five university students and thematic analysis was used for data analysis. Psychoanalytic theory was used to specifically to understand or conceptualize the psychological implications on participants caused by the absence of the biological father. Black Social organization theory and Structural Functionalism theory were used to conceptualize the role of other family members/families or father figures in participants’ experiences and the influence of the society they grew up in. This study found that the participants accepted the role of the biological father as central in their lives and its absence resulted in psychological and economical difficulties. To cope with such difficulties, the support from other family members or other father figures was found to be significant in participants lives. Also, this study found that father absence motivates the participants to succeed to better their lives and majority of the participants regarded their grandmothers as father figures.

Keywords: father absence, psychological implications, other father figure, the role of families, social support

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

To apprehend and comprehend the dynamics of social life and the meanings given to them, one has to get inside the culture. Otherwise, we would not be able to grasp the social historical significance of the most phenomena – Professor Monwabisi Archibald ‘Archie’ Mafeje.

Title: Absent father: Psychological implications for children.

1.1. CONTEXT

Kimani and Kombo (2010) describe the family as a major source in providing basic needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, love and affection, support and other necessities. This description demands both biological parents to be present to have an impact on the life of children (UNICEF, 2014) and this seems to be making reference to the idea of a nuclear family. With that said, this study is concerned with the psychological implications of the absent fathers for children.

The importance of parental involvement in the life of children has been extensively researched and it has been found to be beneficial to the child’s cognitive or intellectual, academic achievement and to their emotional, physical and psychological development (Booth & Crouter, 2016; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Sigel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Goodnow, 2014). Despite these findings, the rate of parental absence (particularly fathers) from their children’s lives, around the globe, is still on the rise (UNICEF, 2014). Africa appears not to fall far from the global trends concerning absent parents, partly because of the impact and the legacy of colonisation (McLanahan, Tach & Schneider, 2013). Countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia are found to have a high rate of orphaned children who are raised in absent father households (De Brauw, Mueller & Lee, 2014). These findings are associated with the labour migration system and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Sherr, Cluver, Betancourt, Kellerman, Richter & Desmond, 2014). Of note, the father to whom reference is made here is the biological father, unless stated

otherwise. As such, the intent of this study was to primarily understand the psychological implications on children caused by the absence of particularly the biological father.

South Africa is considered one of the countries in the world with a high number of children growing up in single-parent headed households. In 2011, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) published a report titled “First steps to healing South African Families” in which Holborn and Eddy (2011) revealed that just over a third of South African children are living with both of their biological parents and 40% of the children are living with only their mothers. Furthermore, 2.8% of the children are living with their (biological) fathers only and that leaves 22.6% of children who are living with neither of their biological parents (Mavungu, 2013). Further, Sonke Gender Justice and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) released a report titled ‘The State of South Africa’s fathers 2018’ wherein they underscore the importance of fathers’ involvement in children’s lives and the role played by other father figures who are not biological fathers (Richter & Makusha, 2018). Various reasons for absent parents have been cited which, inter alia, include unemployment, socio-economic status, lack of marriage, divorce, gender-based violence, parental substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, the labour migration system and cultural beliefs (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka, 2013; Holborn & Eddy, 2011). The absence of the father parental figure seems to receive considerable attention in the literature.

Furthermore, in a study conducted in Johannesburg by Eddy *et al.* (2013), it was reported that most of the South African fathers are absent from the lives of their children because of cultural reasons. Culturally, when two biological parents are not married, the child belongs to the maternal side and the father must pay necessary damage in order to have access to the child (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Madhavan, Harrison & Sennott, 2013). This, however, has been a long-standing African tradition, which has been in use in most black communities, and its aim was not to exclude the father from being part of their child’s life,

but rather to unite the two families and teach the father some sense of responsibility (Madhavan, Richter & Gross, 2015). The black 'family' structure and the role of fathers have been researched in recent times with conflicting and at times with speculative conclusions. 'Black' and 'African' are concepts that are used interchangeably throughout this study and 'black' refers to blacks of African descent. In an event where this is not the case, the context will be clarified; for example, in a case where 'black' is used to theorise the experiences of the previously oppressed population groups (Africans, coloureds and Indians).

Recent research revealed that black South African fathers still assume the traditional role of being an economic provider which is aggravated by the societal expectations of them, which is to provide financial support for their children and that is how they also view their role in their children's lives (Madhavan, Richter, Norris & Hosegood, 2014). Inherent in this expectation is the perception that those who cannot provide for their children financially are likely to experience shame and depression and be deprived of the opportunity to interact and be part of their children's lives (Clowes, Ratele & Shefer, 2013; Madhavan *et al.*, 2014). According to Bennett, Hosegood, Newell and McGrath (2015), fathers should provide affection and moral guidance to children and this could be done through role modelling, playing, communication and companionship. Furthermore, in the 'The State of South Africa's Fathers 2018 report, the idea of fathers only partaking in the economic provision as it relates to their children's lives is challenged, and it is argued that fathers ought to participate in other caring functions (Richter & Makusha, 2018). Theoretically, this research is influenced by Freud's (1920) Psychoanalytic theory which emphasises the role of a biological father in the rearing of children. Psychoanalytic theory adds some slightly different roles to that of biological father, including but not limited to: a protector, a powerful omnipotent godlike being, a castrating authority, a punisher and the supporter for the mother (Stone, 2008).

However, amidst the high unemployment rate in South Africa, the fathers' inability to provide financial support for their children affects directly their ability to fulfil the above-mentioned responsibilities (Barbarin & Richter, 2013). As regards divorce, since the dawn of democracy, South Africa has been experiencing soaring rates of divorce, as have other European countries and these high divorce rates are mostly found among middle-class individuals (Mhongo & Budlender, 2013). One of the reported reasons for such changes is that the more people get empowered the more they feel independent of their partners. As a result, when a partner feels that his or her rights in marriage are infringed, it becomes easy for them to propose divorce (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2013). In addition, the adoption of the foreign concepts of marriage (such as marriage being a thing for only the two individuals involved – sounds more like embracing nuclear family values) by the African people, neglecting their own ways, which have worked for them for a long time, contribute to the high rate of divorce (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2013; Mhongo & Budlender, 2013). Since the children cannot be with both of their parents, they (children) ought to be legally under the care of either of the parents, in most cases, women are said to be the ones to be given such parental responsibilities by the designated courts of law (Charlow, 2015; Schneider, 2016). On the other hand, it should be noted that most of the single mothers, whom children are under their care, have never been married or are not married both in the South African context and in other parts of the world such as the United States of America (Wood, Moore, Clarkwest & Killewald, 2014).

Pertaining to gender-based violence, according to Onyejekwe (2013), 30-40% of South African women have experienced gender-based violence at some point in their lives in the form of physical, emotional and sexual abuse from the husbands, sexual partners and strangers. As a result, South Africa is considered as the country with the highest statistics of gender-based violence in the world (McIlwaine, 2013). Although there is still insufficient

evidence on the link between gender-based violence and the absent father in the sub-Saharan context, Sikweyiya, Nduna, Khuzwayo, Mthombeni and Mashamba-Thompson (2016) postulate that gender-based violence often leads to relationship or marriage break-up resulting in father absence; however, the relationship between the two phenomena is not often directly proportional. Gender-based violence is often associated with hegemonic masculinity in that those who subscribe to hegemonic forms of masculinity are more likely to be violent to their partners. Moreover, the concept of masculinity in the South African context could be contested because it is no longer solely framed by social factors, but by economic transitions too (Hatcher, Colvin, Ndlovu & Dworkin, 2014).

Furthermore, a nexus has been established between believing in forms of hegemonic masculinity and abuse of substances among men. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 15% of the South African population abuse substances and this substance consumption is double the world norm. According to Statistics South Africa, in 2013, over a third of South African adults were found to be regular users of substances (World Health Organisation, 2014). According to Hatcher *et al.* (2014), men who abuse alcohol tend to be violent when intoxicated and such usually affects their marriage and relationships and often leads to break-ups or divorce. However, the generalisation of this could be contested when it comes to South African men because some tend to be loving and caring for their spouses when under the influence of alcohol (Sikweyiya *et al.*, 2016).

With all the above being said, according to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the absence of a father in children's lives negatively affects their cognitive development, academic functioning and academic performance of the child because fathers often stimulate children intellectually (Clowes *et al.*, 2013). In addition, girls who grow up in the absence of the father are more likely to have challenges with formulating and maintaining stable intimate relationships (Holborn & Eddy, 2011) and this finding echoes the arguments held by

psychoanalytic theory, particularly object relations which are explained in the chapter following this one. Sikweyiya *et al.* (2016) add that boys who grow up in homes where the father is absent tend to engage in antisocial and risk behaviours and their identities, including girls, tend to be affected because, in most cultures, a father is normally the one who gives children their identity.

Given all the above arguments, it appears that the conclusions have been drawn using the nuclear family (a family where the biological father and mother reside with children) as a benchmark (Booth & Crouter, 2016; Sigel *et al.*, 2014; Clowes *et al.*, 2013; Sikweyiya *et al.* 2016; Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Looking at the absent father phenomenon in the South African context through the lens of the nuclear family would appear to be biased and out of context, because the nuclear family is a foreign form of family structure for most of the South African population, particularly the black (African) population which is the focus of this study.

The nuclear family is not consistent with Blacking's (1964) understanding of African families, which goes beyond just two biological parents and includes people of the same lineage and clan name. More so, Kimani and Kombo (2010) found the nuclear family to be failing African societies because it robs biological parents of the support from other family members in times of need. Lastly, these trends seem to suggest that a child raised in single-parent households falls short of certain aspects such as academic performance as compared to the one who is raised in the family where the two biological parents are present.

It is against this background that this research study aimed to investigate the psychological implications of the absent biological father and the influence of other family members like uncles and grandfathers (who might have been father figures by filling the void of the biological father) on the life of the child and the family's socio-economic status or class.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do people with absent fathers make meaning of their experiences?
- How does the father's absence affect children in the context of African families and how do children manage the effects?

Please Note: the role of 'other family members or father figures' was included as part of the inquiry during the process of data collection since the participants kept on making reference to it. Thus, it is also included in the above outline.

1.3. BRIEF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud underpinned this study, particularly its focus on the role of the primary caregivers. The theory views the father as an important figure who assumes various roles (protector and castrating authority just to mention a couple) during the child's development (Jones, 2005; Freud & Bonaparte, 1954; Stone, 2008). This framework is relevant to the study owing to its emphasis on the importance of the role of primary caregivers in a child's life - particularly the father – whose absence might have psychological implications for children, as Freud seems to suggest. Therefore, Psychoanalytic theory was used to understand precisely the psychological implications of the absent father phenomenon on the participants. Of note, the theory tended to focus more on the sons; as a result, this study will move beyond sons and biological fathers to include daughters as well. Black Social Organisation and Structural Functionalism theories are used to address the gaps in the psychoanalytic theory. Also, these theories will take a critical viewpoint to how the African family has been defined, viewed and compared with the dominant Euro-American family structures as such comparison tend to disregard all the material realities of the African family structures (Karenga, 1986; Semmes, 2001).

1.4. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one provides the background and the context of the current study. Also, the aim, research questions and a brief overview of the theoretical framework are highlighted. The second chapter focuses on the definition of the key terms and how they are operationalised in this study. Also, the theories are discussed, and the relevant literature is reviewed which includes factors that influence father absence and the implications or effects on children caused by the absence of the biological father. Chapter three explores the methodology of the current research. Among other things, this involves how the data was collected and analysed, and ethical issues that were considered. Chapter four is the results and discussion chapter. In this chapter, the main themes and the sub-themes that were derived from the data analysis process are outlined. Literature and theoretical frameworks were utilized to make sense of the results. Chapter five concludes of the study. The researcher summarizes the findings, the limitations of the study are discussed and the directions for future research are outlined.

1.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter shed light on the background of the study. It attempted to locate the study in both the international and domestic context. Through the review of the preliminary literature, the gap was identified regarding the absent father phenomenon in relation to families. The aim of the study was highlighted, research questions were stated, and the guiding theoretical framework was briefly discussed. Lastly, the move from absent parent/s to absent fathers was demonstrated as the reviewed literature revealed that fathers tend to be more absent than mothers in the lives of children. Thus, the change of the topic from ‘Absent parent/s: psychological implications on children’ as appears on the cover page to ‘Absent father: Psychological implications for children’ as appears in this chapter (chapter one).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is fair and necessary to underscore that the perspectives projected in these essays are those of people who previously suffered disenfranchisement by virtue of their colour, sex or both. Pertinent here is that this category of South African citizens had been rendered voiceless. It is, therefore, to be expected that their perspective would be different from those who were responsible for their oppression. So, in writing about social issues, in the present or past, there is often a subjective dimension, no matter who is writing – Professor Monwabisi Archibald ‘Archie’ Mafeje.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter focused on the introduction of the research study, what the study is all about, its aims, its questions, its context, and the introduction of variables. This chapter will elaborate further the important variables which include father, family and the absent father, and it will present the theoretical explanations for the variables and the existence of a link between father absence and the psychological implications, but one will be circumspect with regard to the context when doing so. Basically, the focus here will be on the literature, theories and the empirical research.

Father

According to Richter and Morrell (2006), a father refers to a man who has a child through having impregnated a woman. This understanding of a father implies that the biological happening is somehow the only criterion of becoming a father and a penetrative and well-thought critique of this essentialist view is fashioned by Mkhize (2006). On the contrary, being a father is a human, social and cultural responsibility; therefore, it cannot be confined to the biological happening or be regarded solely as a matter of biology (Mkhize, 2006; Morrell, 2006; Tembo, 1988). For example, in an African context in general, and South Africa in particular, the concept of the father connotes the older man (Morrell, 2006). In some instances, it could be an older man who takes up social and cultural responsibility for

the children or a man who fulfils the role of protection, care and provision in relation to the children (Morrell, 2006; Richter and Morrell, 2006; Tembo, 1988). Nonetheless, while there is a view that fatherhood transcends the boundaries of biology in some contexts, this study was primarily concerned with the absence of biological fathers, but due to the shifts that took place during data collection as explained in the context, the study then incorporated the role played by other father figures or family members as one of its concerns.

Absent father

There seems to be little consensus in defining the concept of the absent father(s). On the one hand, an absent father is referred to as a man who does not have a regular or daily contact with his children; as such, he is not fulfilling the salient roles in children's development. Further to that, the concept includes the biological fathers who are absent in the lives of the child both physically and emotionally (Makofane, 2015; Richter & Dawes, 2008; Richter, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010). On the other hand, in as much as they agree to some certain extent with the argument that absent father implies the biological father's lack of regular contact with children and being physically and emotionally absent, Eddy *et al.* (2013) and Nduna and Sikweyiya (2015) argue that it is possible for a father to co-reside with the child, yet be emotionally absent and vice versa; therefore, those who are present yet emotionally absent ought to be regarded as absent fathers. In as much as one highlights the controversies apparent in the literature in relation to father absence, it is critical for one to clarify that it is beyond the scope of this study to address this debate adequately. Nonetheless, it suffices to mention that the intention here is not to debate or partake in the debates on absent fathers, but to define the concept in a frame that matches the purpose of the present study. For that reason, the concept of absent father(s) in this study always refers, unless otherwise stated, to the absence of the biological father (from the participants' perspective)

and further interrogates the role played by other father figures or other family members as a phenomenon that was introduced by participants during data collection.

