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Wits School of Arts

Drama for Life

Masters in Drama Therapy Research Report

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Implications for Drama therapy in working single-mother households in the South African context

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A research report submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of requirements for Master of Arts in the field of Drama Therapy.

30 June 2021

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Name: Nonkululeko Vilakazi

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Date: 21 June 2021

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my brother Nhlanhla Vilakazi, who led me back to education. My academic journey was waiting on yours to begin. I really hope that you would have lived to see me get to this level. May you continue to rest in peace. Sekulungile…seku'right!

Even when life is drawn

The body continues to breathe

What appears as suffocation to the naked eye

Is seamless breath to the departed soul

Woke up from a dream with these words after wondering how it feels like to die (30 September 2020).

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- To **God**, my **Heavenly Father**, thank you for continually guiding me in every area of my life. Thank you for never hiding your face from me. Your presence has never left me. The sermon of Habakkuk 2:3 was with me when I feared starting but still remains with me on the other side of that fear as a fulfilment of your word.
- To my loving parents, **Ida and Africa Vilakazi**, may the universe always watch over you. You have guided me in faith and allowed me to dream what others would deem the impossible. I could never thank you enough for your continued support and prayers. May you forever be blessed!
- To my younger **brothers**, thank you for all your support. You have put your lives on hold in order for me to pursue mine. I pray to God to fulfil all your good heart desires and pray that you are blessed abundantly!
- To my **daughters**, I pray that you not only dream with your eyes open but that you live those dreams too. Keep dreaming good dreams future professors!
- To my Supervisor, **Vivien Marcow Speiser,** thank you for your patience, guidance, and mentorship throughout this process. Your support will forever be appreciated!
- To **Drama for Life,** keep moulding practitioners from all walks of life. Today I am because of the platform you've created.

ABSTRACT

According to Sonubi (2011) black women are the lowest-earning group across elementary and managerial positions in South Africa, compared to white women, white men, and black men. There are 41 percent of black women who occupy elementary, low-paying, and less secure jobs and within this 41 percent, are single mothers who are rearing children of absent fathers. To the best of my knowledge, there is little written about the developmental effects that father absence has on children growing up in black single-mother headed households in South Africa. In addition there appears to be a paucity of literature on therapeutic interventions accessible to children reared by single-mothers. This paper explores literature related to possible developmental effects on children due to the absence of the father. This research also investigates conceptual literature on child development and drama therapy to determine whether drama therapy can be suggested as a therapeutic intervention for mitigating the psychological, behavioural, cognitive and relational developmental implications resulting from father absence. Drama therapy is proposed as a possible therapeutic intervention because of the way it engages children within their expressive frame of play. The use of drama therapy as a potential intervention is based on the strength of its ability to facilitate emotional and social support.

Keywords

Drama therapy; single mothers; absent fathers; children; development

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a research investigation of relevant literature relating to the impact of absent fathers on the development of children in black single-mother households in the South African context. The introduction will include a description of personal and professional aspects pertinent to my selection of this topic and will lay the groundwork for the paper.

Background to the study

1.1 Personal Background and my move to study in the UK

I am a single mother of two girls and I took sole custody of my daughters eight years ago. In my experience of bringing up children with an absent father, the absence was only questioned by the children following an unexpected visit from their father. Father absence is understood, in this context, as both a physical and emotional experience. The unexpected visits from their father were time indefinite, where the longest lapse was two years after his last visit. Signs of emotional distress and dysregulation in my daughters would follow soon after meeting their father and would linger for months following the meeting. The girls would show difficulty communicating their questions regarding the absence of their father. They would opt for directing questions through the assistance of characters experiencing similar loss, when, and if, such characters appeared on a television program. I assume that this is how they would make meaning of the loss or find approaches to converse with me regarding the inexplicable absence of their father. This experience also led me to acknowledge that I had not previously created a platform to disclose the reason for their father's absence. From this experience, I formulated a question in my own mind as to whether or not children growing up in single-mother households, and more specifically my children, grieve the ambiguous loss of a parent, specifically, in this situation, the absence of the father.

By anecdotal experience, I further assumed that children of single mothers employed in low-earning occupations, with long working hours suffer a lack of emotional presence due to

work-family conflicts on the part of the mother. I also acknowledge my belief that children of absent fathers might not attain the necessary psychosocial developmental tasks thereby possibly experiencing psychosocial dysfunctionalities. Through my facilitation experience with children in a Johannesburg township, I noticed a pattern and generated a hypothesis of male children's tendency to project a protective instinct towards their single mothers. I assumed that this forced a maturity upon children who spend long hours as their own caregivers because of their single mothers' work-family conflict.

I started writing this paper in South Africa shortly before the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in March 2020; the instantaneous life change to what would become months of lockdown put in place social restrictions that affected various aspects of parent-child relationships. This restriction affected children on arranged visits between separated parents and those who experience inconsistent visiting patterns from their absent fathers. The department of cooperative governance and traditional affairs' restriction 11B part 1(a) stated that "all individuals are to be confined within their living space unless they are performing essential services, collecting essential goods or services, seeking emergency or for chronic medication attention" (2020, p.4). This restriction affected the pre-COVID 19 co-parenting arrangements of children of separated parents with shared responsibilities. From my experience, this restriction posed further uncertainty for those unannounced visits from my daughters' estranged father.

However, COVID-19 restrictions also popularised alternative online platforms to allow for virtual communication to facilitate what had previously been physical interactions. This shift deepened my interest in reviewing literature about the perceived emotional dysregulation of children with absent fathers due to physical absence, where the notion of what is physical accounts for both an in-person and virtual presence. I questioned whether a virtual approach could be used to facilitate parental presence in children's lives. This question was motivated

by my consistent virtual presence as a parent following my educational migration to the UK. It is also important to state that in the completion of my drama therapy studies in South Africa, prior to my departure to the UK, I did not have the opportunity to work as a drama therapist with the clinical population under investigation, so I participated in a drama therapy internship training experience in an on-line format.

Shortly after beginning my drama therapy degree in South Africa, I was awarded a postgraduate international scholarship to pursue drama and movement therapy. My educational migration would mean that I, too, became an absent mother at the same time when my daughters were not able to, and did not see their father because of the COVID-19 restrictions and his inexplicable absence. The popularised online platforms have become a useful resource in facilitating consistent contact between me and my daughters, providing a virtual approach to parenting.

1.2 Migration: The absent mother

I expand my previous thinking and assumptions on the background of this study which focuses on the occupation of low-paying elementary job positions of women by bringing in educational migration as an example of a way to change a low-earning continuum for black single mothers. Based on my experience and societal socio-economic reality, one's education level is synonymous with job position and remuneration. As will be later discussed, both of these factors directly influence my thinking about the work-family conflict of the single mother and its effect on the parent-child dyad. I look at the educational migration that I undertook in my studies and perceive this as an onset for me to think and re-think about some aspects of the socio-economic factors facing the single black mother and her children. It also creates another level of complexity for me as I consider the effects of parental absence on the lives of developing children. Riaño and Piguet (2016, p.1) note the educational migration that I have referred to as international student mobility (ISM) where “an individual will

choose to migrate if (and only if) this means acquiring an experience or diploma (=human capital) that will improve future earnings."

In the past, raising my children on my own meant I had not been able to further my education as my financial responsibility forced me to take on low-paying jobs comprising long-hour shifts across the week. While based in South Africa, I spent little time with my children because of this work-family conflict. Leaving before sunrise and returning past midnight was a standard part of my contractual work. In contrast, I have more hours to interact virtually with my daughters now that I am based in the UK. On the topic of migration with specificity to the absent mother, it feels like I was physically present while based in South Africa but more emotionally present as an emigrant, while studying in the UK. The latter has challenged my multimodal presence across the virtual space to account for physical absence. I am using multimodal presence in this instance noted by Porter (2014, p.36) as heightened sensitivity understood to being "receptive to communication from all senses." It is my understanding that presence, time and space are recurrent factors when looking at relational interactions between low-income working, single black mothers and their children. This perception is due to the amount of time I spent away from home while working long shifts and how I perceive it to affect the mother-child relational interaction as physical presence is challenged. However, there is equally a chance at maintaining an emotional presence from a distance, as I have discovered in the move from South Africa to the UK.

1.3 Dysregulated child?

The perceived idea I held of my daughters' inability to manage an adequate range of their emotional reactions and responses towards my absence led me to feel that I was becoming emotionally dysregulated as I wondered if my pursuit for postgraduate studies could cause long-term psychological harm to them. Until this point, I had previously managed to be supportive to my daughters when faced with unsettling experiences such as the absence of

their father or the negative emotions following his unexpected visits. I was concerned that they would experience heightened vulnerability to stress because of my absence and I wondered how that might prime the negative feelings associated with their father's absence and boomerang visits. Much of my concern regarding my daughters' capacity for self-regulation resulted from the feeling that I had not taught them ways to overcome unsettling experiences and did not trust that they had learnt these resilience skills during my time of stay with them in South Africa.

However, during our recent online visits when they recounted experiences about how I parented them eased my tension and my concern about their capacity for emotional regulation, resilience and coping with unsettling experiences. In conversations, they would share how they dealt with difficult emotions by using previous experiences and incorporating some of the approaches I used to help them manage their feelings during those experiences. Furthermore, my black African family follows my understanding of the structure of a social-based approach to psychology where child-rearing is a shared community role inclusive of extended family members and consequently, I believe that my parents' and siblings' presence helped to maintain a supportive environment for their development and wellbeing.