According to Nduna and Sikweyiya (2015), individuals growing up without their fathers start experiencing the need for them when they are maltreated by other family members, when the socio-economic conditions are bad in their homes, and when they are depressed and finding it hard to sustain secure romantic relationships, especially women. Langa (2014) adds that people start looking for their absent fathers when they feel like their identity is under question, when they experience cultural problems which would need their paternal side to be resolved, when they need to perform rituals that connect them with their paternal ancestors and when boys are about to go for traditional male circumcision.

Psychological implications

According to Richter, Desmond, Hosegood, Madhavan, Makiwane, Makusha and Swartz (2012), the absence of the father in a child's life is associated with adverse psychological implications. These implications comprise negative self-esteem, poor academic performance and lack of security in relationships with the opposite sex. Lachman, Cluver, Boyes, Kuo and Casale (2014) took it further that children raised without their fathers present are more likely to be suicidal, display increased rates of anxiety and depression, engage in substance abuse, show behavioural problems or engage in risky sexual behaviours and show increased rates of school drop-out. Nduna, Jewkes, Dunkle, Jama Shai and Colman (2013), however, found no association between absence of the biological father and depressive symptoms in their study on depressive symptoms among young women and men in the Eastern Cape Province. This finding challenges the narrative that often associates fatherhood only with the biological father.

Family

Often times when people hear or learn of the word ‘family’, two types of families that are often spoken of come to mind and these include nuclear and so-called ‘extended family’. By definition, a nuclear family is a domestic group comprised of the husband, wife and their children (Ekane, 2013). Such a family is often viewed as operating autonomously without any reference to other relatives (Shorter, 1998). By implication, this means that the parents or either of the parents has authority and responsibility for the children. Furthermore, nuclear families are usually formed through marriage and often end by the death of the spouse, divorce, separation or any other factors that affect families (Ekane, 2013; Russell, 1994). In the context of a nuclear family, children tend to be affected psychologically in the event of divorce, separation and death (Ekane, 2013).

In contrast, the extended family is referred to as a domestic group that extends beyond the nuclear family to include other relatives (Ayisi, 1992). This group is said to comprise the parents, children, uncles, aunts and cousins (Therborn, 2004). Even though death does not appear to cause any significant impact on the extended family, it does, nonetheless, impact on the power dynamics of the family because, after the death of the authoritative figure, those who are left would fight among each other as to who should fill that position (Ekane, 2013; Therborn, 2004). This, however, could impact on children psychologically because they could be coerced to take sides and witnessing the fights could be traumatic (Ekane, 2013).

Neither of the above family systems captures the concept of the African families in the mentioned definitions. The limited or the lack thereof of a definitive definition of African families often leads to them being mistaken for extended families and this could be one of the reasons African families are not often spoken or heard of like the above two because they do not fit into those descriptions and they are very complex and diverse. Mbiti (1990) views

traditional African families as based on lineage or kinship and affinity - which refer to the relationship between blood relationships of one marriage spouse and those of the other marriage spouse. Stated more clearly, Mbiti's argument (1990) means that the families of the two married individuals are joined together to become a family and take different responsibilities in different circumstances. That is nowhere demonstrated precisely than in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe (1958) where Okonkwo had to seek refuge in his motherland wherein he was condemned to live for seven years; whereas he "naturally" belongs to his fatherland. While this concedes that a child belongs to its paternal family, it further acknowledges the fundamental role of the maternal family. The family members of the traditional African families comprise grandparents, parents, in-laws, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters who might have their own children and other immediate relatives.

Shorter (1998) adds that such a family includes the analogous groups, that is, those who are not blood or marriage related, including the deceased because they continue to have an influence in their 'absence' and the unborn children because they play an important role in the maintenance of the lineage or family. Further, in as much as Mkhize (2006) regards the living and the deceased as inclusively a part of the child's family community, he appears to do so in the context of the extended family. While it could be indispensable and critical to engage Mkhize's (2006) conceptions of the extended family, it would be difficult to do so since he offers no clear definition of the extended family. For now, in light of Mkhize's (2006) contribution, it is fundamental to state that what distinctively sets African family apart from extended family is the merging of the families of the two married spouses into a single family community and the inclusion of some individuals from the community (the latter is captured in the following argument). Tembo (1988) takes it further and argues that traditional African families take two forms which include patrilineal and matrilineal and the responsibility for raising children takes the entire family or even the community to some

extent other than the specific individuals. He further argues that the way in which the traditional African families are formed is culturally influenced, thus it becomes a challenge to have a homogeneous understanding because African cultures are very diverse yet similar in many ways.

Unfortunately, the relationship between psychological well-being of children and absence of other father figures has seemingly not received scholarship attention as there is a dearth of research regarding that phenomenon. Nonetheless, the positive contributions of other father figures have been made mention of in some instances, such as in the ‘The state of South Africa’s fathers 2018 report’ (Richter & Makusha, 2018) and by Eddy *et al.* (2013) and Holborn & Eddy (2011).

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalytic theory, as founded by Sigmund Freud, at a most basic level, argues that individuals’ childhood experiences influence their adulthood behaviours (Freud, 1920). The theory focuses on both the internal objects of a person and the external objects, moving from the premise that a person’s inner being or internal being is created out of the interactions with the external world (Davids, 2002). Put simply, the child’s physical survival depends, more often than not, on the caregiver’s care without which the survival appears impossible. Through the interaction between the child and the caregiver, the internal object of the child is gradually built and this partly sets a template on how the child will interact with other people. Thus, there is a suggestion that the shadow of the caregiver is found in every object relationship people make. The interaction between the child and the caregiver is better explained by Klein (1984) through Object Relations theory which is under the broad umbrella of Psychoanalytic theory. Briefly, Object Relations theory supposes that the early primary

caregiver-child relationship lays a foundation on how the child will experience the world or people in his/her context and the child will perceive almost everything through the lenses of this relationship (Bretherton, 1991). Further, this approach emphasises the importance of the early parent-child relationship to the development of psychological problems and Klein argues that children's emotional disturbance is not entirely due to fantasies from the internal conflict between libidinal and aggressive drives as Freud believed, but also the mother-child relationship is also crucial to the development of psychological problems (Bretherton, 1991; 1992).

Furthermore, this fascinating analytical explanation on the influence of the caregiver begs a few questions which, among others, include; since caregivers, in most cases, are the mothers, could it be possible that the analytic explanation is suggesting that fathers have minimal impact on children as compared to mothers? Secondly, what happens in the event where the caregiver is not present or his/her care is somehow not enough or satisfactory? Pertinent to the former question, as an attempt to offer a possible answer, is Klein's (1952) argument that, in a child's life, both the father and the mother are the primary caregivers, but the mother becomes the first internal object in the child's mind. This assertion, seemingly, is contrary to Freud's original theory in which the father is viewed as the epicentre (Lemma, 2003). Freud's original theory views the father as an important figure who assumes various roles which include an ego ideal which is some sort of a perfectionism that children try to emulate, a castrating authority, an object of love and identification (cited in Jones, 2005), a powerful supreme godlike being, a knowledgeable person, a protector and a mother's supporter during the child's development (Freud & Bonaparte, 1954; Jones, 2005; Stone, 2008) whose absence might have psychological implications for children, as Freud (1920) seems to suggest.

As regards the latter question, there is an ongoing debate on whether the psychological problems or implications that are experienced by the people are the results of conflict or deficit (Lemma, 2003). The conflict could be explained in terms of Freud's (1965) intrapsychic focus where he argues that psychological problems are a result of poorly managed conflict between id, ego and superego. As for the deficit, Kohut (1984) argues that psychological problems are the result of a developmental deficit, which he refers to as an insufficient influence from the external world. That is, for example, a child who experiences little care or a lack thereof from the primary caregivers might show some feelings of neglect, low self-worth and difficulties in taking initiatives later in his/her life (Davids, 2002; Lemma, 2003). The Psychoanalytic theory's emphasis on the role of the primary caregivers is what makes it more salient to the present study because it partly gives a template through which the psychological implications of the absent father(s) ought to be understood. In addition, Psychoanalytic theory locates the primary caregiver in a biological makeup of a family. Some have characterised this approach as a "Euro-American" lens (Morrell, 2006; Tembo, 1988). Euro-American, in one's understanding, implies perspectives emanating from Europe and/or from the United States of America that tend to dominate most scholarships and to be positioned as universal ways of understanding the world, while they are not.

2.3. CRITIQUE OF THE EURO-AMERICAN LENSES

Black Social Organisation and Structural Functionalism theories are, in the current study, positioned as lenses to critique and interrogate the Euro-American viewpoint on the current subject. The purpose of the two theories is to emphasise assessment of the society in a reflective nature as a way of critiquing the society and what society regards and accepts as a norm (Agger, 1991). This is to say, the two interventions focus on the wholeness of the society, inclusive of its historical specificity and emphasises the integration of all major social sciences as a better way of understanding the society. The focus is not solely on

explaining or understanding the society, rather, to take it further than that by critiquing and attempting to change what the society accepts as a norm (Agger, 1991; Young, 1998).

Black Social Organisation theory

The Black Social Organisation theory, as formulated by Maulana Karenga, concerns itself with the need for a black perspective to study black social realities (Karenga, 1986). This need arises from the notion that the contemporary societies are organised and divided along the racial lines and, for far too long, the theories that have been used to make sense of the societies, are those in line with the dominant race or class (Karenga, 1986; Karenga, 2002). The problem with the majority of such theories is that they are not critical of the society; rather they are complacent with the status quo (Asante & Karenga, 2005; Karenga 2002). The theory takes it further by arguing that the Afrocentric science must be central to the studying of black realities or there should be an adoption of the black sociology which is the science of liberation as opposed to the science of oppression - white sociology (Asante, 2009). In addition, the tenets of this theory, among others, include the racist interpretations inferring the black realities as pathological and they are exclusive of its African diversity. The frameworks that need to be used are those inclusive of the African context and history and there must be a critical understanding of societies, especially in terms of class, power and race (Asante & Karenga, 2005; Karenga, 1986).

Furthermore, this lens concerns itself with different social units and processes that define and compose an African life; central to those units is the concept of the African families. According to Karenga (2002), much of the existing literature boxed the African families into either of the two approaches – pathological-pathogenic or adaptive vitality. The former approach supposes that the African family, as one of the conventional institutions in the

society, is not only dysfunctional or pathological but continues producing dysfunctional and pathogenic members of the society (Karenga, 1980; Karenga 2002). Frazier (1939) and Moynihan (1965) argue that colonialization and the oppression impacted severely on the African families and led to black matriarchal families characterised by marginal and ineffective men, strong women, cultural misorientation, broken marriages or the lack thereof, low socio-economic status, delinquency and unmarried motherhood. Moynihan (1965) adds that inherent to the deterioration of the Africa societies is the deterioration of African families. In the South African context, this could be understood in terms of land dispossession which characterised colonisation that later led to labour immigration which then cemented colonialism (Amoateng & Richter, 2007; Blacking, 1964; Mazibuko, 2000; Smit, 2001).

Adaptive vitality, on the other hand, supposes that the ways of adapting by Africans to the limitations or socio-economic pressures must not be viewed as pathological, but rather as strengths and resilience (Frazier, 1939; Karenga, 1980). Further, the African families, for understanding, should not be fitted to Euro-American families because they are diverse or unique. They are destabilised, though not completely, by colonialization and they have proved their adaptive vitality and resilience despite devastation by colonialization (Karenga, 1980; Karenga 2002). For example, in a study conducted by Makofane (2015) on the experiences of young African women who grew up in extended families with absent biological fathers, it is reported that the women emerged as strong, victorious, assertive, self-reliant and empowered individuals from their experiences because other extended family members were supportive of them. Similarly, in a study conducted in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, on the mother-infant relationship and infant attachment, Tomlinson, Cooper and Murray (2005) found that, despite the poor socio-economic conditions and lack of partner support, nearly two-thirds of the children were securely attached to their mothers. These

outcomes were attributed to the way amaXhosa people in Khayelitsha are socially and culturally organised, in that, children's well-being, safety and rearing are viewed as the community's collective responsibility. These findings are significant because early secure attachment to a caregiver during infancy is crucial in thwarting psychological challenges that might develop later in life (Ainsworth, 1979) which agrees with Klein's (1984) argument maintained above on Object relations theory.

Structural Functionalism theory

The present study also drew from the Structural Functionalism theory by Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim - the two proponents who contributed to the development of the theory, initially, as a way of understanding how society functions in America (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993). The premise of the theory is that society is like a living organism with different organs that work together for the entire society to function (McIntyre, 1966). Through the lenses of this theory, it could be argued that a family is like an organism or system with different members (organs) that work or should work together in order for the whole family to function (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993; McIntyre, 1966). Usually, when one family structure fails to perform its functions, the entire family is likely to be affected because that would suggest that the other structures might need to take over such functions and this inference was made based on the nuclear family (Kimani & Kombo, 2010).

More specifically, the family as a system ought to be responsible for the upbringing, well-being and care of all its members and it could do this by providing the psychological, economic and social security for all its members (Kimani & Kombo, 2010; Winton, 1995). By so doing, the family unity and stability would be sustained. Often times, old members of the family make sure that all these necessities are fulfilled, particularly for the children (Winton, 1995). Note, this does not imply that the only people with meaningful roles in the

family are caregivers or old people; children have their roles too which might be different yet complementary to those of parents (Farrington & Chertok, 1993; Kimani & Kombo, 2010). This compelling explanation of the family triggers an interesting question. The literature, elsewhere, has demonstrated that most of the fathers are absent from their families in the South African context owing to various reasons which include the labour migration system and HIV/AIDS (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Sherr *et al.*, 2014; UNICEF, 2014). Could this possibly suggest that most of the African families are broken or most of the South African children are reared in broken families?

Kimani and Kombo (2010), in the study conducted in Kenya, reported that in nuclear families where fathers have a central position in the families' harmonious existence the families have been found to be dysfunctional due to absent fathers. Mbiti (1990), Tembo (1988) and Ekane (2013) offer an alternative explanation with their argument on the traditional African families which have a different structure, and inherent to the structure of traditional African families is no family member is assigned a central role whose absence renders the family dysfunctional. This argument implies that children reared in such settings are likely not to be affected by the absence of a single family member (Ekane, 2013).

From the above arguments, it is explicit that the nuclear family and the so-called extended families are often dysfunctional in the African context because of their unequal distribution of power or status among its family members. This means that other family members are more significant than others and the absence of such members often leads to the likely demise of such families. It is for this reason that the present study intends to focus on the Africa families wherein all family members have an influence on the well-being of children.

2.4. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND EFFECTS PERTINENT TO FATHER ABSENCE

In the next paragraphs, the factors associated with father absence and their implications for African families have been discussed. Also, an exploration of the studies done with regard to the factors that influenced father absence have been considered.

Labour migration

The labour migration system is one factor which is regarded as responsible for all the other factors that exist currently. Before colonisation, Africans were self-sufficient and dependant on traditional subsistence farming and hunting (Mazibuko, 2000). This implies that Africans had abundance of land for their traditional ways of living. On their arrival, Europeans changed the African ways of living by appropriating their land and forcefully removing and relocating them to the reserves in which the land was too small for the survival of the Africans (Smit, 2001; Mazibuko, 2000). In this way, the labour system was introduced to Africans and they somehow were left with no other alternative but to depend on Europeans by selling their labour (Amoateng & Richter, 2007; Blacking, 1964). At a basic level, this means that the introduction of a migrant labour system saw African men leaving their homes in rural areas to find work in urban areas and this meant that, for the most part, the African fathers were/are absent during the critical years of child-rearing and marriage (Smit, 2001). Drawing from the Psychoanalytical theory, this argument, in the context of the nuclear family, by implication, means that developmental deficit as articulated by Kohut (1984) would find expression in this case because the absence of the father would imply that the child experiences insufficient influence or stimulation on the father's part. Owing to that, the child is likely to develop psychological problems. Again, the foregoing argument presupposes that the father figure is 'only' through biological predisposition.

Unemployment and socio - economic status

In 2011, Statistics South African reported that the unemployment rate for women was 51%, whereof 33% were reported to be black African women (Posel, Casale & Grapsa, 2016). On the other hand, there were only 43.2% of black African men who were employed as compared to 72.6% of employed white men and the unemployment rate of black men in 2012 was 30% (Kehler, 2013; Posel *et al.*, 2016). Given the above information from Statistics South Africa on the unemployment rate of South African women and men and the 2011 findings of the South African Institute of Race Relations on absent fathers (Holborn & Eddy, 2011), it is evident that the majority of South African children in general, black in particular, are living with unemployed single mothers and in low-income households (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015).

According to Clowes *et al.* (2013), children who are raised in such conditions usually suffer from two major issues which comprise the absence of a biological father and the low socio-economic conditions of the household. As a result, such children tend to report negative self-esteem because when they make an evaluation of their conditions in relation to other children they are likely to feel inferior and that somehow affects their self-concept and confidence (Bennett *et al.*, 2015; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015). Langa (2010) and Nduna and Jewkes (2011) take it further by adding, from their studies, that children reared in households in which the biological father is absent reported a loss of identity, negative emotions, an embarrassment for having an absent father and envying their friends who have their fathers present. In addition, children who are raised in such conditions have been found to be neither satisfied with life nor the structure and conditions of their family (Botha & Booysen, 2014). Of note, most of the above studies, if not all, tended to focus solely on the implications of the absent biological father on children with little or no emphasis on the role of other father

figures that may have been part of the participants' lives. This is one of the main gaps that has been consistently revealed by the review of the literature.

Undisclosed paternal identity

According to Manyatshe and Nduna (2014), one of the reasons South African children are raised without the fathers present in their lives is owing to the undisclosed paternal identity. In a study conducted on women of different racial groups, some employed and some unemployed, living with children who do not know their fathers, Manyatshe and Nduna (2014) found that the majority of the participants reported that they did not know how to go about disclosing the absent father and at what age it is appropriate to talk about the absent father. In addition, reasons for the undisclosed paternal identity are somehow contradictory, in that some researchers cite resistance on the part of the biological mother as a hindrance to involving the father in a child's life, whereas mothers also state fathers' disinterest as one of the reasons they are finding it hard to disclose the paternal identity (Manyatshe & Nduna, 2014; Rhein, Ginsburg, Schwarz, Pinto-Martin, Zhao, Morgan & Slap, 1997).

Despite the challenging position in which the biological mothers in the aforementioned studies find themselves, Phaswana (2003) reported that children who are not told of their biological fathers blame their mothers for not communicating the fathers' identities to them and were found to be resentful. Furthermore, various studies have indicated that most of the children in such cases reported a need to know their absent biological father albeit growing up in the presence of the supportive father figures (Langa 2010; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013; Phaswana 2003). In a study conducted on young women in the Eastern Cape, Nduna and Jewkes (2012) found that it is not often the case that biological fathers are absent due to the failure of biological mothers to disclose the paternal identity. In some instances, fathers are absent owing to the denied paternity during pregnancy. The above

studies seemed to have focused on families where the children are only living with the mother because, in most African families, the issues around pregnancy and paternity disclosure are usually handled by the family, not by the child's biological parents.

Gender-based violence

The research by Moreno-Garcia, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise and Watts (2009) and Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts and Garcia-Moreno (2008) revealed that there is a high prevalence of gender-based violence around the whole world. Between 13% and 61% of women who ever had partners have experienced various forms of physical abuse (Morena-Garcia *et al.*, 2009; Ellsberg *et al.*, 2008). Elsewhere, Onyejekwe (2013) indicated the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa revealed that South Africa is one of the countries with high statistics on gender-based violence.

Furthermore, the gender-based violence which is of prevalence in South Africa is physical abuse which is, often times, perpetrated by men in front of children (Lang, Salazar, DiClemente & Markosyan, 2013). Socio-economic status, substance abuse and hegemonic masculinities have been identified as part of the contributory factors with a great influence on gender-based violence (McDonald, Shin, Corona, Maternick, Graham-Bermann, Ascione & Williams, 2016; McIlwaine, 2013). Inherent to the argument that socio-economic status is one of the factors contributing to gender-based violence is the view that only those who are from low socio-economic conditions commit gender-based violence and such a view could be very misleading, to say the least. Albeit the lack of ample evidence on the link between gender-based violence and father absence and the lack of the directly propositional relationship between the two phenomena in South Africa, Sikweyiya *et al.* (2016) assert that, often times, gender-based violence result in father absence because it leads to marriage or relationship breakdown.

In the study conducted by McDonald *et al.* (2016), the majority of children who witnessed the abuse suffered by their mothers at the hands of their sexual partners reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and there is a great likelihood that they turn abusive in their relationships too (Atwoli, Stein, Williams, McLaughlin, Petukhova, Kessler & Koenen, 2013). The challenge with this study is that it was neither conducted in the African nor the South African context and it is a quantitative study - that means the findings arise from the researchers' observations, rather than the participants' constructions. Most of the South African studies in this regard are on children who directly experienced abuse rather than witnessing it and this could mean the implications might be different to the ones that are reported by the above study which was not conducted in the South African context (Cluver, Meinck, Yakubovich, Doubt, Redfern, Ward & Romero, 2016; Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, & Loening-Voysey, 2016; Richter & Dawes, 2008).

Parental substance use

According to the World Health Organisation (2014) and Statistics South Africa in a 2013 report, there is a high rate of substance abuse among the South African population and over 33% of those who abuse substances are adults. The increasing use or abuse of substances appears to pose a challenge to societal order, norms, values and morals, principles and family stability or functioning. At most, parents who engage in substance abuse have been found to rarely spend some quality time with their children (Freeks, 2015). As a result, such parents tend to not be present in the lives of their children so as to influence and facilitate positive behaviour and they miss the chance to respond to children's emotional needs (Atilola, Stevanovic, Balhara, Avicenna, Kandemir, Knez & Vostanis, 2014). Also, men who abuse alcohol tend to be violent when intoxicated, according to Hatcher *et al.* (2014), and such often affects their marriage and relationships and often leads to break ups or divorce. During the divorce or break up, Eddy *et al.* (2013) found that children tend to blame

themselves for the break up or divorce of their parents and develop negative self-esteem and anger.

In a study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal by Desmond, Milburn, Richter, Tomlinson, Greco, Van Heerden and Rotheram-Borus (2012), single parents have been found to use alcohol as compared to married parents. The cited reason that stood out for this kind of parental behaviour is the prolonged stress resulting from the burden of raising the children alone without any assistance from the second biological parent (Watt, Eaton, Choi, Velloza, Kalichman, Skinner & Sikkema, 2014). There is no mention of the family structures of the participants and it was only mentioned that they are enrolled in a Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission programs at eight clinics in KZN and the study used a quantitative research approach. Furthermore, around the SADEC region, it has been reported that the use of substances by parents is likely to result in children who engage in substance abuse and more often this leads to risky behaviours (Kazembe & Neema, 2016).

In Gauteng, it has been found that children who have been raised by single parents using substances are likely to report childhood abuse or experience abuse perpetrated to them by their parents and such is likely to result in psychological trauma (Choi, Watt, Skinner, Kalichman & Sikkema, 2015; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014). Conversely, in Limpopo, it was found that parents who abuse substances tend to be very affectionate towards their children when under the influence of alcohol and some even go to the extent of expressing their undying love for their children (Neger & Prinz, 2015; Spjeldnæs, 2013). In addition, such parents tend to be lenient towards their children and allow them to do anything they wish to do, such as giving them money to go out with friends (Holmila, Raitasalo & Kosola, 2013; Neger & Prinz, 2015).

Divorce and lack of marriage

There has been an observed shift in the reasons for father absence in children's lives over the past centuries. The reasons for the father absence in families were often owing to the labour migration system and the death of the spouse (Osborne, Berger & Magnuson, 2012). In the recent past, reasons for father absence do not occur only because of the labour migration system and the death of a spouse as was the case previously, but most of them are the result of divorce and the lack of marriage (Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014). To date, most of the people who are mothers who have custody of their children have never married or are not married for various reasons (Wood *et al.*, 2014).

Various studies have confirmed that there is a concerning rate of absent fathers in South African families, that is, most of the children in African families are raised by single mothers who are unemployed and mostly never married (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Richter, Makiwane, Rama & Amoateng, 2015). One of the cited reasons for the lack of marriage is owing to socio-economic conditions and unemployment because most African men struggle to raise money for iLobola which is often required by the woman's family in order to release their daughter and also the expenses involved in organising a wedding (Wood *et al.*, 2014). The requirement of the iLobola by the woman's family is a long-standing custom which aims at creating good relationships between the involved families and it was disrupted by colonialism which impacted severely on the community life of the Africans. Among others, the disruption includes the introduction of a monetary economic system which requires people to work so as to get remuneration and this influences the iLobola custom as it now takes a monetary form for the majority of the time.

The aforementioned assertions often lead to absent father families with more disadvantages than advantages for children, in that the family is still regarded as an important context for providing a conducive and stable environment for childrearing (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011; Lacey, Kumari & McMunn, 2013). The detrimental effects of divorce on

children usually appear during the later stages of development where some tend to view marriage as less important and to experience difficulties with maintaining their own relationships later in life or when they start to form sexual relationships (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013). Be that as it may, the existing literature has demonstrated that the families in which children are affected the most psychologically by father absence are nuclear families (Ekane, 2013; Kimani & Kombo, 2010; Russell, 1994).

2.5. COMMENTS ON THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

Given that most of the studies focused on what happens between the two biological parents or the impact on children of the absence of the biological paternal parent, there are two possible implications which are likely to be observed according to Klein's (1984) Object Relations theory and Kohut's (1984) psychology of deficit. As the former puts it, children during childhood depend on the caregiver's response to their needs for survival and through this interaction children develop their own internal object which often times resembles that of a caregiver. By implication, this explanation means that, if the caregiver is not responsive towards the needs of the child, the child is likely to form relationships with partners that are not emotionally present. This could possibly explain the findings that children raised by a single parent tend to experience problems in maintaining their relationships later in life (see Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013; Richter *et al.*, 2012 above).

As for the Psychology of deficit, Kohut (1984) is of the view that people experience psychological problems because of the developmental deficit, that is, the inadequate input from their external environment. At a basic level, this explanation insinuates that in cases where either of the parents is absent, there is a possibility that the children might not get

ample external influence or stimulation from their environment and the findings of the studies on the father absence that have been discussed above seem to concur or validate Kohut's argument. Also, the findings or arguments on parents who are physically present yet emotionally absent in the children's lives for various reasons such as substance abuse could be depriving children of the emotional needs, guidance and influence they need (see above Atilola *et al.*, 2014; Eddy *et al.*, 2013; Freeks, 2015; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015) and this concurs with or validates Kohut's argument. Noteworthy, Psychoanalytic theory seems to fit well in studies focusing only on the influence, on children, of the two biological parents or the nuclear family and the implications of the father absence in that context. One agrees, to some certain extent, that the arguments of the Psychoanalytic theory hold some elements of credence; however, the theory seems not to explain the influence of other father figures who are not biological fathers, yet are present in children's lives and maternal figures who successfully raise healthy children. Therefore, the explained limitation of Psychoanalytic theory in the mentioned contexts justifies the pertinence of the Black Social Organisation theory and Structural Functionalism theory in the present study as a way of addressing those gaps. By way of reminding, Black Social Organisation theory underscores the importance of using Afrocentric science to study African realities since societies are arguably divided and organised along racial, class, gender and power lines. Additionally, such perspectives, according to this lens, are more likely to consider the history and context of African families. As for Structural Functionalism theory, particularly its analogy of viewing the society as a living organism, the emphasis is on understanding the family as a living organism with different organs (members) that need to do their parts for the entire family to function effectively.

2.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the important concepts were defined. The theoretical lenses pertinent to the study were discussed and extensive literature was reviewed outlining both the factors and effects of the absent father phenomenon on children in the context of families. A special attempt was made to integrate the theories and the literature while simultaneously identifying knowledge gaps and possible ways to address them. In the next chapter, the research methodology will be explained.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The first step in decreasing bias is to avoid being oblivious to the possibility of introducing bias at various points of the research process – Professor H.I.L Brink.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology which was used in the present research study. Particularly, the chapter intends to explain the research paradigm and design followed or to explain how the data was collected, analysed and interpreted. Basically, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the research tool or instrument used in this study.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN

The social constructivist research paradigm, which often relies on such research designs as qualitative research to go about collecting the data (Chilisa, 2017), guided this study. According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2012), social constructivist supposes that there is no objective reality in the world because truth or reality is something that is constructed by individuals or members of the society. This approach proves to be more

relevant to the current study because it afforded the participants with an opportunity to construct their own meanings of the father absence and to theorise the influence of the socio-cultural context in this process, rather than having the whole concept imposed onto them (participants). The decision to use a constructivist paradigm and qualitative approaches was informed by the process of ‘selecting research paradigm and methods’ proposed by Chilisa (2017), Chilisa, Major and Khudu-Petersen (2017) and Chilisa and Tsheko (2014) which includes a researcher’s worldview first, followed by the methodology. For instance, one believes that the meaning people make of certain experiences is individual/context and culture-specific and this leads to multiple truths or realities and ways of knowing. Thus, one’s thinking resonates well with the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. Therefore, since the researcher is interested in the psychological implications that participants experienced owing to father absence from the perspectives of those who have experienced it, the paradigm which was deemed appropriate to answer this, according to Chilisa (2017), is constructivist and qualitative methodologies.