1.4 Professional Background

In my experience as an Applied Theatre facilitator working in various South African townships of the Gauteng region and the peri-urban areas of Johannesburg, I have worked with children of various age groups, including those reared in families with single mothers. I observed that the children of an age range below 14 years old who were reared by single mothers, showed difficulty communicating with my male co-facilitator as compared to the children brought up in nuclear family structures comprising both a mother and father. According to my contract for the Applied Theatre facilitation, the decision made by the youth program employment office to have a male and female facilitator working together was based

on the assumption that boy children could have more open and comfortable conversations with the male facilitator and that girl children could find comfort in speaking to the female facilitator. However, both girls and boys in the younger age range would approach me for personal and professional difficulties. Boy children in the older age range reared by single mothers were comfortable to speak to me for any personal issues but referred to my male co-facilitator for professional reasons. In contrast, girl children from the single-mother families would approach my male co-facilitator for personal issues and refer to me for professional reasons. From this observation, I assumed that perhaps, through the pre-knowledge of a child's family structure and their interpersonal interactions and engagements, one can begin comprehending the child's relational style, moral reasoning, personality, and behavioural motivations. I base this assumption on Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development that looks at how social influences inform personality and development (Cherry, 2020a; Naidoo, Townsend, and Carolissen, 2016). In this theoretical approach, each psychosocial stage has an age-related crisis that must be resolved for an individual to move to the next developmental stage

1.5 Theme of mobility or immobility as a facet of inquiry in relationship to the dynamic of the absent father

As part of a performance piece developed and performed in June 2020, as a research inquiry to further investigate some of the issues concerning the writing of this paper, I explored the concept of walking as an action to metaphorically embody the absence of the father. In particular, I was questioning the idea about how fathers walk when they are permanently walking away from their children. I looked at the action of walking as a form of communication. The action of walking in my performance piece drew me to consider the work of performance artist, Francis Alys whose work is about the inquiry of the relationship between people, their geographical space, and the socio-political affiliations in their

environment. These three concepts are implicated in my conceptions about father absence, migration, feminization and the socio-economic influence at the base of work-family conflicts that I am postulating for the single mother. Alys posited that "walking, in particular drifting, or strolling is already with the speed culture of our time, a kind of resistance…a very immediate method for unfolding stories" (Alys n.d. cited in Schneider 2012, n.p.). The inquiry of how fathers walk away in both the performance piece I created in the past, as well as in this present paper was inspired by the above quotation as I was in search of a theoretical framework and was wondering about the unfolding stories of the fathers who are not present in their children's lives and that were understood by myself as fathers who walked away. I acknowledged that my inquiry would follow an assumptive stance of unfolding stories and realised that this investigation would focus on why fathers leave, whereas my interest was in what happens to the child and remaining parent when fathers leave.

Although I decided to shift away from this inquiry, the performance exploration made me wonder through a metaphoric expression about the walking fathers as individuals in search of finding a way of how to father. Through my performance inquiry, I made the assumption that some absent fathers, who are also fatherless sons, might walk away from their children as they struggle to make meaning of their role, responsibility and function as a father. I wondered if this was perhaps because they too did not have a present father. I hypothesised that walking away is in itself the best lesson of how to father. My inquiry then shifted to the notion of trying to understand the somatic experience of the absent fathers due to his physical absence in his child's life. In this regard, I questioned how the absent father's body responds to his absence from his children. Due to the limits of not accessing and understanding the absent father's experience, I moved on to explore how this absence feels, and is experienced in the body of the remaining parent, the mother. As a parent who finds herself in the position of the remaining parent, I explored how my body experiences not the walking away, but the

experience of being the remaining parent. In this, I explored the idea of the sensory and affective effect experienced as a present parent within my role as a mother. This work included the investigation of how it might have felt to navigate spaces that are primarily framed for the father. These are spaces such as, but not limited to, father themed events at school and traditional rites of passage rituals customarily performed by fathers. This investigation was an attempt to understand my experience of the absence, and whether or not my experience is projected onto my children. The use of repetition in the performance helped me to recall the somatic experiences and body sensations I had felt when navigating the above mentioned spaces which might have been traumatic for me. The investigation above is supported by the thinking that implicit memory of traumatic events is held in the body and the brain (Rothschild, 2000). Through this somatic exploration, I was reminded that the absence initially brought immobility. It was my interpretation that this immobility was not merely the literal choice to remain in the house but the involuntary physiological freeze response to threat as automatically alerted by the brain.

This action-based inquiry would later hold the most critical part of the shift in my research interest. I moved to the United Kingdom shortly after beginning my research writing, leaving my daughters in South Africa to be reared by their grandparents. I began to question the mother's functional role when the father is absent in the lives of his children and whether my physical mobility - as understood as my move to the UK for studies - can be likened to being an absent mother? This questioning created a shift in my focus of inquiry regarding the absence, physical distance, and virtual connection to my daughters. The fact that my daughters and I had an established relationship led me to compare whether emotional dysregulation in children results from the absence of a parent that has never been present, or from the absence of a parent who has always held the primary carer's role. I further questioned whether or not that there is a possibility that both these paradoxes can cause

dysregulation and affect development on a varying spectrum. This shift in moving away from my children to study in the UK at the time of writing this thesis has introduced some shifts in my thinking about the effects of being an absent mother while engaging in writing this thesis.

2. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR STUDY

In post-colonial South Africa, there has been a gradual prevalence of gendered employability noted by Sonubi (2011) as feminization in seeing black women occupying 41 percent of the elementary, low paying, and less secure jobs while earning less than their male counterparts who hold the same positions. Black women are also the lowest-earning group across elementary and managerial positions compared to white women, white men, and black men. Within the 41 percent that Sonubi discusses there are single mothers who take sole financial responsibility for their families, including extended family members.

Manyatshe (2013) states that in ethnic single-mothered families, there is the possibility of an absence of child-parent conversations which are necessary for meaning-making of the absence of the father parental role. This can cause complicated feelings between the mother and child, and might lead to assumptions perceived by both the mother and the child(ren) about inhibited feelings and reasons for the father's absence because of the conversation that was perhaps never carried out. Although there may be a healthy mother-child relationship, systematic gender role responsibilities and the confines of gendered role wording in documents such as school applications or indemnity forms become the reminder of what's missing within a family structure, i.e., Mother's details, and Father’s details. Furthermore, Manyatshe writes about the black single mother who is stigmatized through the traditional monotheistic beliefs and cultural traditions. These stigmatizations could create further issues in the mother's attempt to navigate the father's role and responsibilities.

For the purposes of this research paper, I will focus on exploring aspects from the developmental literature about children from infancy to adolescence in general, with a

specific research focus on the children of absent fathers reared by black single-mothers living in South Africa who work in elementary, low-paying, less secure jobs. Based on my assumption that there are some elements of parent-child potential conflict, and developmental effects because of father absence, I will investigate from literature whether the potential time pressure of the single mother's professional demands and the absence of the father could lead to effects on child development and maladaptation. I base this proposed investigation on psychoanalytical thinking about child development which postulates that primary groups have a role in personality development and primary socialization while being characterized by high emotional attachment (Graham, 2016). Psychoanalytical thinking further connotes that a lack of primary group engagement may lead to an underdeveloped self-concept and insufficient social comparison. In addition, I will be exploring literature on drama therapy to investigate whether drama therapy could be used to mitigate the effects of the absence of the father in single-mother households in the South African context. Since I have not had drama therapy experience in working with this population, my drama therapy investigation will be based upon an application of the theoretical concepts rather than being derived from direct clinical experience with the population.

3. CONTENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

3.1 Research argument

My essential research argument is that an investigation of the literature on psychoanalytical development and drama therapy will support and advocate for a drama therapy approach to aid in the treatment of children in single-mother households in the South African context. To the best of my knowledge, there is currently no drama therapy approach suggested in the literature for working with children of absent fathers and black single mothers of low-paying occupations rearing their children. I believe that the father's absence can be considered as an ambiguous loss. The ambiguous loss I refer to is the loss of a family member without

resolution or closure as defined by Boss (2006). According to the theoretical position of Kail et al "the missing person [who] is physically absent but still very present psychologically" (2020, p.230). To the best of my knowledge, there is also an absence of drama therapy literature that fosters the development of a strong and durable parent-child relationship in a single-parent family structure in order to aid the advancement of the subjective well-being of the child.

Further arguments for the necessity of this study emanate from the pressing nature of the problem of developmental consequences for children growing up in single-mother households within the South African context. According to Freeks (2017, p.91) statistics estimate "2.13 million children in South Africa [are] fatherless, and 9 million grow up without fathers". He also writes about how children of absent fathers are more likely to face educational, behavioural, and psychological development issues (pp. 89-113.

3.2 Contribution to the field - significance of this study

This paper intends to explore the literature coming out of Western developmental psychoanalytical psychology and its application more specifically to children in the South African context reared by black single mothers, and whose fathers are absent. In addition I will explore drama therapy concepts and techniques in order to use these findings to possibly make some recommendations for drama therapy as a social and emotional support treatment option for the perceived developmental effects on this population of children. I see this as a contribution to drama therapy applications and a possible intervention in response to both the population itself, as well as some of the time-space conflict restrictions imposed by single mothers' working schedules.

There have been numerous studies across various schools of thought around the world on the phenomenon of absent fathers where the focus was on its social, psychological, behavioural, socio-economic, and developmental implications.

The developmental issues of children with absent and estranged fathers have been studied within the social sciences, psychology, theology, and phenomenology as briefly discussed below and will be reviewed later in this paper. East, Jackson and O'Brien (2007) have conducted a phenomenological study about the disrupted father-daughter relationship of adult daughters including their unmet father-daughter relationship due to growing up without their fathers. Other scholars have written about grief responses and loss resulting from parental estrangement (Agllias, 2017), complications of estranged parent-child dyads for immediate family members of both the child and the estranged parent (Scharp, 2019), the causal effects of father absence on the well-being of children and the strategies estimating these effects (McLanahan, Tach and Schneider, 2013), and the efficacy of reintegration therapy as a practice recommendation post parental separation or divorce (Polak, 2019).

However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no literature available pertaining specifically to the developmental effects on children due to the ambiguous loss or absence of important parental roles in South Africa and how drama therapy can be used as a possible therapeutic intervention for this absence. This is the specific contribution I am hoping to make to the field of drama therapy in considering drama therapy as a way of helping this specific population.

Drama therapy is understood in this context as a form of psychotherapy that uses theatre and drama techniques to facilitate therapeutic change (Johnson and Emunah, 2009). It is my contention that drama therapy's distinctive feature to intervene for psychological, behavioural and cognitive dysfunctionalities may help in working on some of the perceived developmental issues involved with children in South Africa growing up in single-mother

households with absent fathers. Role-playing and enactment of both familiar and new scenarios could provide a therapeutic approach for the child to acquire the necessary developmental skills in their psychosocial development while simultaneously addressing psychological, cognitive, and behavioural issues where needs be.

3.3 Research questions undertaken in this literature review:

1. What are the psychological, developmental, behavioural, and cognitive effects on children of absent fathers?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the single mother's work-family conflict and the mother-child attachment pattern?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the single mother family structure and the child's personal and social identity acquisition?
4. Is there empirical data on therapeutic interventions for working with developmental effects in children, influenced by father absence in black single-mother households?
5. Can drama therapy be a useful intervention to help with perceived psychological, behavioural and cognitive dysfunctionalities in single-mother families?