3.3. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

For the research design to be congruent with the research aim, the purposive non-probability sampling method (which entails selecting participants for specific reasons) was used. Five participants were recruited to take part in the study – three males and two females. The participants’ ages ranged from 20 to 28 years old. The inclusion criterion was twofold. First, the participants had to be from homes with absent fathers. Second, they had to be registered students at either the University of Fort Hare or Rhodes University in the year 2017 (none of these two universities was given special priority in terms of recruitment). The university students as a sample were chosen because it was convenient to recruit them as they were easily accessible and because elsewhere in this study the literature argued that children tend to experience educational challenges due to father absence; as such, the researcher was

curious to explore that. Those who met the outlined inclusion criteria were then recruited to participate in the study on a strictly voluntary basis.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

During data collection, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted and each interview took about 30 minutes to 45 minutes approximately. The interviews were conducted by the researcher who used his therapeutic skills to allay any anxieties manifested by the participants in relation to the interview. This allowed the participants to speak freely and assisted in generating rich data. The questions for the interviews were generated from the preliminary literature review and from the research purpose (Yardley & Marks, 2004). The questions required the participants to share broadly about themselves as they were open-ended. This very nature of questions allowed the flexibility in the interview, in that, they allowed both the participants and the researcher to explore further some issues that may emerge during the interview (de Vos *et al.*, 2012). Further, this kind of schedule allowed the researcher to keep the questions focused on the topic, while in turn improved the depth of the data and unlikely affected the flow of the conversation. This data collection method, characterised by a focused schedule and a flexible interview approach, is very reflective of qualitative research (de Vos *et al.*, 2012). The interview was guided by the following semi-structured interview questions (please see Appendix F for an interview guide):

There is a variety of reasons for biological fathers to be absent; would you like to share the reason in your case?

1. Could you please share with me when did you notice that your biological father was absent?

2. I would like you to remember back at that time, can you do that? If yes, what was happening in your life then?
3. Are there any meanings you attach to growing up without your father present in your everyday life or what does it mean to you to grow without him being present in your life?
4. How did growing up without your biological father present in your life affect your life in general (social, relational, psychological, financial and academically)?
5. Please would you share with me the things you did to cope with the impact of growing up without your father present.
6. Is there any person in your family or community whom you consider as a father figure? If yes, please share the nature of your relationship (This question was included in this semi-structured interview guide during data collection as participants alerted the researcher to the phenomenon of ‘other father figures’).
7. How do you feel now after you have talked to me about your experiences? Do you have any questions or concerns?

3.5. PROCEDURE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

On the 10th April 2017, the research proposal together with the ethics protocol documentation were submitted to both the Psychology Department and the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University. Among others, such ethical issues as voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were considered in the ethics protocol form. On the 22nd June 2017, the current study was granted ethical clearance by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (Appendix A). On the 28th August 2018, a request to conduct research at the University of Fort Hare was sent to the then acting Dean of Students via email. Attached to

the email was the ethical clearance certificate, and the letter (Appendix B). The Dean of Students forwarded the email to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Academic for his attention. The DVC Academic forwarded the request to someone else and that particular person never responded to the request (see the attached email correspondences in the appendices). I then decided to write an email to the last person to whom the request was forwarded but there was no response and I further wrote to the DVC to make him aware of the situation and there was no response. My supervisor was informed of this situation and, after that, the researcher visited the University of Fort Hare to put up the adverts (Appendix C) on campus in areas designated for that. The researcher met with the Head of the Department of Psychology who then offered to help with the office in which the interviews were conducted and he offered that interested students could leave their details in the Psychology Department. The interviews were scheduled for 24 October 2017 with all participants (six of them) over the phone and via email (see the email correspondences with participants). Five participants made it to the interviews; one of them could not avail herself on the day of interviews and they signed consent forms for participating in the study (Appendix D) and for recording of the interviews (Appendix E). The data was collected on the same day from all five of them. On 21st September 2017, a letter (Appendix B) requesting to recruit Rhodes University students and to put recruitment advertisements (Appendix C) around the campus was attached to the email which was sent to the Rhodes University Registrar – I also attached the ethical clearance document (Appendix A). On 28th September 2017, the Rhodes University Registrar approved the request to recruit students and put posters around campus (Appendix G). However, none of the students indicated an interest to be part of the study. Lastly, this thesis was proofread and edited by BK & AJ Carlson Professional Editing Services (Appendix H).

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

In order for one to analyse the collected data, the deductive thematic analysis was followed as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Marks and Yardley (2004). The reason for this choice of analysis was informed by the position of the current study – which is a constructivist perspective because it aims at theorising the socio-cultural contexts that tend to influence the meanings that the participants make of certain phenomena. Further, the latent thematic analysis was followed and this analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) and Marks and Yardley (2004), does not focus solely on what the participants have articulated or the description of participants' words as it tends to move beyond that and involve some interpretive work. The foregoing tradition is well compatible with the constructivist perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grbich, 2012) and resonates well with the researcher who is a psycho-analytically inclined person.

Furthermore, the present research is grounded on Black Social Organisation theory and Structural Functionalism theory. The Psychoanalytic theory was used specifically to understand the psychological implications of the absent father phenomenon. This counsels that the researcher approached the data already with pre-existing ideas and looked for themes related to certain perspectives – and this is a deductive approach in the thematic analysis world as properly explained in the above paragraph. Be that as it may, themes that emerged that were of interest, perhaps outside of the foregrounded theoretical framework, were not ignored. Therefore, all three of these theories and some reviewed literature informed the interview questions and data analysis. Also, the researcher moved beyond the participants' explicit content and leaned on the interpretive approach during the data analysis – this is evident in the following chapter.

Thematic analysis consisted of six stages. These stages included familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and

naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These stages are discussed below.

Familiarising oneself with the data

Since the data was collected through audio-taped interviews, it was transcribed verbatim. As the interviews were conducted by the researcher, I was familiar with the data even before I transcribed it. To make the data readable, the Jeffersonian Transcript Notation (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) was followed (see Appendix I). Then the researcher engaged in what Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to as immersion – which involved reading the data repeatedly as a way of getting ideas and meanings.

Generating initial codes

Coding, according to Marks and Yardley (2004), is the process that involves categorising data, that is, you take certain pieces of information and you label them as belonging to certain categories. Since the analysis was informed by the theories that were used in this study and some reviewed literature, the data codes were identified along the lines of the used theories and the reviewed literature. The matching data extracts were highlighted in certain colours for later use.

Searching for themes

This stage began by writing the names of the codes on small pieces of paper and the relationship between different codes was considered as a way of sorting out the codes into potential themes. Certain codes were combined to form an overarching theme; as such, main themes were formed, while other codes fitted well as sub-themes and some could not fit anywhere. However, those that could not fit anywhere were not abandoned nor destroyed at

this point in time. Themes that were formed at this stage were informed by the theories and the literature.

Reviewing the themes

This stage involved reviewing and refining the identified themes. This was done for two main reasons, among others. These reasons included determining if the themes and extracts formed a coherent pattern and, secondly, to note if the themes matched the data set, reviewed literature and used theories. Through this process, the number of themes was found to be very high as there were nine of them. As a result, these were reduced into fewer themes and some themes formed sub-themes of the other themes.

Defining and naming themes

At this stage, each and every theme was defined and explained as to what it entailed. Further, the themes were explained in terms of how they were relevant to the study and the theoretical lenses. The relationship between the main themes and the sub-themes was also established. Some of the names of the themes were slightly similar to the literature and some were new.

Producing the report

This stage involved a write-up of the final themes and it acted as a way of providing the validity of the analysis process. The extracts from the data were continuously used throughout the write-up as a way of illustrating and underscoring certain points. Further, the themes were written in a concise and logical style and were fused with the literature and theoretical perspectives.

3.7. REFLEXIVITY

As an African, I have been socialised around the importance of a family and how it is central to one's identity because family is culturally constituted. Throughout my academic life, there have been some epistemologies that have been privileged more than others and those that have been excluded are mostly those that speak directly to one's identity. The privileged epistemologies are those of Euro-American origin and the excluded or marginalised epistemologies are African indigenous ways of knowing. Further, ever since I had an interest in this research area, people often wondered if I grew up without a father as well. Let me state this categorically, I was raised by both of my parents and other family members. This research interest, therefore, was influenced by both my socialisation background and provoked by the impact of colonialism in South Africa. This then counsels that it would be inevitable for me not to be partial whether consciously or unconsciously. It would be naïve of me to think that I have been objective or impartial throughout this project as that would imply that I have been engaging with this research from an, in Braun and Clarke's (2006) phraseology, 'epistemological vacuum'. As such, this thesis was a deliberate process to produce knowledge that is not often found in the existing literature or that has long been distorted and suppressed.

Furthermore, it was more challenging to shift from being a trainee psychologist to being a researcher as it was hard for me not to respond to the expressed emotions. These two identities collided from time to time during the interviews. However, these two identities were not without advantages. For example, being a trainee psychologist comes with certain privileges; as such, participants might have found it easy to partake in the study on the basis that they will speak to a psychologist. Further, what is also a challenge about research, in general, is that there is the conventional way of going about it which might often obscure the voice of the researcher and give much voice to the cited scholars, especially if the supervisor

does not challenge you to critically engage with the research. Fortunately, my supervisor challenged me to always have a voice when engaging with the research.

Ultimately, I felt much challenged by the findings of this project. I approached the study with the interest of finding out about the role that the absent father has on the psychological well-being of university students who grew up without biological ‘fathers’. Elsewhere in this study, the literature has suggested that such an absence leads to psychological challenges. This curiosity was informed by the fact that the researcher had grown up in environments surrounded by children from families with no biological fathers. So when I encountered the view in the literature that such absence leads to varied psychological challenges on children, I then became interested in this, with the hope that it will offer some perspective to understand perhaps the hidden psychological challenges that my peers possibly experienced due to such absence. To my surprise, grandmothers were regarded as father figures. This was a shock because the literature tends to confine the father figure position solely to males. This finding suggests at least one important thing among many others which is that we have been engaging in this issue in ways that are patriarchal.

3.8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

In her conference paper, Brink (1993) counsels that those doing qualitative studies ought to be sensitive to the issues of validity and reliability and be attuned to numerous factors that tend to pose risks to the validity or credibility of the research findings. Among others, these factors include; the researcher, the research subjects or participants, social context or situation and the methods of data collection and analysis (Brink, 1993; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Golafshani, 2003). These scholars further suggest that various strategies or tactics need to be implemented in each phase of the study to weaken or avoid the threatening factors. To address these concerns as raised by the above scholars, as a researcher, I made use of the

supervision, attended weekly research seminars and made use of the skills acquired from training as a psychologist to conduct interviews. As outlined in the reflexivity, as a researcher, I approached the study with a degree of awareness of my biases.

To make them feel comfortable, I made sure to first establish a professional rapport and share the aim or purpose of the study with the participants. Also, each and every concern the participants raised was responded to freely and openly. Further, the participants were informed about each and every stage of the study and that the questions were formulated based on the reviewed literature. Lastly, the researcher made sure to conduct the interviews in a context in which the participants were comfortable – by visiting their university and conducting the interviews in a less distractive physical space or office. The researcher is cognisant that the subjects might have presented themselves in a positive light by answering questions in a certain way meant to please the researcher or paint a certain picture of their families. As such, by way of addressing this, I maintained an objective stance when asking questions during the interviews.

Ultimately, as regards the methods of data collection and analysis, the research methodology, theoretical frameworks and data analysis steps were clearly outlined. Almost all of these phases were informed by the literature, and literature from other disciplines as well to avoid any possible biases.

3.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter focussed on the research methodology. The research instrument was discussed and the procedures that were followed in collecting and analysing the data. The next chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

REPORT, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

One of the most difficult things to do these days is to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture – Bantu Stephen Biko, I Write What I Like

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter focused on the methodology of the current study and the procedures that were followed before and during data collection. Further, this chapter will present the empirical findings of the study. Among others, these findings will include biographical information, reasons the fathers are absent, and themes and sub-themes with discussions. Of note, the reasons for fathers' absence that are discussed below under the subject 'why fathers are absent' will not be discussed as a theme because these reasons vary from one participant to another to form a homogeneous theme. However, it was deemed apt to include them since the literature consistently made reference to them and somehow their importance.

4.2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The study comprised of five participants, two females and three males. All the participants were IsiXhosa speaking individuals. The participants were aged 20 to 28 years old. Further, one of the participants is doing an Honours degree, while the rest are still at an undergraduate level, the second year of study to be precise. Lastly, two participants grew up in an extended family, two in a nuclear family and one in an African family.

Table 1: Biographical Data

| Bogus Names | Age and sex | Level of education | Family type |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Ayabonga | 22, Male | Second Year | Extended |
| Siphiwe | 20, Male | Second year | Nuclear |
| Ndumiso | 25, Male | Second year | Nuclear |
| Sinoyolo | 22, Female | Second year | Extended |
| Nontombi | 28, Female | Honours | African |

4.3. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Overall, the participants responded positively to the request to take part in the study. Of the six who indicated an interest, five participants took part in the interviews. The sixth one could not avail herself on the day of interviews despite several attempts by telephone to get hold of him/her. Since the participants seemed to be heterogeneous in many forms, the findings are reflective of that as they appear below in this chapter but except for gender because there are no significant gender differences that reflected on the findings. Several themes and subthemes were identified in the collected data and they were organised in the ways depicted in Table 2 with the exception of ‘why fathers are absent’. As mentioned elsewhere in this

study, the driving theoretical lenses for this study are Black Social Organisation theory, Structural Functionalism theory and Psychoanalytic theory.

Table 2: Themes

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|--|
| 1. A father, the provider | |
| 2. Psychological implications | 2.1. The anger 2.2. Impact on intimate relationships (with others) 2.3. The meaning made of the father absence |
| 3. The role of families and communities | 3.1. The power of the African grandmother 3.2. Social support 3.3. The role played by other people/ family members |
| 4. Father absence as a source of motivation | |

4.3.1. Why fathers are absent

As per the above allusion, the reasons for father absence were found to be different among the participants. Two participants - Ayabonga and Sipiwe - indicated that their parents are not married hence the father is absent.

Excerpt 1: *He is not married to my mother – Ayabonga*

Excerpt 2: *so what happened is that my father had an extramarital affair with my mother while he was married to another woman, and that is how they got me - Sipiwe.*

Excerpt 3: *He died, he died (3) I was 8 years old then... he was ill for four years and when I saw him in Hospital, I said I give up- he can go now, he has been holding on for a long time – Ndumiso.*

Excerpt 4: *Honestly I do not know, he just left after they divorced with my mother, he just left – Sinoyolo.*

Excerpt 5: *I was told that my mother got pregnant when she was 15 years old by my father who happened to be in the same community as her because he was hiding from the police (4) he instructed my mother to lie that it's not him who impregnated her - Nontombi*

Further, Sinoyolo indicated that her father left after he divorced from her mother and he never came back. For Nontombi, her mother had an unsupported pregnancy and she could not disclose the name of her father because she had to conceal the father's identity since he was heavily involved in politics and the then police officials were after him.

The present study found varied reasons for father absence and father absence from the participants' perspectives seems to mean that fathers are not co-residing with them in the same households and are both emotionally and economically absent owing to various reasons. These reasons comprise lack of marriage, divorce, death and partly unsupported pregnancy or undisclosed paternal identity. These findings are in line with the observations made elsewhere in this study on the shifts in the reasons for father absence over time. The observation contends that, as put forth by Hetherington and Arasteh (2014), the most prevalent reasons for absent fathers are not limited to labour migration system and death; instead, they are also the result of divorce and lack of marriage. Woods *et al.* (2014) substantiated this observation by the finding that most of the single mothers have never been or are not married for various reasons. As regards undisclosed paternal identity, there is one case of it that supports the finding that one of the reasons for father absence is an undisclosed paternal identity as advanced elsewhere in this study by Manyatshe and Nduna (2014). However, the slight difference between these two findings lies in the reasons for non-disclosure as in the present study it is due to the then political issues – apartheid political activism.

4.3.2. Theme 1: A father – the provider

The father absence was felt more when the participants were in need of basic essentials like clothes and this theme emerged strongly in most participants' responses. In excerpt one, Ayabonga appears to associate the role of the father with economic provision and speaks

about how his life was challenging because his father did not play that role of providing economically.

Excerpt 1: *yoooh most difficult times, starting from the Senior Phase in standard six (4) at school, I'm not a clever person and I love to participate in extramural activities. Competitions that takes you out of school (8) so my grandmother won't be able to assist me financially for such competitions and that's when I felt that I needed my father because I even needed shoes - Ayabonga*

Excerpt 2: *you see in 2015 I took a gap year because I matriculated in 2014 (6) you see that is when I felt like I need a father because when you staying at home doing nothing you tend to expect everything from the mother maybe to buy you things like clothes and cosmetics (5) I was young by then so I could not work for myself and I thought if my father was around things would have been different and when he died it became very obvious that he was absent - Siphiwe.*

Excerpt 3: *eeh I would say my mother tried to raise us to be good children but it was hard when I had to ask for things because I could see that my mother had no strength to provide for those things and I decided not to bother her... you see when during the intermediate phase in High school when they require things like uniform and stationery which she could not afford that's when I felt my father's absence - Ndumiso.*

Excerpt 4: *(3) no (laughing) I don't recall really a moment where I felt like I needed a father because I grew up staying with my cousins who also did not have a father so if they had a father maybe I would have felt the longing to have a father because I would have seen their father doing things for them – Sinoyolo*

Excerpt 5: *(7) yes Jah I felt the father absence greatly this year (2017) because I do not have a sponsor, I do not have the bursary, I do not have NSFAS and I am only dependant on my mother and I felt his absence greatly this year shame (10) I feel like I needed my father mostly for issues related to finances but as for emotional problems, I talk to my uncles especially my younger uncle. Since he is a saved Christian we don't talk about romantic relationships - Nontombi*

Siphiwe, in excerpt two, speaks about how he had had to rely only on his mother for him to get his basic needs met since his father was not there to provide economically. Ndumiso appears to be acknowledging the role his mother played in terms of providing economically because the father was not present to do so. For Sinoyolo, the absence of her biological father was not much of a problem as it was more like a norm in her family since her cousins had absent fathers too. For Nontombi, the father absence was felt greatly in 2017 as she had a lot of financial difficulties. Nonetheless, she received emotional and financial support from other members of her African family.

For the most participants it seems, as evidenced above, that the father absence was mostly felt when the participants were transitioning in their personal and academic lives and trying to adjust with financial demands. For these participants, there is a suggestion that when

economical needs are taken care of, the father absence is not felt that much, and their emotional needs were taken care of by the present family members.

The present study found that the role of the father is still strictly regarded as that of being an economic provider and this is evident in the theme '*A Father – the provider*'. The study participants needed their fathers when they were experiencing financial difficulties. This finding supports Nduna and Sikweyiya's (2015) argument that people tend to need their fathers when the socio-economic conditions are bad at home. Further, the current finding on the role of fathers corroborates the research that revealed that black South African fathers are expected to provide economic support for their children and that is how they also tend to view their role in their children's lives (Eddy *et al.*, 2013; Madhavan *et al.*, 2014). This finding was also confirmed when one participant - Sinoyolo - who had both her financial and emotional needs met by other family members maintained that there was no point at which she needed a father in her life. On the other hand, Mfecane (2008) and Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) do not only confirm this role of economic provision assigned to South African men, but they also go beyond that and caution against it as they believe that it affects men's position as fathers. They further argue that men ought to be encouraged to be involved in their children's lives by doing other caring functions such as nurturing (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). From the current finding, it is clear that the presence of other adverse factors such as low economic status or high unemployment rate among caregivers likely exacerbates the effects of father absence on the part of participants (children). Strangely, the present study ascertained that the participants still wanted to know and interact with their biological fathers despite the support from other father figures or family members. This finding agrees with Langa (2010), Nduna and Sikweyiya (2013) and Phaswana (2003) who reported similar findings. Psychoanalytic theory's conceptualisation – which is that the biological father has a central role or is central to a child's life - seemingly finds expression

in this establishment (Freud & Bonaparte, 1954; Jones, 2005; Stone, 2008) as the participants could be communicating the acceptance of the centrality of the biological fathers' role in their lives, support from other people notwithstanding.

4.3.3. Theme 2: Psychological implications

The study found three issues that are associated with the psychological impact of growing up without a father and these include anger, meaning attached to the absence and challenges with intimate/social relationships. The partly similar findings could be traced from Richter *et al.* (2012) and Lachman *et al.* (2014) where, among various psychological problems they reported, they made mention of a lack of security in relationships with the opposite sex and a display of increased anger from those who grew up without their fathers present.

Subtheme 1: The anger

A few study participants cited anger as one of the ways the father absence affected them psychologically. Ayabonga expressed that what has made him angrier are the interactions between him and his father and the fact that they are living in the same neighbourhood and they pass each other on the way without greeting one another.

Excerpt 1: (4) *we see each other on the road and say nothing to each other not even greet one another (10) that is what angered me the most about my father and I have noticed that the way I am angry I can react in any way when he's around in December, he should rather die because he is just like a dead person though he is alive (6) this made me have anger issues cause I was very hurt – Ayabonga.*

Excerpt 2: (7) *I was embarrassed and angry when I could not have my basic needs met and when I had to depend on my mother for everything and we would fight alone with my mother and sometimes she told me to go and ask for things from my father myself when he was still alive and things were worse after he died – Sipiwe.*

Excerpt 3: (5) *maybe I am bitter that my father was absent but I do not care, he left me and that's not my fault... I do not wish for my children to grow up without their father because is not a good experience – Sinoyolo.*

Excerpt 4: *growing up without my father has affected me because what is happening now I am an introverted person of which I do not like to be an introvert and I think that is caused by not getting the fatherly love (4) and I have a tendency to easily get irritated, hurt, and angry and I am a sensitive person (5) I would say it affected me that way - Ndumiso.*

In excerpt two, Sipiwe speaks about embarrassment and anger when he could not have basic necessities. For him, it appears that it was hard to have his basic needs met even when his father was still around (alive) and this created some conflicts between him and his mother. In excerpt three, for Sinoyolo, although she does not care that her father left her, she acknowledges that, in ways that are subtle, the father absence made her feel bitter and she would not want another person to go through the same experience. Ndumiso, in excerpt four, moves beyond the feelings of anger that is caused by father absence to include how it impacted on his personality. He observes and experiences himself as an introverted person.

Furthermore, Bennett *et al.* (2015), Nduna and Sikweyiya (2015), Langa (2010) and Nduna and Jewkes (2011) shared similar findings where they argued that those who grew up without fathers tend to report negative emotions, feelings of inferiority and embarrassment, poor self-concept and confidence because they tend to evaluate their situation in comparison to other children with fathers. The cited researchers have, unfortunately, not discussed these psychological implications in great depth. In my interpretation, it is worth mentioning here that the study participants were apparently angry for possibly two reasons – they experience hardship while their fathers are still alive and how the whole phenomenon of father absence has been handled. This observation is informed by the observation that the participants highlighted the centrality of the biological father's contribution, and this again echoes the argument maintained by Psychoanalysis' frame as it relates to the role of biological fathers. If that is the case, then it could be implied that had the biological father been involved and assumed his central role (as envisaged in Psychoanalytic frame of thought) or the situation been properly managed and economic issues addressed, the participants could have been spared from the anger and embarrassment. For example, consider these two comments from Ayabonga:

“I was fine because I did not feel like I have no father and he decided to introduce himself and I expected him to be a father but he did not do that – then I asked myself why did my father introduce himself, was it to make me suffer or to hurt me? (8) yes after that, my uncles could not assist me anymore because they now know that I have a father and they could have kept on supporting me had it not been for that”.

“We see each other on the road and say nothing to each other not even greet one another (10) that is what angered me the most about my father and I have noticed that the way I am angry I can react in any way when he’s around in December, he should rather die because he is just like a dead person though he is alive (6) this made me have anger issues cause I was very hurt”.

It could be inferred that Ayabonga was angry because his father introduced himself to him and failed to take a responsibility when he needed him to do so. Therefore, he is not angry at the absence *per se* but for the way things took place.

Subtheme 2: Impact on intimate relationships (with others)

The impact of father absence on the participants’ romantic or intimate relationships emerged strongly as a theme among many study participants. This impact was experienced differently by the study participants; some needed a father’s guidance, some needed a role model and some need just a father’s perspective on certain issues.

Excerpt 1: *(4) eeh when I am dating my relationship does not last for a long time (5) I am the kind of the person who does not commit or put much effort when it comes to love issues (4) It could be possible maybe that I was affected by growing up witnessing my father not living with my mother so since I grew up seeing them not living in one place (2) so maybe I concluded that there is no use for me to have a partner you see because I did not witness that in my parents – Siphwiwe.*

Here, Siphwiwe attributes the inability to maintain romantic relationships to growing up witnessing his biological parents not living together. For him, it appears, it could have been useful to witness his parents living together as that would have shaped his perception of relationships because they would have modelled for him how to maintain a relationship.

Excerpt 2: *I would say since I am this old there are things if my father was present (6) For example, things that have to do with girls (9) my mother is unable to sit with a boy child down and tell him that son now it is time to do certain things in a certain way (4) then you see it was meant to be a father who speaks to the son (10) for example when you are a grown-up man there are things like dating and the mother will never tell the truth when it comes to them (4) for example, we grew up witnessing our parents reluctant to talk to us about dating (5) for example, a mother won’t be able to say when you are about to sleep with a girlfriend you must use a condom, whereas a father would even tell you during the informal conversations that son you have to date and have sex but you must have the condom on (14) in romantic relationships, there would be instances where a father would say son when you have sneaked in a girl a home you must wake up as early as possible on the next*

day so as to release her in time so that her parents do not see her (3) the mother is unable to tell me this because she fears to appear as someone who teaches me bad things (5) my father then would tell me things that must be done - Ndumiso.

Ndumiso speaks about the importance of having a father figure to provide guidance when it comes to romantic relationships and a need for someone to talk to about relationship matters. For Ndumiso, sex education seems important and there seems to be a difference between how the mothers and fathers deliver it. Also, he seems to suggest that it is the father's responsibility to engage the son in sex education. Ndumiso seems to be idealising the father here and suggesting that the father's role when it comes to relationships is central for males.

Excerpt 3: *Yhuuu not at school (4) I think it affected me on social and romantic relationships because I do not trust you in my life (4) If you leave me and even here at University I don't care and now if a person comes into my life I keep in my mind that they are going to leave anyway (2) I do not put the effort into relationships anymore because I know that people come and go so any person might leave me – Sinoyolo.*

Sinoyolo here suggests that father absence made it hard for her to trust people, and that manifests in her relationships with people.

Excerpt 4: *(10) even then there were times I could think (5) you know it really matters to have a father in your life (2) there were times I could feel like talking to my father and tell him about things that the boyfriends tend to do and think it could be better to hear a male perspective other than that of my boyfriend – Nontombi.*

Nontombi shares that even at times when things are going well in her life, there are instances where she thinks of her father. For Nontombi, fathers could play an important role even when things are going well. Again, the father's role in shaping a person's perception of relationships seems to be accepted as central.

When it comes to the second psychological issue which has to do with relationships, the study found a range of issues which include the inability to commit to a relationship, lack of trust and sex education and guidance. This is where the explanation of the Psychoanalytic theory could come handy since it argues that owing to the interaction between the child and the parent the template on how to interact with or relate to other people is set on the part of

the child (Davids, 2002). Object Relations theory stretches this argument a bit further by arguing that the parent-child relationship lays a foundation on how the child will experience the people in her context and everything will be seen through the lenses of this relationship (Bretherton, 1991; Klein, 1984), and this is particularly important when people later form relationships in their lives. Among others, this is more evident in the case of Sinoyolo where she says “*Yhuuu not at school (4) I think it affected me on social and romantic relationships because I do not trust you in my life (4) If you leave me and even here at University I don't care and now if a person comes into my life I keep in my mind that they are going to leave anyway (2) I do not put the effort into relationships anymore because I know that people come and go so any person might leave me*” . Furthermore, in their review of the literature, though dated, East, Jackson and O'Brien (2006) granted that people who experienced father absence at an early age were more likely to be exposed to adversarial factors later in life. These factors include negative self-esteem, poor socio-economic status, behavioural disturbances, and difficulties in developing intimate relationships and autonomy (East *et al.*, 2006). No apparent gender differences on the participants relationship challenges as caused by paternal absence and this observation contrasts Holborn and Eddy's (2011) view that females who grew up in households where fathers are absent tend to report relationship problems later in life and such is not the case in these findings as both females and males report relationship difficulties.

Through the lenses of the foregoing theory, it could be deductively argued that some study participants may be finding it hard to commit or trust people in relationships for fear of rejection or abandonment and disappointment which they may have experienced when their fathers left them. Further, the absence then might have exacerbated these feelings since it likely minimised the father's contribution on the part of the child, as Kohut (1984) would have us believe in his psychology of deficit. In the psychology of deficit, Kohut (1984)

counsels that psychological challenges are a result of inadequate external stimulation as opposed to intrapsychic conflicts – in the context of these findings, inadequate external stimulation could be due to biological fathers being not there to play their role.