4 METHODOLOGY: Literature Review

My research methodology in this literature review will consist of a review of pertinent literature related to my topics of investigation. This paper aims to examine the overlaps between Western and South African theories on child development in general, and specifically how these theories could be applied to children growing up in single-mother households with absent fathers in the South African context. Another objective of this literature review is to review the practice of drama therapy in order to determine whether this approach might be suggested as a useful way to mitigate the developmental consequences and subsequent issues of this population. Additionally, this literature review aims to increase

understanding of the potential gaps in the existing literature as related to working with this population with drama therapy.

In order to conduct this literature review, I conducted research through journal articles and e-Books utilizing specific search engines including: Research Gate, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis online, Academia, Journal Of Social Work Practice, Stellenbosch Theological Journal, Centre for Mental Health, ReproJustice, International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences, mentalhelp.net, National Institutes Of Health, handle.net, Creative-Psychotherapy.co.uk, Changingminds.org, Verywell minds, Wiley, Contemporary Nurse, Britannica.com, American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities, The Canadian Center of Science and Education, Journal of Learning Disabilities, The Heart and Soul of Psychotherapy, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, PsyCom.net, The Journal of Psychotherapy, The Open Family Studies Journal, Annual Review of Sociology, Journal of Social Sciences and humanities, Simplepsychology.org, Psychologydictionary.org, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Interdisciplinary Journal of Family Studies, International Journal of Software Science and Computational Intelligence, Biological Psychiatry Journal, The Free Dictionary, Research Space UKZN, Stellenbosch University Scholar Research Repository, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, Journal of Psychology in Africa, Sociology Discussion, Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, Safmh.org.za. South African Depression and Anxiety Group, Society for Personality Research, Oxford Bibliographies Online Datasets, Brain Pickings, Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, The Arts in Psychotherapy, Global Journal of Reproductive Medicine, and The Open Family Studies. I used key terms such: as absent fathers, implications of father absence, single mothers, single-mother households, children of absent fathers, effects of father absence, absent fathers in South Africa, single black mothers in South Africa, development of children of absent fathers, psychological development of children with absent fathers, interpersonal

relationships in child development, drama therapy [dramatherapy] and child development, role theory, and the implications of play in child development. All relevant sources were critically examined for their value and relevancy to this study and whether or not they should be included in this literature review.

The theoretical framework and literature review I will be presenting are based on my perceived hypothesis that father absence leads to negative psychological, behavioural and cognitive developmental implications in children reared by single black mothers. I will review the theoretical framework and literature associated with child development, as well as drama therapy theory associated with child development, and explore some of the writing about therapeutic interventions for dysfunctionalities and emotional dysregulation. The theoretical framework I investigate will introduce literature that will be further explored later in the paper.

For my discussion and for purposes of the theoretically informed answering of my research questions, I will examine the psychoanalytical and analytically oriented literature on child development in order to explore whether there is support for my assumption that there are psychological developmental effects of absent fatherhood on children's growth and development in single-mother households in the South African context. I will investigate literature from prominent European and North American theorists and offer some opinions about whether these theoretical models are consistent with child development theories pertaining to South Africa. I will review some of the available literature to explore the possibility that the absence of the father has implications on psychological, behavioural, and cognitive child development of children in black families headed by single mothers who live in South Africa. I will concomitantly explore the literature on drama therapy in order to investigate whether drama therapy might be suggested as an intervention to help in working with children who are living with absent fathers and who have experienced psychological

issues and problems in relationship to living in single-mother households. As stated above, I will explore the literature from the disciplines of developmental psychology and drama therapy.

Developmental Psychology- I will focus on psychoanalytical and psychodynamic developmental theorists to investigate development across stages of chronological age and biological indicators that individuals go through across their lifespan. I will look at both the Western and as well as African perspectives and apply both of these perspectives to the proposed phenomenon. In looking at these models, I will select literature with themes such as, but not limited to nature, nurture, sociocultural context, continuous and discontinuous development, and human resilience as these themes are present in my understanding of the proposed phenomenon. It is my belief that exploring these sources might support my perceived assumptions about father absence and its possible effects on child development.
In addition, I will be reviewing some of the relevant literature in the field of drama therapy in order to determine whether drama therapy could be proposed as a way of working with the issue of absent fathers on children growing up in single mother households in South Africa.

Drama therapy is understood as an interdisciplinary process-based therapeutic practice that uses theatre and drama techniques to facilitate therapeutic intervention and healing. However, I will only focus on drama therapy literature that uses play, role play and storytelling as assessment and therapeutic intervention techniques for addressing behavioural, cognitive and psychological development issues in children. In addition, I will look at literature that focuses on brief therapy because of the model's short treatment durations and in considering that the perceived clients might possibly access therapy within school settings.
In view of the fact that drama therapists are trained to work with a varied range of clinical populations with the intention of resilience building, and social and emotional resource

strengthening, my focus on psychoanalytical and psychodynamic theory is to engage the psychological framing associated with the literature on the effects of father absence in children in order to suggest drama therapy processes that are psychologically informed. It is again worth noting that I have not had clinical drama therapy experience in working with this population so my investigation and recommendations are theoretically based. Furthermore, the contribution of psychoanalytical and psychodynamic theories helps in the understanding of personality and psychological development in children and adults and these are vital theories to keep in the periphery when planning for and considering functional and accessible drama therapy interventions. Although drama therapy tends towards an interactive and relational approach, and does not always work with the notion of pathologies and diagnosis, an understanding of the psychology of behaviours and personality may help inform the therapy session choices for client specific psychological needs.

Psychoanalytical and psychodynamic theories are centred on work with conscious and unconscious forces. Similarly, drama therapy also works with conscious and unconscious material through metaphoric and fictional techniques. This paper investigates the use of psychoanalytical and psychodynamic theories to inform suggested approaches in drama therapy for children with absent fathers. This approach is perceived as a way of helping these children to develop a sense of self awareness and to learn how to regulate emotional responses and reactions resulting from these perceived effects. Additionally it is hoped that they would develop and learn coping techniques for dealing with their feelings. The primary motivation to delve into these theories is due to the impact of psychoanalytical and psychodynamics approaches in looking at early childhood experiences as that which shapes later behaviours and personality. This is considered to be vital when looking at the developmental effects on children of absent fathers.

5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

5.1.1 Review of Developmental Psychology literature from a psychoanalytical perspective

In this section, I will present theoretical positions followed by a brief discussion of their application to the themes of this paper.

Psychological development is defined as "the development of human beings' cognitive, emotional, intellectual, and social capabilities and functioning over the course of a normal life span, from infancy through old age. It is the subject matter of the discipline known as developmental psychology" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020, n.p).

The developmental psychology section in this paper draws heavily on psychoanalytical and analytical development theory and consists of six subsections namely psychosocial, object relations, a relational approach to object relations, attachment theory, analytical theory and psychoanalytical therapy. In this section, I will review the theoretical literature in order to learn about the various spheres of psychoanalytically and analytically oriented psychological development theories. The discussion section will weave links between the theoretical framework and its relevance in the South African context. This will help me understand the impact of absent fathers in single-mother households in South Africa from a Western lens. This will further assist in the theoretical understanding of concepts and stages in the sections to follow.

5.1.2 Psychosocial development: Drawing upon the theories of Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson contributed a psychosocial theory of development that spanned across an individual's lifespan (birth to death). His theory looked at how social influences inform personality. This contribution is centred on the idea that all people go through eight developmental stages defined as the epigenetic principle (Cherry, 2020a). Each stage has an

age-related crisis that must be resolved for an individual to move to the next stage (Naidoo, Townsend and Carolissen, 2016, pp.70-125). I will be presenting this theoretical approach since it covers the range of human development from infancy onwards. As relevant in the discussion section, I will focus on formulations pertinent to this paper.

The first psychosocial stage spans from infancy to twelve months. The child's primary carer plays a fundamental role in the child's possibility of resolving the trust versus mistrust crisis. This is due to the infant's dependency on the caregiver and whether the caregiver is consistently available and reliable to the child or not (Naidoo et al., 2016). If the caregivers are consistent and reliable, the child learns to trust. According to Cherry (2020a) this stage's learned resolve informs later life interaction and develops hope, while withdrawal becomes a probable pathology. The resolved crisis allows the child to move to the autonomy versus shame and doubt stage, which spans between their first and second year of life. The resolve in this crisis is for the child to acquire independence under the caregiver's regulated guidance (Naidoo et al., 2016). The theory continues to state that when a child is allowed free-will of expression, the child's self-restraint ability becomes a marker for the acquired resolution which shows autonomy (Cherry, 2020a). This acquired autonomy moves the child to the third and final occurring psychosocial stage in early childhood. The stage spans between the child's third to sixth year of life, where the crisis is initiative versus guilt. Psychosocial development believes that the autonomous child initiates their activities, but when this initiative is responded to negatively by their caregiver, they develop guilt throughout their lives (Swartz, 2016).

The fourth psychosocial stage is the only one to occur in middle childhood. The fourth crisis is industry versus inferiority and spans from the child's seventh to the eleventh year of life. The industry versus inferiority stage suggests the acquisition of social and educational skills, and success in this can result in competence or industry where self-assurance is characteristic

of the resolved task (Swartz, 2016). If the task is not resolved, "the child experiences feelings of inferiority" (Naidoo et al., 2016, p.76).

Erikson's fifth psychosocial stage spans adolescence (12-19 years) and presents with the crisis of identity versus identity confusion. This stage's resolution is for adolescents to successfully acquire an adult identity following their shift from childhood autonomy (Swartz, 2016). Identity crisis is the most critical conflict in this stage and the inability to resolve this task leads to identity confusion.

Discussion

It is my opinion that in Erikson's conception of healthy growth he envisions how things can go right. In formulating a personality theory, Erikson believed that the ego was at the core of personality development, and is a component that helps children interact with the outside world (Naidoo et al., 2016). The above statement makes psychosocial theory vital for informing the drama therapeutic approach because of the ego's capacity to help the children reared in single-mother households reflect on the unconscious processes explored within the drama therapy sessions. This is due to the ego's ability to maintain the awareness of reality based on rational, and conscious thought.