The foregoing interpretation is supported by Davids (2002) and Lemma (2003) in their contribution wherein they argue that people who experienced insufficient care or a lack thereof from the primary caregivers are more likely to manifest feelings of neglect. However, notwithstanding the arguments advanced by Davids (2002), Lemma (2003) and in Object Relations theory above, the current findings on relationships seem to be echoing the traditional position of the Psychoanalytic theory as advanced by Freud wherein the biological father is viewed as the epicentre of the child's life (Jones, 2005; Freud & Bonaparte, 1954; Stone, 2008). This is particularly evident in excerpt two above by Ndumiso where he seemingly idealises the father and positions him as a very important object and somehow perfect. On the other hand, in as much as the above interpretation, as informed by Psychoanalysis, might hold some credence, it should be noted that the discussed psychological or relationship problems are not only prevalent among people who grew up without their fathers as they could be experienced by people in general. Be this as it may, one is not oblivious to the viability that growing up without biological fathers might have made some study participants vulnerable to the above psychological or relationship problems as East *et al.* (2006) argue.

Subtheme 3: The meaning made of the father absence

The experience of growing up without the father appears to have a particular meaning attached to it by the participants. As such, among some participants, the experience is closely tied to difficulties and pain even though they have accepted the situation now.

Excerpt 1: *let me tell you, me personally, growing up without my father was painful and very hard, even though now I think I have accepted it and I am just normal like any child but I suffered growing up without my father (8) and what makes me say this and what worsen the suffering is that I compared myself a lot with other children and other people noticed this and pointed it out that I'm comparing myself too much and that is what is hurting me (4) as I'm telling you that I grew up in an extended family, my uncles have children whose needs are well taken care of and mine were not as met as I wanted since my father is not responsible and he is not willing to support me – so that's when I saw that growing up without a father impacted on me greatly – Ayabonga.*

Ayabonga highlights how hard it was growing up without his biological father present in his life, especially being surrounded by people who had their father present. He further emphasises that what hurt him the most was to make a comparison between himself and those with fathers.

Excerpt 2: *yooooh! Growing up without a father is hard, I would say it's hard though it might have positive things on the other hand (5) but at the same time growing up without a father is difficult especially when there is something you want to share with him and his love because growing up without that love might catch up with you later on in life because it's necessary that both your parents are present in your life so that you can grow well – Siphwe.*

It could be observed here that Siphwe associates the meaning around growing up without a father with hardships. For Siphwe, these hardships include lack of fatherly love and guidance, lack of someone with whom to share some of your emotions and how you might struggle later in life owing to the shared deficits.

Excerpt 3: *growing up without the father depends on the kind of a mother who's raising you because it happens at times that she's a mother who abuses substances especially alcohol and she would not care enough for children but if the father was present things would be better because he would correct some behaviours from time to time (4) However, growing up without the father is very hard in life – it's very hard to grow up without the father (2) but you can grow up without a father and become a good child – Ndumiso.*

Ndumiso appears to acknowledge the important role played by a maternal figure and suggests that the experience of growing without a father depends on the kind of mother one has, notwithstanding the hardships associated with the experience. He further suggests that a father's presence is essential for guiding behaviour and enforcing discipline.

Excerpt 4: *I don't think it matters to me, really I don't think it matters because he was absent, at least, if he was present then left when I'm a bit old, maybe I would have felt the void or the gap but he left while I was very young hence I cannot put any meaning to it – he left that's it – Sinoyolo.*

The participant appears to have no meaning attached to the experience because of the suggestion that she never knew how it feels like to have a father. According to Sinoyolo, for

the person to know how it feels like not to have a father, they must first know how it feels like to have a father.

Excerpt 5: *you know growing up without a father has both the positive and negative sides (5) one thing I can assure you is that if you do not know your father and you would like to know him, don't go there with high expectations that maybe he is a rich person and he's going to come and solve your problems (6) just try to know your father as a person and don't expect to get things from him that you not getting from your mother (7) expect both the positives and the negatives and have the room for the disappointment and at home, they said if I would like to know my father I could go and try to find him but I must know that they love me at home (3) always try to have a reason why you want to know your father – Nontombi.*

Nontombi emphasizes both the negative and the positive meaning of growing up without the father. For her, it is important to expect any outcome when trying to find your father as he might not be a rich person nor meet your expectation of having all your problems solved. She also hints at the support and assurances from her family if she decides to look for her father.

As evidenced throughout this chapter and the above subtheme, the psychological distress was mostly experienced when the fathers could not perform one of their parental roles – that of providing economically. Nonetheless, some participants did acknowledge the psychological issues caused by father absence which are not related to the economic provision but include lack of guidance, lack of love and behaviour regulation. As regards the father's role in relation to economic provision, various studies have acknowledged its importance in children's lives (Eddy *et al.* 2013; Richter *et al.*, 2010; Richter & Makusha, 2018). However, the same researchers have challenged the notion of economic provision especially in the South African context wherein the levels of unemployment are rife and how that might hinder the fathers' involvement in their children's lives. Further, these researchers articulated that fathers' involvement, which includes caring functions, and which have long been regarded as feminine, is also essential in the well-being of the child (Eddy *et al.*, 2013; Richter *et al.*, 2010; Richter & Makusha, 2018). In relation to Ayabonga's case where he compares himself to others, Clowes *et al.* (2013) believe that children that are raised in homes where biological fathers are absent tend to report negative self-esteem because when

they make an evaluation of their conditions in relation to other children they are likely to feel inferior, experience negative emotions (Langa, 2010; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011) and that somehow affects their self-concept and confidence (Bennett *et al.*, 2015; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015). Further, Eddy *et al.* (2013), notwithstanding the importance of economic provision, reported that the father's presence in a child life reduces the chances of bad manners/behaviour or lack of respect, involvement in criminal activities and poor parental guidance. Eddy *et al.* (2013) and the current findings underscore the importance of the father's involvement in a child life as advanced by the traditional Psychoanalytic theory and this hints at how influential the Psychoanalytic theory is in terms of understanding the father's roles in the life of the child.

4.3.4. Theme 3: The role of families and communities

Under the *role of families*, there will be three subthemes to be briefly discussed as stated above. First, the present study found grandmothers as people who occupy the role of a father figure. The explanation for this finding is twofold. It could be explained, firstly, in terms of the impact of colonialism and the migration labour system in particular on the African ways of life as articulated elsewhere in this study by Amoateng and Richter (2007), Blacking (1964), Mazibuko (2000) and Smit (2001), suggesting that this was not the case in the pre-colonialization era and such is supported by Tembo (1988). Secondly, it could be explained in terms of African culture as it relates to family life as discussed by Ekane (2013), Mbiti (1990) and Tembo (1988). As regards the former, I suppose that rather than this finding being used as an entry point for understanding South African or African history, I propose the converse - the prefatory need to understand the deep impact of colonialism on African life in order to understand this finding. The discussion in relation to this finding will be expanded under the following subtheme – the power of the African grandmother.

Subtheme 1: The power of the African grandmother

Paradoxically, when participants were asked for a person they regard as a father figure in their lives, the theme of the grandmother as a father figure emerged strongly among the majority of participants. The other two participants regarded the soccer coach and the older brother as the father figures. For Ayabonga, it appears that his grandmother is the only person he relies on for the majority of the time.

Excerpt 1: *grandmother a shoulder to cry on and everything it's grandmother (4) even when I had to go for circumcision I discussed that with my grandmother; although I had uncles when I talked to them they complained that I compare myself with their children they would sometimes threaten to leave the family and at some point, I felt abused (6) hence I relied on my grandmother for everything – she's the father figure to me - Ayabonga.*

Excerpt 2: *it's grandmother it's grandmother she played my parents' – both my parents' roles (7) yes, she's been there and I want to graduate while she is still alive – Sinoyolo*

Excerpt 3: *Yooh yooh it's my grandmother it's my grandmother shame (3) yooh that woman she is my mother she is my father she is my friend (4) you know at home there is no one who ever had a conversation with grandmother about their boyfriends and I am the only one who does that (5) I talk about my relationship with my grandmother (6) my biological mother just knows that I have a boyfriend but we don't speak in depth about it, it's only my grandmother with much information about my relationship (8) so yes it's her - Nontombi.*

For Sinoyolo, since she has both her parents absent, her grandmother plays a central role in her life. Similarly, Nontombi shares similar sentiments as Sinoyolo about the central role her grandmother plays in her life.

With that said, elsewhere, Frazier (1939) and Moynihan (1965) put the situation of African families aptly when they write that colonialism severely impacted on African families and resulted in black matriarchal families characterised by strong women with marginal and ineffective men. To substantiate this, one had to rely on the sister disciplines, one of which includes Anthropology. As such, Thebe (2018) - from the ethnographic studies he put together - reports that in most Southern African settler states, migration for labour remains central to households' livelihoods even to date. This process, according to Thebe (2018), results in most rural households being headed *de facto* by women since they were historically least involved in labour migration than men. In this situation, men's

responsibility is to provide only financial resources and, due to their absence, men have a poor grasp of rural household and community affairs compared to women. As such, women dominated most of the crucial decisions at home and in the community and enjoyed a degree of relative autonomy (Thebe, 2018).

Therefore, the finding on grandmothers as father figures could be better comprehended from the foregoing premise or historical account. On the other hand, as regards the latter – that is, African culture as it relates to family life, Morrell (2006) and Tembo (1988) view being a father, in an African context, South Africa in particular, as the human, social and cultural responsibility which can neither be confined to the biological father nor a male figure (*my emphasis*). This assertion is substantiated by Tembo (1988) wherein he argues that traditional African families include patrilineal and matrilineal forms and raising children is the responsibility of both family forms and to some extent the community too, rather than specific individuals. Similarly, these offerings could be followed in explaining the likely reasons behind grandmothers being the father figures because being a father is not solely the responsibility of certain individuals like males or biological fathers alone as is explained above. Noteworthy, I am aware of the subtle contradiction that might be observed between the offered two explanations as to why grandmothers are regarded as father figures.

To be clear, the possible contradiction could be speaking to the diversity of African families which should not be treated as homogeneous as Tembo (1988) would argue. Also, this could be an indication that having grandmothers playing central roles in African families is neither new nor a taboo in an African context and nor is it a construction of colonial experiences. Most fundamentally, it was established from the current findings and discussions that for good mental health and positive outcomes, children do not necessarily

need a biological mother or father, rather, at least, one caregiver with whom to share a positive relationship is needed as that could suffice for positive well-being.

This finding is viewed as perplexing or unexpected because of the dominant notions in the literature which tend to confine the fathering role to males. The current finding seems to be contrary to what the State of South Africa's Fathers Report (2018) underscores which are the roles of fathers in both economic provision and fulfilling other caring functions (Richter & Makusha, 2018) because, unlike the report, the finding does not confine economic provision and caregiving only to males. On the other hand, the current finding seems to be unique and it has some huge implications for what is referred to in the just mentioned report as fathers' involvement with mothers and children in the first 1,000 days of a child's life (Richter & Makusha, 2018). Among other things, the report shares that fathers' involvement assists in ameliorating mothers' distress and that has positive ripple effects on the mental health of a child (Richter & Makusha, 2018). Noteworthy, I am not attempting to refute what the report argues about father's involvement as that has a convincing research backing. Rather, I attempt to understand, in the light of the current finding, what happens to a father's involvement in the context where the grandmother is regarded as a father figure. Also, rhetorically, does the father's involvement only refer to biological fathers? Second, the current finding could have implications for the gender equality discourse because it might imply from the first glance that it agrees with the notion that caring for children is a female thing. On the contrary, it might be agreeing with the likes of Morrell (2006) and Tembo (1988) who argue that fathering is a social and cultural responsibility which could be fulfilled by almost anyone irrespective of gender.

Subtheme 2: Social support

Social support as a coping mechanism emerged strongly among most participants either from the other family members or those of the community, based on the researcher's interpretation of what the participants say in the excerpts and the myriad of challenges participants experienced owing to the biological father's absence. Coping implies something participants resorted to for them to ameliorate the distress that comes with the desire or the longing for a life with the biological father present. Also, to help them cope with the challenges (whether economical or psychological in nature) that come because of the biological father's absence, participants needed a substitute for the absent father to help with the challenges. Therefore, participants concede that there are challenges which are not only psychological but also economical in nature.

Excerpt 1: *(10) grandmother grandmother she would tell me and say Ayabonga you should not follow your father because he is the one who introduced himself to you although I wanted to confront him and tell him to support me (7) I turned to my grandmother for coping - Ayabonga.*

Ayabonga seems to turn to his grandmother for coping.

Excerpt 2: *my football coach was that supportive figure (2) most of the time I played football (4) I spent much of my time in football so as to distract me from thinking about my situation of not having a father but I told myself that even if the thought comes what has happened has happened of which I cannot change it so I must just accept it and accept myself the way I am and accept that my father is no longer in my life and my mother is present and I will live with her – Siphwe.*

For Siphwe, the support from his soccer coach, the role his mother plays in his life and football seem to be what he relies on for coping with his father's absence.

Excerpt 3: *(7) no, my father died while I was very young and when I was a bit old I had already forgotten that I grew up without a father (6) my mother tried to warn us against drugs and told us that we are not supposed to do them – so I would say my mother played my father's role as well – Ndumiso.*

Ndumiso appears to be acknowledging the central role his mother played in making sure that he does not resort to substance abuse for coping. Also, there is a suggestion on his part that since his father died when he was still young there was no need for coping as he had already forgotten the experience.

Excerpt 4: *Yuuuh my family, my sister yooh my grandmother she closed that void left by my parents yooh she closed it – Sinoyolo.*

Sinoyolo acknowledges the role of her family as an important source of support. Albeit her recognition of her family, she further emphasizes the central role played by her grandmother.

Excerpt 5: *it's my uncles (8) I have two uncles, the older one and the younger one from my maternal side and I grew up regarding my older uncle as my father though I questioned the possibility of that, but it did not matter because I was loved and I did not want to question things as I grew up in a Christian family – Nontombi.*

Nontombi seems to underscore how her maternal uncles have been very helpful for the longest time to the extent that she thought one of them was her father. For her, it was questionable how her mother's brother could be her father, but that was not important more than the support she enjoys from them.

Second, the study found that *social support* was instrumental in assisting the study participants to cope well with the experience of growing up without their fathers. These experiences, in Psychoanalytic theory's framework, are the results of the participants' acceptance that the biological father is a significant part of their lives and his absence would lead to psychological challenges for which they need a substitute in order to cope. The social support then becomes an important coping mechanism and is experienced at both family and community level. At a family level, the findings on the importance of social support echo the position of the Structural Functionalism theory that taking care of children is the responsibility of all the family organs (members) (Kimani & Kombo, 2010; Winton, 1995).