5.1.3 Object Relations: Drawing on the developmental theories of Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein in her writing about *Object Relations Theory* looks at a human in relationship to other people (Shultz and Shultz, 2017). Klein believed that the infant's sense of self depends on its relationship with the primary caregiver. Klein's theory stemmed from Freud's concept that personality development spans out in the first five years of a child's life, but Klein argued that personality is developed and shaped in the infant's first three to six months of life. Melanie Klein proposed an object relations theory that centres on the importance of consistent patterns and interpersonal relationships (Shultz & Shultz, 2017, pp.115-143).

Object Relations theory which was developed by a group of British psychologists, including Melanie Klein, brings focus to the maternal role where it highlights the mother's tendency towards intimacy and nurturing. Human connectedness is at the core of object relations theory. Klein's object relations theory focuses on the infant's real or fantasized early relationship with the mother or her breast and how it informs later-life interpersonal relationships (Bell, 2011).

Klein believed that infants experience people as objects and relate to external objects from a phantasy or a reality relation through the satisfaction of their carer's instinctual drives (Shultz & Shultz, 2017, p.115-143). From this, the infant develops a *phantasy life* understood as the infant's state of mind which "offers an unconscious commentary on instinctual life and links feelings to objects and creates a new amalgam: the world of imagination" (Mitchell, 1986, n.p). It is hypothesized that this is how children interact with their internal and external world through unconscious phantasies. Phantasies enable the ego to initiate object relations and informs later life relations. The earliest phantasy images are of good and bad where the infant makes relation to their mother as an object with a good or bad breast, further translating this as the good or bad mother (ChangingMinds.org, 2020a).

Klein proposed two developmental positions to highlight the back and forth alternation in development and show the infant's anxiety and conflict experience. These positions are the p*aranoid-schizoid* and the *depressive position* which elicit the life and death instinctual conflict (Learning Theories, 2020).

The paranoid-schizoid position is primitive and develops within the first four months of life. It shows the infant's relationship with gratification and frustration through its relationship with the good and bad breast (Klein, 2013; Learning Theories, 2020). In accordance with the infants relationship with the good and bad breast, the infant introjects good objects and expels bad objects. How the infant organizes it's experience with the good and bad objects leads to a

splitting of internal and external objects and the split of the ego's gratifying from frustrating experiences (ChangingMinds.org, 2020b). The infant projects destructive feelings towards the phantasized bad breast while expressing love and comfort towards the phantasized good breast (Klein, 2013; ChangingMinds.org, 2020b).

Klein's second position, termed the depressive position, occurs between the fifth or sixth month of the infant's life. Due to the matured ego's tolerance of its destructive nature, the infant understands that good and bad phantasy's can co-existence. The infant moves from seeing an object in parts (good and bad) to seeing the mother as a real whole (The Depressive Position, 2020). The infant develops the tendency to protect the mother from its destructive phantasies (ChangingMinds.org, 2020a). The depressive position preoccupies the infant with loss accounted for by their fear of losing their mother. The infant can associate their mother as both a good and bad object while expressing empathy towards this new whole as a reparation task resolve for previous phantasy splitting (ChangingMinds.org, 2020a). The resolved task appears as love which becomes displayed to and experienced by the mother (Klein, 2002).

If reparation is not accomplished, the infant experiences mistrust and psychic disorders. This leads to anxiety that the infant deals with by using defence-mechanisms as coping strategies. Klein proposed four psychic defence mechanisms: introjection, projection, splitting, and projection identification which function to protect the infant's ego.

Introjection is "an unconscious defence mechanism in which one incorporates characteristics of another person or object into one's psyche" and alternatively defined as the tendency for the infant to incorporate the external objects experiences (The Free Dictionary, 2012). The introjection of good things is for protection against anxiety whereas the introjection of bad things is for the purpose of gaining control over them (Yenn, 2016).

The projection defence mechanism is the tendency for the infant to project both good and bad feelings and impulses onto external objects (Yenn, 2016). Destructive feelings and thoughts tend to be expelled onto an external object (ChangingMinds.org, 2021).

As noted earlier, the defence mechanism splitting is the infant's tendency to separate good and bad aspects of the self as ego and external object as phantasy (Yenn, 2016).

The fourth and final psychic defence mechanism requires an actual interpersonal interaction. Projection identification is the potential for the individual projecting destructive impulses to influence the individual projected on to alter their reality. This defence is the tendency of the infant to identify with their projections (Ogden, 2004).

Discussion

Object relations theory focuses on the child's relationship with the mother and is thus not suggested as a method to mitigate the absence of the father. This theory is brought in to assist in informing the intersubjective therapeutic relationship between the drama therapist and the child in Drama therapy. The therapist might take on the mother role as a dramatic metaphor to rehearse behaviours that help integrate a positive sense of self for the child in therapy. This unconscious and conscious relationship between the therapist and the child will help aid consistency of patterns and interpersonal relationships that are useful in the child's world outside of therapy. This relationship will also assist in integrating both the good and bad phantasized breast in the child's ego to later aid the black single mother-child relationship where conflicts arise in relation to her work commitments.

Klein's intention was to focus on the internalization of the ego, superego, and Oedipus complex to relate the person to other people or external objects. Klein's theory accounted for a human being in relationship to other people where the infant has internalized external objects. Although this paper refers to a wide spectrum of children and not merely infants, the theory of object relations might foster an interpersonal approach for working with children of

single-mother households within drama therapy for the purpose of re-enacting parent-child relationships and for developing and/or strengthening healthy coping behaviours as possibly rehearsed and/or learned in therapy.

5.1.4 The Parent-infant relationship in object relations: Drawing on the theories of Donald Winnicott

Donald Winnicott's theory extended Klein's thinking by proposing a theory of human beings in relationship to their physical environment. Winnicott's (1966) influence in object relations theory emphasized the role of early relational experiences as key to personality development. His theory was concerned with the child's perceptual field because of their attunement to the mother as a whole responsive object (Winnicott et al., 2017). Winnicott postulated that the self-concept is developed through the child's relational experience with their mother and argued that "if a mother is attuned to the infant, and responsive to their cues such as crying, the child will learn that they can affect their environment. They would experience themselves as omnipotent" (Stevens, 2021,n.p).

Winnicott believed that the infant could not be separated from the mother and that they together constituted what he referred to as a psychic unit (Exploring Your Mind, 2018). He maintained that the mother is likened to the environment and believed that the consistent and reliable response to the infant's needs accounts for the infant's agency and a real sense of being within that environment. From this, he proposed the concept of the *good enough mother* where the child's needs are met by the caregiver who maintains a position that neither overprotects nor neglects the child (Exploring Your Mind, 2018). This theory posits that the good-enough mother informs the development of the true self understood as the spontaneous and authentic experience sense of self.

In this model the caregiver's failure to respond to the infant's needs results in the infant switching to adapting to the caregiver's assumed needs. By so doing, the infant believes that

these assumed caregiver needs will be met. This tendency develops the infant's false self (Stevens, 2021). However, the false self is also developed by the over-protective or excessively attached instinct of the *ordinary devoted mother* (Exploring Your Mind, 2018). Winnicott's proposed transitional objects concept was developed in response to the idea that a mother figure's absence creates developmental complications. Transitional objects are believed to replace the absent caregiver to reassure the infant's feelings of omnipotent power while maintaining security and confidence (Stevens, 2021; Winnicott et al., 2017).

Discussion

The understanding of transitional object in this paper is postulated to account for the caregiving role of the therapist in drama therapy and the suggestion that the drama therapist could possibly replace the primary caregiver within the therapy space in order to explore some of the issues surrounding the parent-child relationship, investigate relational patterns and repair the relationship where needs be. Regarding the infant and the environment, this concept also helped in understanding and separating off the mother as an environmentally distinct feature from the child.

Winnicott described play as the child's omnipotent control over their good-enough mother (cited in Tuber, 2008, pp.119-124). He saw this as an important part of healthy development and vitality. Object relations theory further contributed towards the idea that play is aided by the mother's ability to attune to the child's control. The next stage of play was noted as the child's ability to play alone in the presence of someone available to their needs when required. Moving on from this, this theory denoted the next stage to be the mother's ability to join in with the child's play or introduce a new aspect of play outside the child's own play, enhancing their relationship. Tuber posits that "playing thereby allows the child to consistently work on the boundary between illusory omnipotence and helplessness and thus has at its essence the quest for mastery over the inner and outer chaotic (that is, not yet

understood) aspects of its experience" (2008, p.123). This statement supports the use of play within drama therapy as a vehicle that will help the child understand their experiences. The drama therapist can potentially take on the role of the primary carer within drama therapy sessions in order to play out these possibilities. Furthermore, the drama therapist would have to be attuned to the child in order to aid this relationship in the play space with the possibility of being seen as the transitional object within this space. The attuned therapist-child relationship will have a time variability dependant on presenting and pre-existing social, relational and psychological factors. This knowledge leads into the vital aspect of attunement in both the therapy space between the therapist-child relationship and in the child's home with their primary carer in order to harness a relational engagement.

5.1.5 Attunement: Missattunement, passive, intra-modal, and cross-modal attunement

In the following section, I am referencing the work of Stern (1985) which I will attempt to relate to the practice of drama therapy. Stern defines attunement as "the performance of behaviours that express the quality of feeling of a shared affect state without imitating the exact behavioural expression of the inner state" (1985, p.142). Attunement can be expressed or experienced in variations of cross-modal attunement, intra-modal or passive attunement and missattunement, inclusive of both purposeful and non-purposeful missattunement. Stern delineates that "attunement need not proceed towards empathetic knowledge or response" (p.145), which shows the importance of purposeful missattunement, where missattunement is understood as the conscious choice to break away from attunement for a learning intent or therapeutic exploration. The theory states that passive attunement is an internalized 'being with' state of witnessing that allows the therapist to hold space for the client without the client feeling watched. This variation aids the client's taxonomy of engagement. Intra-modal attunement can be understood as a within mode reactiveness. Cross-modal attunement is understood as the feeling of connection in being in relationship with another (Stern, 1985).

Discussion

I am hoping that in drawing upon psychoanalytical theory and proposing drama therapy as an intervention for the perceived effects on children of absent fathers, that the techniques of storytelling, role play, and play might help aid my argument as to why drama therapy can be a suggested therapeutic approach. Through the therapeutic relationship I am suggesting that the drama therapist can use the various forms of attunement and missattunement in order to support and enhance unconscious and conscious communication through this inter-subjective relationship.