Further these findings confirm the assertions by Tomlinson *et al.* (2006) and Tembo (1988) that raising children in most African communities is not only a responsibility confined to biological parents or family members, but it transcends those boundaries to be the entire community's responsibility – thus the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”. Further, the Cameroonian maxim, as discussed by Nyamnjoh, (2002), that ‘A child is one person's only in

the womb' finds expression in these findings as it underscores personhood and communitarian ways of living among some Africans (Mfecane, 2018). These findings, when considered through the framework of Black Social Organisation theory, demonstrate what Moynihan (1965) alerted us to which is that strong African societies lead to intact African families that support its members. For some strange reason, it is curious how this particular facet of the African culture filtered through to the present day after it suffered years of bastardisation by colonialism. On second thought, it reiterates the position of the Black Social Organisation theory that African families were not destroyed completely by slavery and colonialization as they proved their adaptive vitality thereafter and retained some of its values against all the odds (Karenga, 1980; Karenga 2002). These findings are somehow the evidence that there are still fundamental elements of what is associated with African culture that are still finding expression even to date, notwithstanding the impact of colonialism (Biko, 2017). Basically, Biko (2017) agrees with the Black Social Organisation theory's concept of adaptive vitality in relation to African families or culture by and large. On the other hand, these findings contradict much of what is documented in the literature elsewhere in this study. The literature reports that those who have been raised by single parents are more likely to be abusive in their relationships, blame themselves for not having their fathers present, and resort to substance abuse and behaviour disturbances (Atwoli *et al.*, 2013; Eddy *et al.* 2013; Kazembe & Neema, 2016). Evidently, none of the participants resorted to negative behaviours for coping and with regards to that there are no significant gender differences as Sikweyiya *et al.* (2016) would want us to believe.

Subtheme 3: The role played by other family members

All the participants underscored the role played by other family members and people in their immediate surroundings during the times of need. Ayabonga speaks about how his

father introduced himself to him and failed to care for him. He further points out how this impacted on his relationship with his uncles.

Excerpt 1: *I was fine because I did not feel like I have no father and he decided to introduce himself and I expected him to be a father but he did not do that – then I asked myself why did my father introduce himself, was it to make me suffer or to hurt me? (8) yes after that, my uncles could not assist me anymore because they now know that I have a father and they could have kept on supporting me had it not been for that – Ayabonga.*

Excerpt 2: *During circumcision a person who was present is someone I would refer to as a brother to me but he is much older than me – so he is the one who took that father’s responsibility at that time - Sipiwe.*

Excerpt 3: *my mother was a very good person because she raised us well even though she was unemployed (4) she tried, as a parent, despite unemployment, to show us that had she had means she would do great things for us – Ndumiso.*

Excerpt 4: *(5) Yes and at home there were also no male figures because it’s grandmother and paternal aunts who did not have male people in their lives so there was no feeling that ow there is a man and he is treating me in a certain way so if my father was present perhaps I wouldn’t have been treated in that way – Sinoyolo.*

Excerpt 5: *(6) I never had issues with my boyfriend to the extent that I would go home crying and saying had my father been present things would have been different, no shame I never felt that and that is because I was greatly loved at home by my aunts, grandmother and uncles and they made sure that I do not feel the absence of my father in my life (7) even earlier on this year when I told them that I don’t have the sponsor anymore, my younger uncle he offered to add R700.00 monthly on my pocket money and they took care of the supposed responsibilities of my father - Nontombi*

Sipiwe underscores the role played by one of the family relatives during circumcision with whom he only shares the surname. This differs from one region to another. In some, it is important for a biological father to be present during circumcision, while in other areas a biological father’s brother can officiate the ceremony or anyone from the family or clan. Further, Ndumiso acknowledges the role that his mother played and the shortfalls. For him, albeit his mother tried her best to provide for them, there are things she could not fulfil owing to unemployment. For Sinoyolo, it seems, there is an appreciation of the role her grandmother and paternal aunts played to the extent that she did not feel the void created by the father absence. On the other hand, there is an acknowledgement on her part that is twofold; first, she does not know what it is like not to have a father since she does not have any experience of having a father – so you need to know how it feels like to have a father for you to know how it feels like not to have one. Second, a presence of a male figure and his possible treatment of her in her family would have probably given her a reason to want to

have a father since she would be longing for a particular treatment different to the one provided by the present male figure. Nontombi acknowledges the love she received from her family. For her, the role of her father was shared among the present family members and the love she received from them was sufficient.

Third, similarly, the study found that *other family members played crucial roles* in different aspects of the study participants' lives. The aspects comprise emotional needs, financial needs and support during circumcision, just to mention a few. It is quite fitting at this moment to draw from the Structural Functionalism theory which argues that the family is like an organism or system with different members working together for the better functioning of the family (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993; McIntyre, 1966). Through the lenses of this theory, it is intelligible as to why the other family members were crucial in the provision of psychological, economic and social security for all members since that is their responsibility as advanced by Kimani and Kombo (2010) and Winton (1995). Further, these findings echo, almost exactly, what has been argued by Ekane (2013), Mbiti (1990) and Tembo (1988) that owing to the structure of traditional African families, no member is assigned a central role whose absence would render the entire family dysfunctional and negatively affect children raised in that context. Again, this finding emphasises what Mfecane (2018) and Nyamnjuh (2002) argue above that caring for a child is a collective responsibility of families and communities in most African contexts. Interestingly, albeit the above-cited scholars attributing these findings to the structure of only traditional African families, it has emerged strongly from the study that even participants from nuclear and extended families acknowledged the contribution of the other relatives who are not currently living with them. In as much as this could be hinting to the nuances and heterogeneity of families in an African context, one cannot help to suppose the possibility of some elements of African culture

transcending these family structures to find expression in their members' and relatives' interactions.

4.3.5. Theme 4: Father Absence as the source of motivation

The study participants indicated that the experience of growing up without their biological father is not entirely gloom and doom. The theme 'father absence as the source of motivation' emerged strongly among most participants. Siphwe acknowledges the difficulties of growing up without the father, but he also acknowledges the positive impact this experience had on his life and even at school.

Excerpt 1: *yoooooh! Growing up without a father is hard, I would say it's hard you see but on the other hand, it's helpful to grow up without a father because it assists you to learn to be independent and I realised that now I am not dependent on anyone I am alone... It helped me to learn means to survive that is to survive you do this and that (15) it was my father who started crying when I passed Grade 12 (8) when passed Grade 12 my father passed away and my mother got better but then I could see my performance has dropped but then I told myself my father is no more, so I should focus on my school work and I focused and passed - Siphwe.*

Excerpt 2: *I would say on my school performance the experience gave me the strength to work hard and get educated and raise my children as a stable father (5) it gave me strength and courage to study hard – Ndumiso.*

Excerpt 3: *(4) yes yes my plan is to graduate while my grandmother is still alive, and I want to make her proud because it would be very meaningful to me for her to witness that moment - Sinoyolo.*

Excerpt 4: *(6) yes in my life it was a source of motivation (3) It was a motivation for me (4) it's what kept me going because I knew that my uncles won't always be there so I must study hard and pass so that I can get employment (15) you study you study you want to prove that you can make it without a father figure and you don't want to repeat the same mistakes of your mother who was left pregnant by a father (2) maybe I would be free if my father was around and get pregnant (12) not really academically it did not affect me instead it's one thing that pushed me to pass and when I was doing Grade 12 by then I already knew my father and he said negative things when I failed Grade 12 I then told myself that I will prove him wrong you know (4) I remained quiet and I told myself that he will hear people saying I am in University because I did not want him to think I am like my mother because my mother's pregnancy got in her way of completing the school (5) so I wanted to prove him wrong that I can live without him – Nontombi..*

For Ndumiso, the experience did not only give him the strength to study hard and attain education but to also prepare a better future for his children. Sinoyolo shares how the experience motivated and made her determined to attain a degree qualification to make her grandmother proud. Lastly, Nontombi implies that the experience influenced her in two ways;

the first one is related to relationships and the second one relates to her academics. For Nontombi, it was important to note the mistakes of her mother and to make sure she does not replicate them and to prove to her father that she is capacitated enough to live without him.

Among the study participants, there is an acceptance of the difficulties that are caused by the acceptance of the biological father's role as central in their lives and this is espoused within the Psychoanalytical frame of understanding. Also, there is a suggestion on the participants' side that one can do without this role. Be that as it may, the difference lies in how people execute Psychoanalytic theory, in that, while to some the absence might imply devastation or end of the world (Bennett *et al.*, 2015; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2015; Langa, 2010; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011), here it motivates the participants to succeed. *Inter alia*, the experience assisted the study participants to be independent, learn survival skills or means, learn family values and to work hard, especially at school or university, in order to change their conditions. These findings are similar to those of the study by Makofane (2015) wherein it was reported that women who took part in the study emerged as victorious, strong, assertive, self-reliant and empowered individuals from their experiences of growing up without their fathers. These findings were attributed to the support of other extended family members who were present. Furthermore, in terms of mental health issues, there has been a considerable amount of research which found that people who experienced negative life events are less likely to develop adverse mental health issues if they have adequate social support (Casale, Wild, Cluver & Kuo, 2015; Hinton, Apesoa, Varano, Unützer, Dwight, Johnson, Park & Barker, 2015; Juth, Smyth, Carey & Lepore, 2015; Wang, Cai, Qian & Peng, 2014). These findings underscore the importance of social support that has been discussed in the broader subject that precedes this one – the theme is *the role of families and communities*.

To further substantiate these findings by bringing in a cultural feel, in a chapter titled 'Some African cultural concepts' in the 40th anniversary edition of 'I Write What I Like', Biko

(2017) writes about a fundamental aspect of African culture that relates to Africans' mental attitude to general life problems. He differentiates between the Africans' approach to problems and the westerners' approach to problems. Biko (2017) asserts that when westerners encounter a problem, they are more likely to use a problem-solving approach following a rigorous analysis. On the other hand, Africans are more likely to use a situation-experiencing approach which prepares them to understand that at times life will have difficult challenges which are beyond their powers to solve. Similarly, according to Bagley and Copeland (1994), to cope with the problems, Africans and African Americans who have internalised the values of their culture are more likely to rationalise their experiences and transcend them instead of stressing over a problem or use a problem-solving approach which is mostly followed in psychology. From these foregoing slightly similar perspectives, it could be argued that the study participants possibly used their internalised cultural values, which Black Social Organisation theory and Biko (2017) alluded to, to approach their situation to allow themselves to experience it, learn from it and transcend it. This means these cultural values could be some of the African cultural elements that managed to filter through to the present day despite the impact of colonialization. Further, these findings seem to signify the arguments of the Black Social Organisation theory which maintains that there is a necessity to use black perspectives to study black social realities (Karenga, 1986) and there must be a critical understanding of societies, particularly in relation to class, power and race (Asante & Karenga, 2005; Karenga, 1986). It must be noted that this study does not, in any way, suggest that what is considered to be African culture is superior to other cultures or African families are better at providing support for their members than any other families. Rather, it merely counsels that the culture, differences and strengths of any individuals or families need to be taken into consideration every time there is an interaction with those individuals or families. On the other hand, it is evident here that the participants had attained relative

academic success in their academic or schooling careers (judging by the fact that they are in university now) and they use their situation to do well in school. The finding then on paternal absence as a source of motivation contrasts the argument advanced by Booth and Crouter (2016), Clowes *et al.* (2013), Goodall and Montgomery (2014), Richter *et al.* (2012) and Sigel *et al.* (2014) that children raised without their fathers present tend to report poor academic performance.

4.4. CONCLUSION

According to the findings, it is clear that the absent father phenomenon impacted on different aspects of the participants, such facets as negotiating relationships, economic stability and family life, just to mention a few. Nonetheless, the experience impacted positively on the life of the participants as they learned responsibility, independence and family values, among other things. The role played by present family members and other people from the community was found crucial in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed –
Chairman Mao Tse Tung

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises the summary of the empirical findings and the limitations of the present study as well as its implications. Also, it provides suggestions for future research.

5.2. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study intended to interrogate the psychological implications of father absence on children. For the better apprehension of the phenomenon under study, social, cultural and historical contexts were foregrounded aspects of the study as supported by Chilisa (2011). This is due to the understanding that in a study that is guided by a constructivist research paradigm, the foregoing factors are important in understanding the phenomenon under study from the perspectives of those who experienced it (Chilisa, 2017). By implication, this means that father absence could not be studied in isolation to the family and community or society by extension, as these were significant in contextualising the study.

Father absence

It has been established from the study that the reasons for father absence varied among the participants and this finding is shared by other studies which have been cited in the preceding chapters. Also, it has been observed that father absence, from the point of view of participants, implies that fathers do not co-reside with them nor are they emotionally and economically involved in their lives. Further, the study found that participants assigned

fathers, among other things, the role of economic provision and they felt the absence, at best, when the socio-economic conditions were bad at home. Additionally, most participants shared that grandmothers filled the father figure position since they were both economically and emotionally involved. Lastly, the study surmised that the presence of other adverse factors like low socio-economic status and unemployment among caregivers such as grandmothers, mothers and uncles seems to have likely worsened the effects of father absence on the participants.

Psychological implications

The findings on psychological implications are threefold. These include anger, impact on relationships and meaning associated with the experience. The study found that, since father absence likely made most participants vulnerable to experiencing psychological and economical hardships, they developed anger as they were angry and embarrassed for having to go through such difficult times. However, participants slightly hinted at other roles that could have been played by fathers had they been present and these roles include; providing guidance, love and behaviour regulation. As regards relationships, the study found that most have a pattern of unstable relationships and they struggled to develop and maintain intimate relationships. This finding corroborates the similar findings that are shown in other studies that have been cited throughout this research.

Coping mechanisms

To cope with challenges that participants went through owing to father absence, the majority of them relied more on their grandmothers, other family members and community members who were instrumental in the provision of social support to ameliorate economic and emotional challenges. The study noted that, as other studies cited in the preceding chapters, social support plays a significant role for someone who has been through adversities

to thwart potential mental health challenges. Additionally, what is associated with African culture, as it relates to African families and communities, was found to have played a significant role. *Inter alia*, some of these African cultural concepts include assuming the responsibility of raising a child as a collective effort. Also, the study concluded that at least one positive relationship that a child shares with one caregiver suffices for positive well-being and that this caregiver does not necessarily have to be a biological parent. Further, the study evinced that for the majority of participants father absence served also as a source of motivation as, among other things, the experience helped the participants to learn family values, be independent and work hard, particularly at university so as to change their situation.