5.1.6 Attachment theory: Drawing upon the theories of John Bowlby

Bowlby is credited with introducing the idea that a human being exists within their transcendental environment which was another contribution to understanding the development of the self. John Bowlby's attachment theory proposed that "a child has an innate or inborn need to attach to one main attachment figure or monotropy" (McLeod, 2017, n.p). In his theory he highlighted the link between early infant separation with the mother and later maladjustments. He believed that the infant's ability to form attachments with others was an automated and hereditary survival tool developed from birth. Bowlby emphasized the importance of the development of a secure bond between the mother and infant to help aid psychological well-being and development. He also posited that the child's initial attachment works as a framework for all future relations with others in later life (McLeod, 2017). Attachment theory stresses the importance of the infant's proximity to their attachment figure because this quality of attachment is critical to development.

Attachment theory examines the forging of a reciprocal interaction in the parent-child relationship where the infant's signalling behaviours are responded to by the caregiver by fulfilling their needs (McLeod, 2017). The caregiver's non-responsive stance or absence leads to maternal deprivation, described as cognitive, social, and affective dysregulation in the

infant (Collins English Dictionary, 2021). The negative long-term consequences of maternal deprivation causes “delinquency, reduced intelligence, increased aggression, depression and affectionless psychopathy” (McLeod, 2017, n.p).

Bowlby suggested that a parent and infant attachment relationship was responsible for the infant's working model, a cognitive system based on the child's self-insight, perceptual field, self-concept, and self-esteem (McLeod, 2017). From this attachment theory emanated stages of attachment. Bowlby's attachment stages were informed not only by the caregiver's physical presence but also by their emotional responsiveness.

Bowlby presented four attachment stages, with the first stage spanning from birth to two months. The first stage is the pre-attachment stage, where infants are aware of their ability to act out signals such as crying or eye contact to attract adults' attention. The infant has no formal attachment to a specific primary caregiver but is gratified with being attended to by anyone within proximity. The infant does not discriminate one person from another (Learning Theories, 2020a; Bretherton, 1992).

From two to six months, the stage is marked by the infant not expressing any feelings of distress when separated from their parents. Although they know who their parents are, the infant may prefer a particular person other than their parents. This stage is the attachment in the making stage, where infants depend on their mother during distressing situations (Learning Theories, 2020a; Bretherton, 1992).

Clear-cut attachment is the third attachment stage and spans from six months to three years of life. Although the child can be attached to several people, the third stage's attachment marker is separation anxiety where the infant cries as a response to being separated from their caregiver. The separation anxiety intensity is informed by the infant's temperament and the caregiver's emotional responsiveness to the infant (Learning Theories, 2020a; Bretherton, 1992).

The goal corrected partnership or the formation of reciprocal relationships is the stage where the child's separation protest declines. This stage takes place from four years and onwards. As per cognitive-developmental age, language is developed, which helps the child understand the caregiver's leaving and returning patterns. A sense of security marks the fourth stage because the child knows that the parent does not have to be physically present to have their best interests at heart (Learning Theories, 2020a; Bretherton, 1992).

Bowlby's theory showed how a reliable, consistent, and responsive caregiver is at the core of the child's independence and personality development. As a secure base, the caregiver helps to mould the infant's internal model, which directly develops their personality and self-concept (Learning Theories, 2020a; Bretherton, 1992).

Discussion

The above-noted psychoanalytical theories highlight development within the psyche's various structures and offer a different perspective of how to conceptualize the self in relation to others, their physical environment, and their transcendental environment. These theoretical frameworks account for some aspects of the self and some of the relational aspects of the individual.

Psychoanalytic theories are selected as a choice to inform the drama therapy relationship as they allow for an exploration of a varied range of emotions not limited to pathologies which are both conscious and unconscious and fall into past and present experiences. In this way, the approach fosters a safe environment to explore emotions connected to father absence and the implications thereof giving both the therapist and client insight into what is unconsciously and consciously arising while informing the therapeutic goals. This thinking is supported by Landy (1986), who stated that "[d]rama therapy relates in some ways to many major psychotherapeutic theories, viewing the client as embodying a confluence of conscious and unconscious processes of mind, body, feeling and intuition" (p.59).

5.2 Review of selected Developmental Psychology and a discussion of its relevance to children growing up in single-mother households with absent fathers

In this section I will review some of the other psychological literature that might help towards an understanding of the implications of absent fathers on the development of male and female children growing up in single-mother households. I will focus on literature that might address themes of behavioural, psychological and cognitive dysfunctionalities related to growing up in black single-mother households of low socio-economic status within the South African context. Some aspects of the absent father phenomenon that I am drawing upon in this regard include scholars of various schools of thought that have researched areas including art therapy, psychological theory, theology, social sciences, trauma in relationship to cognitive and behavioural development and implications for drama therapy. In relating to these writings, I am making inferences relating to my choice of the topic about children growing up with black single mothers in low-income occupations. In the section that follows, I will be introducing literature that examines some of the possible developmental impacts on children growing up with absent fathers by analysing literature divided into subsections titled: effects of father absence on cognitive verbal attainment; benefits of male role models in boy child development; rearing the boy child: socialization patterns and masculinity; identity crisis resulting from absence of masculine guidance; paternity disclosure; single mother and absent father perspectives on father absence; young adults' perception about father absence, and relational effects due to father absence**.**

5.2.1 Effects of father absence on cognitive verbal attainment

Falana, Bada, and Ayodele (2012) investigate the influence of single parenthood on school children's emotional and intellectual development and its influence on their sex role. This study was carried out in Ekiti State, a Southwest region of Nigeria. Although the focus is not merely on single mothers, there is accuracy on the developmental data collected using a self-

designed instrument titled Family Structure and Child Development Inventory (FSCDI) that is validated by experts in Counselling Psychology and the Psychosocial and Cognitive Development Scale (PCDS) which is a measure of the assessment of psychological, social and cognitive development of children. This study was relevant to my question on whether there are psychological, developmental, behavioural, and cognitive effects on children of absent fathers. Through data from the study, the scholars were able to investigate the potential effects that father absence and single motherhood have on the child's cognitive verbal attainment which informs their later life educational outcomes, occupation, mental health, substance abuse and social activities as a proposed gap that the study aimed to fill (Falana, Bada, and Ayodele, 2012).

Discussion

This section is primarily dedicated to the review of the negative effects experienced by children reared in black single-mother households. I made the choice to focus on the negative effects in order to compare whether there are any implications of these effects on the psychoanalytical and psychodynamic development of the child. The comparison was important to help address what theory suggests as healthy and positive child development through the use of drama therapeutic interventions. Although this study is not geographically positioned within the South African locale relevant to my review of interest, the paper focuses on negative effects of father absence which is a relevant theme in my research.

5.2.2 Benefits of male role models in boy child development

Sylvester (2010) was interested in the *at-riskness* that adolescent boys growing up in low socio-economic environments in the Cape flats community in the Western Cape without their fathers experience. Through the collection of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and collage data, Sylvester (2010) described the perception and experiences of ten adolescent boys who were faced with developmental challenges resulting from the absence of a strong

male role model. Through the collection of data, the boys' perception of the role of the father included that of being a provider, a protector, a guide and for identity. The prevalent themes in this study was that the boys' discipline issues, both in their homes and at school, could lead to possible risks in decision making that could affect their future. Sylvester (2010) further presents observations on educational challenges such as academic, behavioural, school attendance and grades as repeated issues facing children of absent fathers. This study responded to my inquiry about the possible behavioural effects and the relationship between the single-mother family structure and the child's personal and social identity acquisition.

5.2.3 Rearing the boy child: Socialization patterns and masculinity

Where the 2010 study referenced above focused on the experiences of adolescent boys, Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2012), were interested in gender socialization patterns and construction of masculinity in adolescent boys living in single-mother households in a Cape Town community in South Africa. Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2012) posit that single mothers were reliant on physical changes and typical male traits in adolescent boys to conclude their transition into manhood. Single mothers held expectations for adolescent boys to perform typical male responsibilities in the absence of fathers and within the stance of masculinity, to partake in gang-related activities and associate with risky behaviour. This study infers dysfunctionalities across various aspects of single-mother households for adolescent boys, one of which is the reinforcement of gender-appropriate skills and values from same-sex-parents.

5.2.4 Identity crisis resulting from absence of masculine guidance

Thwala (2018) recognised the absence of research on the impact of absent fathers on township learners where the absence was perceived to breed insecurities, a lack of primary role models and the lack of masculine guidance. Prevalent themes in the qualitative findings were insecurity, poor discipline, disruption, identity crisis and child resilience for the sake of

selfless single parents. His further finding was that female participants showed less emotion towards the father's absence. Although the study approaches the implications of rejection and biological father abandonment through the lived experiences of male and female adolescents in a Mpumalanga Province township, it infers adverse physical and psychological health effects. Similarly to Thwala's study, Smith, Khunou and Nathane-Taulela (2014) carried out a study on male and female participants from a disadvantaged South African township and explored social identity influences of children of absent fathers. Associations of lower self-perceptions were noted in regards to paternal absence and the non-use of paternal surnames was linked to limitations on identity. The latter was further associated with personal and cultural identity where cultural identity looked at a child not merely belonging to a material paternal realm but unconsciously connecting one to ancestral lineage in the metaphysical realm. Both of these studies provide significant answers to my proposed questions on the child's personal and social identity acquisition and upon the effects that father absence has on their psychological and behavioural development.

5.2.5 Paternity disclosure

Nathane-Taulela and Nduna (2014) investigated the experiences of young women from the Mpumalanga province who discovered their biological fathers following identity disclosure from their mothers or maternal family members. Based on how the disclosure was carried out, the study made inferences about the influence of the relational experience between the father and the child. The study posited that unmet cultural customaries for paternity acknowledgement also negatively influenced relationship formation between the absent father-child dyad. Another important theme was the feeling of indifference when some of the young women discovered their unknown absent fathers identity. There was an interplay between the now discovered real father versus the previously unknown but idealized father.

5.2.6 Single mother and absent father perspectives on father absence

Morwe, Tugli, Klu and Matshidze (2015, pp.15-20) carried out their study in the South African Odi region through the perspective of the single mother on the absent father's involvement in the children's lives. A variable number of the single mothers expressed the decision of the fathers not to maintain contact with the children while another group showed marginal participation of the fathers in the children's care and responsibilities. This study posited that paternal absence wrecks and polarises children and families. Although these studies were not carried out in response to each other, Eddy, Thomson-de Boor and Mphaka (2013) capture the social dynamics and reasons associated with the disengagement of absent fathers through the absent father's perspectives in Johannesburg, South Africa. Although their study is structured around four main themes, three of themes, that is, the possible causes of the widespread paternal absence, perceived consequences of the absence and possible remedies that partially form dialogue with the single mother's perspective will later inform my discussion. The study perceives negative implications on the lives of children and mothers due to the absence of the father with perceived consequences such as impact upon socio-economic status, health, behavioural patterns, paternal guidance, cultural and social exclusion, and disconnection from cultural identity.

5.2.7 Young adults' perception about father absence

Magqamfana and Bazana (2020, pp.169-173) investigated the absent fathers influence on young adults' self-perception in South Africa. Implications were on the material well-being shortages as previously expressed in the single mother and absent father study's perspectives. The study showed an inter-individual variability in response to psychosocial effects due to father absence. Furthermore, Magqamfana and Bazana (2020) acknowledged the influence of the Euro-American patriarchal and nuclear structure influences on the fatherhood debates leading to the disregard of extended family member roles within the South African context family structure. The psychological implications suggested by this study are premised on the

belief that “positive paternal involvement in families is very important for many reasons including identity formation” (Magqamfana and Bazana, 2020, p.172).

5.2.8 Relational effects due to father absence

Although Ntloko and Kheswa’s (2018, pp.346-368) paper was primarily reporting on the impaired sexual behaviour of female adolescents due to parental insecure attachment in accordance with John Bowlby’s attachment theory, the physical and emotional absence of the father demonstrated a significant influence in relationship formation with others inclusive of romantic partners. Their findings on paternal absence reported negative self-esteem, unfavourable academic performance, and pregnancy as a result of cohabiting with romantic partners. Data collected from this study further showed female adolescents with absent fathers to partake in risky sexual behaviours.

Matlakala *et al*. (2019, pp.1-12) explored the socio-emotional and economic factors facing children of absent fathers in a South African rural community from the account of a single mother. The scholars claim that paternal absence raises father benefit envy, creates emotional glitches and alters how children with absent fathers interact with society. As the accounts of consequential experiences of absent fathers vary across individuals, the perspective from which the data is collected also varies with the influence of socio-economic status and society.

Mdletshe (2014, pp.4-57) took a narrative inquiry approach to understanding the consequences of father absence and subsequent coping strategies of 18-21year old women living in Soweto. On the inference of father absence, the study yielded the development of both negative and positive coping strategies where the negative strategies were seen through “withdrawal from others, denial of the need for a father, self-blame, silence and defensive humour and the positive strategies were maintaining a positive attitude, keeping a journal or diary, creativity, religion and ancestral worship, speaking to others and living a different life”

(pp. 39-44). On the implications of having had absent fathers, the study showed how young women faced distress as a result of poverty where the father role held the expectation of economic intervention but where it was not forthcoming.

Akin to Mdletshe's noting of the paucity of literature on the well-being of children of absent fathers, Tau (2020) was also interested in the subjective account of young adults reared in single-mother households with absent fathers and carried out her study in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Tau's (2020) findings concluded that father absence is experienced both negatively and positively where the former denotes psychological effects manifested as abandonment, sense of worth and family disruption and the latter facilitates extended family cohesion and the children's sense of independence. The study further associates the negative psychosocial effects experienced by the children with dysphoric feelings which are internalized as 'bad objects' in accordance with Melanie Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 2013; ChangingMinds.org, 2020b).

Discussion

Although there is some literature available that proposes some positive effects of paternal or father absence, this section was primarily dedicated to the review of the negative effects experienced by children reared in black single-mother households. The literature referenced shows a prevalence of psychological, psychosocial and behavioural implications due to absent fathers. Recurrent themes included material deprivation, impact on interpersonal relations, identity issues, psychosocial needs and partaking in social disruptive and risky behaviours. The reason for my focus on negative experiences is to propose drama therapy as a therapeutic approach for the well-being of the children growing up in single-mother households in response to the hypothesized negative impact absent fathers have on children's development. Secondly, the focus on negative experiences is to support the recommended use of drama therapy as an intervention that could be informed by the psychoanalytical thinking

which recognizes both conscious and unconscious feelings and experiences that might otherwise be avoided or repressed. In this way I am hoping to address negative coping mechanisms, strengthen resilience, and surface thoughts and feelings through the aesthetic frame of drama therapy which holds the potential for both conscious and unconscious communication.

5.3 Review of drama therapy literature

Following from a summary of some aspects of psychoanalytical theory and drawing from some aspects of developmental psychology literature alluding to the implications of father absence, this section will draw upon drama therapy literature pertinent to the inquiry of the effects of father absence in children growing up in black single-mother households. The drama therapy section will focus on the Sesame and transpersonal drama therapy frameworks as this literature will later inform the drama therapy implications in the discussion as therapeutic approaches for mitigating the perceived negative effects of father absence. Drama therapy concepts such as play, role play, and storytelling will be defined in this section as these concepts will detail the action based therapeutic implications in the discussion. Furthermore, analytical concepts pertaining to both the therapeutic relationship and the psychology of the action based work will be discussed.

5.3.1.Sesame and transpersonal drama therapy

Based on a review of some of the pertinent psychoanalytically oriented psychology concepts, I will be examining some aspects of drama therapy literature to ascertain whether drama therapy might be proposed as an intervention for engaging with the perceived psychological, behavioural, and psychosocial dysregulations which may be due to the father's absence in single mother headed homes.

The Sesame drama therapy approach is grounded in the use of drama, movement, myth and movement with touch and sound forms. This non-direct psychotherapeutic approach is

influenced by Carl Jung's notable theory of analytical psychology where his work on the psychology of the unconscious brings focus to aspects that shape personality (Cherry, 2020b). These are both outer aspects such as mythology, religion, ancient symbols and rituals, customs and beliefs, and inner aspects such as dreams, visions, hallucinations, and delusions. As adapted into the drama therapy Sesame approach, Carl Jung's analytical psychology considers the holistic well-being of the individual because it acknowledges that identity is not merely an innate experience but considers one's social and cultural context. The Sesame approach uses drama and movement as therapeutic art forms to engage unconscious material that might not yet be accessed using verbal discussion (Pearson, 1996).

5.3.2 Transpersonal drama therapy

Similar to the Sesame approach of working with the holistic well-being of an individual and looking into their psyche in a nonthreatening and non-intrusive manner, is the transpersonal drama therapy approach of Hinsdale (2013) that posits that transpersonal drama therapy can be used to facilitate corrective emotional experiences where the therapist holds the responsibility to communicate the child's inner reality to their immediate caregivers for the fostering of empathy and insight towards the child. The use of transpersonal play and drama therapy has a fundamental purpose to provide a platform for expression, and compassionate witnessing of the child's experience. This approach helps the child to frame their experiences and to shift them to positive understandings about themselves and their surroundings while at the same time, they grow the ability to formulate their cognitive and emotional foundations since children communicate using play when these abilities are not yet achieved. The use of transpersonal drama therapy includes working with the children's caregivers within the therapeutic plan in order for the children to encounter their caregivers in a social and emotional territory that differs from everyday life. This transpersonal therapy approach uses no distinct or set roles between the client and therapist and they have equal power in

communicating in mind, body and soul, providing a holistically engaging experience. The prevalent role that a transpersonal drama therapist holds is that of a mirror for the child client to see themselves and that of a guide that leads the child back to personal congruence. Transpersonal drama therapy employs contact work or touch for working with attachment styles with specificity on the secure base, but this contact work should be client led. Hinsdale (2013) states that for secure base contact work and activities, the therapist should take on a mother role within a mother-child relationship. The therapist in a transpersonal session holds the role of the witness unless enrolled in a dramatic role within the play. Similar to the Sesame approach, transpersonal drama therapy aims to make the unconscious conscious through metaphorical material (Hinsdale, 2013). The use of drama and play as metaphorical aesthetics assists in the therapeutic inquiry for their particular aesthetic ability to maintain a cognitive distancing (Johnson and Sajnani, 2014).

Transpersonal play and drama therapy discussion

Transpersonal play and drama therapy is an approach that promotes the inclusion of a child's caregiver within the therapeutic plan. Based on this, it is pertinent to consider the single-mother's occupation, as described in the background to the study and some of the literature reviewed where the mother may be noted as working long-hour shifts. The leap into the background is to ensure that suggested therapy approaches are accessible for this family structure. The inclusion of the single-mother into the child's transpersonal play and drama therapy plan should acknowledge her limited time or lack of availability due to her occupational commitments. Based on this understanding, a brief approach to therapy could be considered in order to facilitate a therapeutic intervention for children of absent fathers growing up in single-mother households where the mother is affected by work-family time conflicts. In this way, one can perhaps maintain the structure of the transpersonal play and

drama therapy approach while rethinking the inclusion of the primary caregiver in the therapy space when the single mother is the only primary caregiver of the child.

5.3.3 Brief therapy and other approaches to drama therapy

Thinking about brief therapy raises the importance of the therapist's skill to form an attachment and separation process with a client in a brief period. Although the form seems to propose unrealistic expectations of solutions within the brief period, it can be used to inquire for urgency and agency (Gersie, 1996). Although Juhnke and Coker's (1997) solution-focused intervention is used for the recovering alcohol-dependent single mothers in this study, their brief approach introduces elements vital for family cohesion by facilitating the awareness of existing strengths and resources to promote healthy family dynamics. Emunah's (1994) *Five progressive phases in drama therapy and their implications for the brief dramatherapy* model allows for flexibility and control of the pace of therapy. This model has five paradigms that help facilitate change by using drama techniques and therapeutic interventions.

Another form of brief therapy is Ncube's (2018) *Narratives in the Suitcase* project, which is a five part model with a distinctive feature of the belief that children do not always require interventions from adults to resolve their own issues. The project explores children's stories on the move, including refugees, migrant children, and those on the streets. It enables them through dramatic play and story to reimagine and share an alternative story. On the ability of stories to give cognitive and emotional significance to experience, Busika (2016) proposes a brief psychoeducational intervention with therapeutic properties by integrating i*ntsomi*, playback theatre, and narradrama to facilitate resiliency through a story to foster the well-being of early developing children in societies facing societal ills.