To sum it up, it was established that a biological father's presence does play a significant role in a child's life as advanced by the traditional Psychoanalytic theory. This was evident, in most cases, where participants accepted the biological father's role as central in their lives and that made them experience psychological challenges and other problems since their fathers were absent. To cope with these challenges, participants conceded that they needed a substitute to close the void and this was better conceptualised using Structural Functionalism theory where it was maintained that it is the different family members' responsibility to care for children's psychological, physical and economical needs. Also, the current findings echoed the position of the Black Social Organisation theory where African families show some cultural elements and values that managed to filter through to the present day despite the impact of slavery and colonialization. This was most evident in cases where participants showed that it did not take only one person to raise them but the entire family, and the community in some instances. This further solidified the Black Social Organisation theory's view that strong African societies are more likely to lead to intact African families.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the study was conducted successfully, there are a few limitations that have been noted. First, collecting data was very challenging in so many ways. Communicating with gatekeepers was almost a nightmare as one struggled to get some responses at times. Second, during the data collection phase, the funding was not sufficient for one to cover all the needed resources for data collection. Third, the scope of this study was not broad enough for one to engage in certain debates (such as fathers' physical absence and emotional involvement or vice versa) and adequately explain certain phenomena (such as the impact of father absence on relationships and the longing for the biological father despite the involvement of other father figures). Lastly, since this is a mini-thesis, one could not explore some of the thoughts shared by participants.

5.4. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study focused on the psychological implications for participants caused by the absence of the biological fathers. It could be useful, in future, to conduct a study focusing on absent fathers so as to interrogate how they understand their involvement in their children's lives. Second, it could be necessary to conduct a comparative study examining the child outcomes between households where the father co-resides with children and where the father is physically absent. This is to determine whether physical presence translates to positive involvement or physical absence translates to a lack of involvement. It could be necessary in future to explore further the thoughts that were shared by participants but here one could not explore them further due to the limiting nature of the mini-thesis. For example, in the next study, it would be interesting to interrogate how this role of a biological father in terms of providing guidance, love and regulating behaviour is innately determined and to what extent

such conceptualisation is socially constructed. Mainly, the concern would be to establish whether the child is born naturally longing for these responses from the father or she or he learns about them from his or her environment.

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RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

22 June 2017

Simnikiwe Maqgamfana
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Simnikiwe,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2017/44

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2017/44 and title, *'Absent parent(s): psychological implications on children'*, served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 14 June 2017. The RPERC notes that this project is supervised by Mr. Sandiso Bazana. Your project has been given ethics clearance.

Please note that should your project require consent from institutional gatekeepers, the RPERC requires that you submit written confirmation of this consent. Kindly also ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Werner Bohmke
CHAIRPERSON: RPERC



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grabamstown • 6140 • South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC • Tel: (046) 603 8502 • Fax: (046) 603 7203 • e-mail: y.scheepers@ru.ac.za

University of Fort Hare,

Student Affairs Division

The Dean of Students

Email: pdabula@ufh.ac.za

Dear Mr. Prince Dabula,

RE: REQUEST TO USE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE STUDENTS AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.

I am Simnikiwe Magqamfana, a first-year counselling masters psychology student at Rhodes University, Psychology Department. As per the programme's requirements, I am conducting a research on "Absent parent/s: psychological implications on children". The research is conducted under the supervision of Mr. Sandiso Bazana, a lecturer at the psychology department.

This research study intends to explore the psychological implications of absent fathers on children. Participants eligible for this research are those who are Black, both males and females, 18 and above years old and are registered University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University students. Face to face semi-structured individual interviews will be conducted as a way of eliciting data. The aim is to recruit 6-12 participants with an estimated time of 30 minutes per interview, six students from University of Fort Hare and six students from Rhodes University. A venue convenient to each participant will be used. Thus far, the dates and times for the interviews are unknown and are yet to be confirmed.

Ethical concerns pertaining to this research have been identified and considered and this project has been granted an ethics clearance by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University (see also the attached document).

Inter alia, the ethical concerns include a twofold consent for participants, which is giving a verbal consent to partake in the research, as well as signing a consent form. The consent form will entail issues of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity as well as the right to withdraw from the interview or not to respond to questions. Participants will be requested to give permission for the interviews to be recorded. All audio files and transcribed materials will be stored in password protected computers and be deleted thereafter. The identifying information about the participants will never be released, that is, identities of the participants will be protected. When the need arises, necessary arrangements which pertain to emotional support for the participants will be made. Therefore, this serves as a request to use 6 University of Fort Hare students as participants for this research.

I hope my request will be successful

Yours sincerely,

Simnikiwe Magqamfana

smagqamfana@gmail.com

071 909 1330



Simnikiwe Magqamfana <smagqamfana@gmail.com>

RESEARCH

6 messages

Simnikiwe Magqamfana <smagqamfana@gmail.com>

28 August 2017 at 08:00

To: pdabula@ufh.ac.za

Cc: Sandiso Bazana <s.bazana@ru.ac.za>

Dear Mr. Dabula,

Please receive the attached documents for your attention and consideration. The documents include the letter requesting permission to recruit students to be participants in the research study specified in the letter and the ethical clearance letter. Enkosi.

Kind Regards,

Mr. Simnikiwe Magqamfana

Student

Psychology Department

University of Fort Hare

e: smagqamfana@gmail.com

smagqamfana@outlook.com

"Whereof we cannot think, that we cannot think; we cannot, therefore, say what we cannot think" -

Ludwig Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus).

2 attachments

 **Research Approval.pdf**
192K

 **Research Letter_UFH.pdf**
136K

Dabula, Prince <PDabula@ufh.ac.za>

28 August 2017 at 09:44

To: Simnikiwe Magqamfana <smagqamfana@gmail.com>, "Obi, Larry" <LObi@ufh.ac.za>

Cc: Sandiso Bazana <s.bazana@ru.ac.za>

Dear Simnikiwe

I have forwarded your request to Prof Obi, DVC AA since this is an academic exercise

Regards

Prince Dabula (Acting Dean of Students)

From: Simnikiwe Magqamfana [mailto:smagqamfana@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, August 28, 2017 8:01 AM

To: Dabula, Prince

Cc: Sandiso Bazana

Subject: RESEARCH

[Quoted text hidden]

This communication is subject to the University of Fort Hare e-Mail Disclaimer

2 attachments

 **Research Approval.pdf**
192K

 **Research Letter_UFH.PDF**
136K

Obi, Larry <LObi@ufh.ac.za>

28 August 2017 at 10:02

To: "Dabula, Prince" <PDabula@ufh.ac.za>, Simnikiwe Magqamfana <smagqamfana@gmail.com>

Cc: Sandiso Bazana <s.bazana@ru.ac.za>, "Majova-Songca, Lindelwa" <lmajova@ufh.ac.za>

Dear Prof Majova-Songca,

Please attend to this request .

Best wishes
Larry Obi

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

----- Original message -----

From: "Dabula, Prince" <PDabula@ufh.ac.za>

Date: 2017/08/28 09:44 (GMT+02:00)

To: Simnikiwe Magqamfana <smagqamfana@gmail.com>, "Obi, Larry" <LObi@ufh.ac.za>

Cc: Sandiso Bazana <s.bazana@ru.ac.za>

Subject: RE: RESEARCH

Dear Simnikiwe

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Regards

Prince Dabula (Acting Dean of Students)

From: Simnikiwe Magqamfana [mailto:smagqamfana@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, August 28, 2017 8:01 AM

To: Dabula, Prince

Cc: Sandiso Bazana

Subject: RESEARCH

Dear Mr. Dabula,

Please receive the attached documents for your attention and consideration. The documents include the letter requesting permission to recruit students to be participants in the research study specified in the letter and the ethical clearance letter. Enkosi.

Kind Regards,

Mr. Simnikiwe Magqamfana

Student

Psychology Department

University of Fort Hare

e: smagqamfana@gmail.com<mailto:smagqamfana@gmail.com>

smagqamfana@outlook.com<mailto:smagqamfana@outlook.com>

"Whereof we cannot think, that we cannot think; we cannot, therefore, say what we cannot think " -
Ludwig Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus).

“Absent parent/s: psychological implications on children”

APPENDIX C

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ABSENT DAD



I am eligible to participate in this research study if I am,

1. An African student
2. 18 or above years old
3. Raised without my biological father present
4. A Rhodes University student

What is required of me?

1. Contact me if you meet the criteria and are interested in partaking.
2. A face- to -face individual interview will be conducted at the Psychology Department for approximately 30 minutes.

What do I need to know?

1. Participation is voluntary and a person can withdraw at any point of the interview without any consequences.
2. A person has the right not to respond to some of the questions during the interview or withdraw from participating at any time of her or his choosing.
3. The responses will be treated with utmost anonymity and confidentiality
4. If the need arises, arrangements have been made to help you seek emotional support.

Without any doubt, I believe that you could make an invaluable contribution to this study. If you are interested and feel strongly about this topic, please contact me before the end of October 2017.

Your participation will be highly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Principal researcher
Simnikiwe Magqamfana
MA Counselling Psychology
Rhodes University
071 909 1330
mayo.psychology2017@gmail.com

Supervisor
Sandiso Bazana,
Lecturer- Psychology
Department
Rhodes University
(046) 603 8816
s.bazana@ru.ac.za

NB: This advertisement has been approved by the Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review committee. Necessary permission has been obtained to conduct the research on the institutional premises.

APPENDIX D

RHODES UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Simnikiwe Magqamfana on "Absent parent/s: psychological implications on children".

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 071 909 1330 or mayo.psychology2017@gmail.com. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Mr Sandiso Bazana in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on (046) 603 8816 or s.bazana@ru.ac.za.
2. The researcher is interested in psychological implications on children growing up without their biological fathers present in their everyday life.
3. My participation will involve taking part on one-on-one semi-structured interviews anonymously and confidentially. Which will be audio recorded.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. A counselling centre may be contacted for further support on _____ (telephone).
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.
8. The stored audio recordings and interview transcripts will only be available for researcher's use in potential future studies or publication. The researcher will continue to maintain confidentiality and anonymity as per the promise in the advertisement.
9. The audio recorded data will be stored in password protected computers which will be kept safely in locked cupboards

Signed on (Date):

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

APPENDIX D

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name :
Surname :
Date of birth :
Age :
Gender :
Race :
Level of study :
Institution :
Student number :
Family structure :
Grew up living with? :

Rhodes University — Department of Psychology

**USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES
PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM**

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Name of participant | | | |
| Participant's contacts details | Email address: Phone number: | | |
| Name of researcher | | | |
| Level of research | Honours | Masters | PhD |
| Brief title of project | | | |
| Name of supervisor | | | |

DECLARATION

(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)

| | | | |
|----|--|--|--|
| 1. | The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me. | verbally | |
| | | in writing | |
| 2. | I agree to be interviewed and to allow recordings to be made of the interview. | audiotape | |
| | | videotape | |
| 3. | I agree to _____ and to allow recordings to be made. | audiotape | |
| | | videotape | |
| 4. | The tape recordings may be transcribed | without conditions | |
| | | only by the researcher | |
| | | by one or more nominated third parties | |
| 5. | I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written. OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions | | |
| | | | |

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by researcher: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structured interviews by their very nature allow the degree of flexibility for both the researcher and the participants, as such; I would not give a full structure of questions, rather, the questions that would guide the interview.

My name is Simnikiwe Magqamfana; I am interested in understanding the psychological implications of growing up without your biological father.

There is a few questions I am going to ask you and you may find some of them rather personal. You do however; have a choice not to answer any questions about aspects of your life which you are not willing to disclose. As already explicitly stated in the consent form, you may also withdraw from participating at any time of your choosing. You are participating here anonymously and such is assured. The report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader. The interview will be audiotaped for transcription and analysis purposes. The audio records will be deleted after the completion of the report, as stated in the permission release form. Meanwhile, they will be kept safe in password protected computers. Perhaps you would like to share your concerns or questions? If there are no questions we may begin.

There is a variety of reasons for biological fathers to be absent; would you like to share the reason in your case?

1. Could you please share with me when did you notice that your biological father is absent?
2. I would like you to remember back at that time, can you do that? If yes, what was happening in your life then?
3. Is there any meanings you attach in growing up without your biological father present in your everyday life or what does it mean to you to grow without him being present in your life?
4. Is there any person in your family or community whom you consider as a father figure? If yes, please share the nature of your relationship.
5. How did growing up without your biological father present in your life affect your life in general (social, relational, psychological, financial and academically)?
6. I would like you to share with me the things you did to cope with the impact of growing up without your father present?
7. How do you feel now after you have talked to me about your experiences? Do you have any questions or concerns?

Thank you for your time and for talking to me!



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6110 • South Africa

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

E-mail: registrar@ru.ac.za

Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8101

Fax: +27 (0)46 603 8127

Simnikiwe Magqamfana
G17M5161
Department of Psychology

26 September 2017

Dear Mr Magqamfana

Name of research proposal: Absent parent(s): psychological implications on children.

This serves to confirm that you have been granted permission to conduct your proposed research at Rhodes University as requested.

Yours sincerely

Dr Stephen Fourie
REGISTRAR

APPENDIX H

8 Nahoon Valley Place

Nahoon Valley

East London

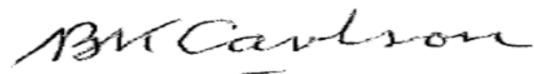
5241

20 January 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the following thesis using the Windows 'Tracking' system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

Absent father: Psychological implications for children by Simnikiwe H. Magqamfana, a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology at Rhodes University.



Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)

Professional Editor

Email: bcarlson521@gmail.com

Cell: 0834596647

Disclaimer: Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the student in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

BK & AJ Carlson Professional Editing Services

APPENDIX I

Jeffersonian Transcript Notation

The following annotation conventions are adapted from *G. Jefferson, Transcription Notation, in J. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds), Structures of Social Interaction, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984*. A copy is also provided in Transana's Help: Transcript Notation section.

| Convention | Name | Use |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| [text] | Brackets | Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech. |
| = | Equal Sign | Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single utterance. |
| (# of seconds) | Timed Pause | A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech. |
| (.) | Micropause | A brief pause, usually less than .02 seconds. |
| . or down arrow | Period or Down Arrow | Indicates falling pitch or intonation. |
| ? or up arrow | Question Mark or Up Arrow | Indicates rising pitch or intonation. |
| , | Comma | Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation. |
| !- | Hyphen | Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance. |
| >text< | Greater than/Less than symbols | Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker. |
| <text> | Less than/Greater than symbols | Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker. |
| ° | Degree symbol | Indicates whisper, reduced volume, or quiet speech. |
| ALL CAPS | Capitalized text | Indicates shouted or increased volume speech. |
| underline | Underlined text | Indicates the speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech. |
| ::: | Colon(s) | Indicates prolongation of a sound. |
| (hhh) | | Audible exhalation |
| •or (.hhh) | High Dot | Audible inhalation |
| (text) | Parentheses | Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript. |
| <u>italic text</u> ^[+] | Double Parentheses | Annotation of non-verbal activity. |