Discussion

In reviewing these transpersonal play and drama therapy, Sesame drama therapy and the above noted brief approaches to drama therapy, it is pertinent to bring focus to the role of the

therapist as this helps aid the therapy. It is my belief that the therapist holds the power to navigate across various roles to help the client explore permissions, interpersonal relationships, rehearse new behaviours, project unconscious communication, and mirror the child's behaviours for the purpose of gaining insight about past experiences which hold implications of negative effects. This in turn will allow the child to express how they feel while learning new ways of being in response to the perceived negative effects of the absent father. In some instances, the therapist's role can be complicated by other important roles in a child's life but the therapist can find ways to explore the child's relationship with these roles within therapy. However, these relationships can only be explored where the therapist is attuned to the child and can consciously move across the various roles as will be described in the section to follow. These roles have the potential to hold both the conscious and unconscious implications of object relations theories.

5.3.4 Drama therapist's role and function - analysis and discussion

Johnson (1998, pp.85-90) posits that an art therapies psychodynamic model allows clients to project or externalize aspects of themselves through arts modalities or onto therapists and the therapeutic relationships, and that these creatively transformed experiences can be re-integrated into the clients' experiences or retrieved from the therapist. This understanding allows me to link the therapist's function with relevance to object relations.

According to Shultz and Shultz (2017), object relations theory helps individuals understand their interactions with others and in working through difficult relational episodes. Object relations posits that it is the early developmental phases that affect how one relates to others and this supports the importance of why the therapist has to work on their subjective self in order to become a good enough objective self in the aid of therapy (Shultz & Shultz, 2017). Understanding how object relations theory is associated to drama therapy may help the therapist understand how psychological concepts such as projection, projective identification,

transference and countertransference influence the therapy and participation mode of both the client and therapist while the client relies on their experience in the drama therapy session and reflection thereof to gain understanding of themselves. The above concepts are also vital in understanding the various major roles the drama therapist takes on in the therapy space. These roles are described by Lewis and Johnson (2000) from a drama therapeutic approach and are namely, the *social role* as a therapist, the *psychological role* as a transference figure and the *dramatic role* as a character in the drama (pp. 113-116). Within all three of the above mentioned roles, the drama therapist has to be cognisant of their influence as an exercise of good practice. Furthermore, Drama therapists have to employ the ethical considerations for brief therapy when they dramatically and psychologically take on parental roles namely, the 'mother role' in the therapy space. Specificity is brought to the mother role as it is mentioned in earlier chapters.

5.3.5 Concepts and techniques underpinning drama therapy

In this section, I will define some of the major concepts and techniques within the field of drama therapy that might support postulating a drama therapy intervention for the perceived effects of father absence in children growing up in single-mother households.

5.3.5.1. Dramatic reality

Pendzik defines dramatic reality as an interactive dramatic realm "which involves a tangible entrance into an imaginary realm, engaging in make-believe play, in *as if* behaviour, etc." (2006, p.3). Dramatic reality can be experienced through role play, improvised transformations, dramatization of personal stories and scene work, storytelling or projective tools, and it has the capacity to merge imaginative and real experiences with potentiality to explore possible worlds. Another important feature that Pendzik states is its ability to elicit "issues connected to relationships, communication, cooperation, acceptance, judgment, or any relational aspect that psychotherapy is generally concerned with" (2006, p.15). Looking

at dramatic reality theory and its abilities may help in supporting the inquiry question of whether drama therapy could be a useful intervention to help with psychosocial dysfunctionalities in single-mother families.

Discussion

It has been my intention earlier in this paper in presenting psychoanalytical concepts and developmental theory to suggest that children in single-mother households with absent fathers are impacted developmentally. I am suggesting that there are consequences that negatively impact on attachment styles, relational engagements, object relations and developmental dysfunctionalities which I am attributing to father absence. Therefore I am suggesting that it might be important to bring focus to the attunement process within the drama therapeutic space. It is my belief that the process of attunement is premised on human connectedness making it a vital concept in drama therapy.

5.3.5.2. Storytelling

Storytelling is a creative form of narrative therapy that allows children to externalize personal narratives or internalize stories that will allow for an imaginal exploration within characters present in the story (Tanaka, Kakuyama and Urhausen, 2003). Storytelling and listening allow the child to expand their understanding of themselves and make meaning of their real and imagined life experiences (Gardner, 1974). Storytelling fosters a platform for cathartic release and as well as helps the therapist to discover the clients coping mechanisms (Malchiodi, 2003). Tanaka, Kakuyama and Urhausen (2003) note storytelling as “one of the effective interventions known to assist children in verbalizing their feelings safely” (p.125). As a non-confrontational form, storytelling fosters a platform for the child to express difficult emotions leading to an enhanced self-awareness (Gardner, 1974). Storytelling as a concept and technique used in drama therapy might support the intervention for children of absent fathers by facilitating a dialogical engagement of the clients’ inner and imaginal world within

the dramatic reality in order to shift from a possibly problem-saturated narrative to another point of view.

5.3.5.3 Role play

Role playing or role taking in the drama therapy space is the conscious act of a client playing themselves, a character from real life or an imaginative role (Jones, 2007). Through role playing, a client can explore different feelings, ways of being, rehearse different approaches to a real life experience and see life events from a different perspective. Role play is an external re-enactment facilitated within the dramatic reality (Pendzik, 2006). Jones (2007) notes how role playing within the imaginal world of the dramatic reality creates an explorative platform that is not inhibited by everyday life censorship and boundaries. Landy (1995) posits that "people make sense of themselves (and others) by taking on and playing out roles and communicating that sense to others through stories" (p.8). The possibility of playing another or playing the self in different ways awards children the opportunity to rehearse, within role, diverse ways to approach difficult situations. Role playing might be an effective technique in exploring the child's inner conflicts and as well as rehearsing dialogical interactions between the single mother and child on connected topics to the absent father or the absent father and child relationship.

5.3.5.4 Play

Play in drama therapy is used as an expressive language that facilitates a flexible experimentation of the ways in which to approach real life events and experiences (Jones, 2007). The choice of play within the therapy space is guided by the developmental continuum which is synonymous with psychological stages of cognitive, emotional and interpersonal development (Russ, 2004). Play related to the development stage is guided by the clients' cognitive, physical and psychological needs and functionality (Russ, 2004). Jones (2007) postulates that play facilitates the practice of interactions and new behaviours regarding real

life experiences. Additionally, the therapeutic play space fosters awareness and engagement. Playing in the drama therapy space further allows a safe distance to explore various possibilities about everyday life issues (Jones, 2007). The latter idea highlights why play can be a vital technique in exploring the implications of drama therapy as an intervention for the perceived effects that father absence has on children. This includes some of the psychological issues expressed in the literature including, but not limited to, estrangement, risky behaviours, avoidance, negative coping mechanisms that can be explored in therapy.

6. Discussion/results/findings emanating from the literature review: an analysis of shortcomings for the possible adaptation of a psychoanalytical approach as applied to the South African context

Following a review of some aspects of child development from a variety of sources, as well as an examination of the relevance of these to the South African context, I have examined drama therapy concepts and practices that are relevant to my investigation. However, in comparing the African perspective of development to the psychoanalytically reviewed framework, I noted literature that did and did not resonate with the lived experiences of South African single-mother headed families. In this section, I will begin by comparing the psychoanalytical theory approach to the socio-economic, cultural, historical, and social South African context. Following from this, I will use the reviewed frameworks and literature to help me answer the research questions as posed earlier in this paper. Because part of the reviewed literature supports the argument that there are psychological, behavioural and cognitive effects experienced in the development of children of absent fathers who are reared by working single mothers in low-paying occupations, I will indicate how drama therapy could be a suggested intervention in working with the experiences of such children.

This paper has presented a psychoanalytically oriented review of developmental theory as it pertains to the development of object relations between parents and children. As I review this

theory in relationship to the South African context, I find discrepancies in the theory. There are socio-economic, political, social, and cultural themes that are not accounted for by mainstream developmental theories, resulting in the theories' shortcomings when reviewed in this context. According to Cherry (2019), psychoanalytic theory was formed in Europe during a political and social context overwhelmed by sexual repression, and the sexual drives as motivation for development responded directly to and from that era. However, culture and community are at the core of personality development in the South African context with a focus on interdependence (Kelland, 2015). Speaking about sex is also a cultural taboo in the African context as noted by Okechi (2018).

It is in basing psychological development on the relationship between the mother and child that isolates the individual from their broader context (Naidoo et al., 2016; Swartz et al., 2016). This neglects the individual's cultural, social, and political influences that inform their personality, specifically for the South African context.

The African perspective of psychology presents a collectivist framework and principles to structure how communities live (Kelland, 2015). One of these principles is community and tribe and refers to how people are organized and hold various roles and responsibilities within a collective framework because they are familiar to role and responsibility-based structuring, as noted by Kelland (2015) in his community principle. The South African context is presented with complex intrapsychic and social themes that may not be accounted for by this psychoanalytically oriented approach.

Discussion of findings in relationship to my research questions

Question 6.1 What are the psychological, behavioural, and cognitive developmental effects on children of absent fathers?

I have come to understand that the loss of a father role in the child's life not only impacts the socio-economic well-being of the child but further affects development, personality, and

behaviour. This is supported by Freeks (2017) who in his study notes the negative statistics on father absence and fatherlessness and ways in which the loss of this crucial role contributes towards the child's development and future relationship building, and negatively affects the child. Sylvester (2010) brings focus to the family dynamic of female-headed households and highlights how overcrowded living arrangements with extended family members pose a challenge to the children's development because of unmet needs. He indicates how these family constructs were also noted to lack structure, parental supervision, rules, and discipline which together enhanced the at-risk behaviours of the adolescents. In this instance, based on my view, this data can be used to partially oppose the African perspective of the collective rearing of children that promotes communal parental responsibility as the collective working model is dysfunctional.

Sylvester (2010) provides a positive and negative account of immediate male role models and although these role models are not the children's biological fathers, this data proposed that the absence of a warm and affectionate male role model and relationship in childhood poses direct influence on self-esteem, gender role behaviour and relational interactions. Where Sylvester's participants account of an idealized role of the absent father for financial and disciplinarian tasks, Magqamfana and Bazana (2020) presents data that notes participants' poor self-concept and confidence, inferiority, and negative emotions resulting from father absence in comparison to children with fathers who are present in their lives. I interpret the above findings to suggest that the children reared in homes with no fathers are challenged psychologically and emotionally due to lack of positive paternal involvement. Magqamfana and Bazana (2020) further noted father absence to have implications on intimate relationships and autonomy as synonymous with psychosocial and object relations theory.

Sylvester's (2010) findings can be compared to psychosocial theory on how behaviours and personality are shaped by societal norms and childhood experiences, where resolved crises

lead to strengths and virtues of the personality. However, one can counter argue the psychosocial theory on how the accomplishment of resolved tasks accounts for positive development by raising the possibilities that tasks can be resolved, yet resolutions such as that of identity can be engulfed in a negative identity based on social experience. These resolved crises in turn do not become strengths or virtues as seen in the behavioural and psychological outcomes of the participants in Sylvester's study. The at-risk behaviours manifest by the adolescent boys in this study can be linked to the lack of self-restraint and the unresolved psychosocial task of identity confusion.

In addition, the African model of collectivism that supposes a positive outcome of the community principle holds as a negative association for the boys living in this community because of their socially learnt at-risk behavior (Richter and Morrell, 2006).

Based on my review of the literature, and in answer to my question, I have come to the conclusion that there are negative effects on the psychological, behavioural, and cognitive development of children with absent fathers. The absence of the father or positive male role model does affect the psychological and behavioural development of the child leading to an unaccomplished sense of self (Shultz & Shultz, 2017). This is because childhood experiences of interpersonal relationships determine the development of relationships in emerging adulthood (Kail, Cavanaugh and Muller, 2019).

Psychosocial theory supports this in the *intimacy stage* of development, where it is argued that "the kinds of relationships you saw and experienced as a child (and whether they involved violence) affect how you define and act in relationships" (Kail et *al.*, 2019, p.40).

Based on this analysis of psychosocial theory, one can argue that the above is one of the psychological effects absent fathers have in children's later life.

Based on the above literature, children of absent fathers experience a range of psychological, behavioural and cognitive development effects such as a distorted self-concept, negative

coping strategies that affect behaviour, inferiority complexes, identity and role confusion, a low self-esteem and confidence based on a lack of affectionate role models. These children might present with a lack of sense of self therefore affecting their personality and their ability to form relationships in the future.

Question 6.2 Is there a significant relationship between the single mothers work-family conflict and the mother-child attachment pattern?

The primary focus of this research question is to investigate the triad between time, work-family conflict and mother-child attachment patterns in order to address the socio-economic impact on the mother-child relationship.

Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi (2018) describe work-family conflict as:

> a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and the family domains are incompatible in some respect. Much of the conflict is characterized as two major forms: time and psychological strain. Time-based conflict occurs when the time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in, or comply with, the expectations of another role, while strain-based conflict is viewed as strain from the demands of one role intruding into and interfering with participation in another role (p.112).

Based on the above quote, the challenge of finding a balance in each role for a single mother remains an unresolved one supposedly leading to a perceived lack of physical presence in their parental role. According to Sonubi (2011) the work-family time conflict for the single mother is due to her work demands which indirectly creates more mother absence in the child's life. The child spends limited time with their working mother because of the household's economic needs. I am assuming that this can impact upon the progression of developmental attachment. I then further make the assumption that the child's early separation from their mother poses the possibility of maladaptations for the critical

development of their psychological well-being as stated by attachment theory (McLeod, 2017).

Though attachment theory suggests close proximity and maternal responsiveness as necessary in order to inhibit maternal deprivation (in McLeod, 2017), Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi (2018) posit that the child's socialization is carried out by extended family members, outside their families and day care centres due to work-family conflict. From this, I hold the opinion that parental proximity and maternal deprivation caused by the work-family conflicts can result in an unacquired secure attachment bond between the mother-child relationship (McLeod, 2017).

Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi (2018) note that single parent homes are unable to cope with financial and emotional strain as they have to play the roles of both the mother and father and are challenged with scheduling issues and childcare inadequacies. The socio-economic need poses a challenge on the parent-child relationship.

The lack of social support for single parents as stated by Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi (2018) challenges Winnicott's idea about the psychic unit which suggests the inseparability of the mother and child (Exploring Your Mind, 2018). The lack of time to be with family, being a working mother with family responsibilities, the working-mother role dyad, the lack of time for self at home, work and family induced stress are among the issues facing single parents because of work-family conflict. These phenomena pose a direct question about the function of the good-enough mother and development of the true self as an infant's agency where socialization takes place outside their home (Akinnusi, Oyewunmi and Sonubi, 2018).

Based on the above understanding, I believe that there is a significant relationship between the single mothers work-family conflict and the mother-child attachment

pattern. A review of the literature indicated that the single mothers work demands might affect the progression in developmental attachment between the mother and child as the mother dedicates a lot of time to her work role due to socio-economic demands. This in turn poses psychological strain on both the mother and the child where the child cannot regularly experience the mother within her mother role as the mother is conflicted between her mother and work roles. The mother's work-family conflict poses challenges to the child's unattended needs and might lead to the feeling of maternal deprivation.

Question 6.3 Is there a significant relationship between the single-mother family structure and the child's personal and social identity acquisition?

In researching the effects of father absence on children reared by single mothers, I have learned that in many ethnic single-mothered families there is an absence of parent-child conversations necessary for meaning-making about the absence of the father, causing complicated feelings between mother and child (Manyatshe, 2013). Manyatshe (2013) further notes both the mother and child's inhibited feelings because they never carried out conversation.

In noting the father's role, the effects of father absence and the adolescent boy's self-description as according to Sylvester's (2010) study, some of the individuals raised concerns about choosing not to communicate about male related issues with their mothers. This paper suggested the need for a positive male role model for the adolescents' personal and social identity formation where a lack of such roles models resulted in gang related crime, heterosexual expression of masculinity, school absenteeism, and substance abuse as a way to acquire a male identity (Sylvester, 2010). The acquisition of social and personal identity through social influence is accounted for by the psychosocial stages of development related to age (Cherry, 2020a). Based on the supposed absence of positive role models for identity

formation, I make the assumption that not all psychosocial developmental tasks are acquired as suggested by age relation.

The child's identity and patterns of socialization can be influenced by gender and developmental age primarily within the child's home as well as various other social environments (Bojuwoye and Sylvester, 2012). Although Bojuwoye and Sylvester's study involved participants from a Coloured community, their investigation of the gender socialization of adolescent boys living in single-mother households might support my hypothesis that children of absent fathers are cheated of the experience to identify with the same sex parent in order to support the theory on gender appropriate skills and socialization patterns. The adolescent boys in this study expressed deprivation of same-gender parent reinforcement, guidance and male-gender interests (Bojuwoye and Sylvester, 2012). Although there may be a healthy mother-child relationship, systematic gender role responsibilities and the confines of gendered role wording in documents such as school applications or indemnity forms become the reminder of what is missing within a family structure, i.e., Mother's details and Father's details. The black single mother is also stigmatized through the lenses of the traditional monotheistic belief and cultural tradition (Essien and Bassey, 2012). From this, it might be surmised that both cultural and traditional beliefs can present social inequalities for the single mother that prevent her from navigating into traditional father roles and responsibilities (Richter and Morrell, 2006). These social inequalities affect single mothers' children during religious and traditional rites of passage traditionally facilitated by fathers, for example, the rite of African circumcision for adolescent boys in Xhosa clans (Kail, Cavanaugh, and Muller, 2016).

Based on the reviewed literature, male children experience difficulties in discussing male related issues with their mothers. It is reasonable to assume that male role models inform the child's self-concept within their personal and social identity therefore

proving that the absence of a father affects the child's identity formation. This statement is made with the consideration that there is no male role model present in the single-mother household. Children tend to adopt negative behaviours within their social settings as a way to acquire the male identity for which they lack a reference within their primary setting. Though this is not always true, this is an argument I draw from the above literature. Because socialization patterns can be influenced by gender, there is the implication that children of single mothers are deprived of gender appropriate skills and socialization patterns. Furthermore, male children of single mothers are deprived of settings where rites of passages are observed by fathers; this leads to a stigmatization of the single-mother household.

This review of the literature has indicated a significant negative relationship between the single-mother family structure and the child's personal and social identity acquisition.

Question 6.4 Is there empirical data on therapeutic interventions for working with child developmental effects caused by father absence in black single-mother households?

Thwala's (2018) investigation was on the impact of father absence in children living in a South African township. Thwala's (2018) inquiry investigated whether feelings of rejection and abandonment had an impact on the learners' school performance and discipline and, from this data, and used this data to design pastoral interventions for the children of absent fathers. Although this study is coming from a theological approach, Thwala's (2018) suggestion of pastoral counselling intervention for the effects of father absence in South African townships offers a narrative approach to therapy for these communities. This can support my hypothesis to suggest that therapy is helpful in children of absent fathers experiencing negative effects because of this absence. These studies have supported my understanding that there is some empirical data on therapeutic interventions for working with child developmental effects

caused by father absence in black single-mother households. I am hoping that in the future there might be more studies forthcoming on the efficacy of therapy with this population.

Question 6.5 Can drama therapy be a useful intervention to help with identity acquisition, psychological, behavioural and cognitive dysfunctionalities in children of absent fathers? - implications for drama therapy

The spontaneous and free-flow quality of play can be likened to the psychoanalytic concept of free association, a technique that facilitates the expression of unconscious material and repressed memory and thoughts (Corey, 2014; Irwin, 2005). This allows the therapist to find out more about the child using a drama therapy approach and to use play as a form for therapeutic treatment. Through play, a therapist can model a responsiveness of the "good enough" mother and use play and role play to hone the child's capacity for self-insight and awareness; the process allows the child to engage with both conscious and unconscious experiences within the dramatic reality used in drama therapy (Hoey, 2005). In addition, role play allows children and adults to engage with real life experiences through metaphoric safety. By using role play as a vehicle, the child can externalize internalized feelings and expand their problem solving of real life experiences (Jennings, 1995, pp.63-73). Role play assists the child to explore resistance behaviours while trying out possibilities and rehearsing dialogical conversations with significant others in their real life (Jennings, 1995). The latter holds as a corrective intervention method for parent-child relationships as according to Winnicott's (1966) relational theory, because the drama therapist can step into the important roles present in the child's life in order to allow the child a platform to explore real life scenarios within the dramatic reality. There is an overlap of therapeutic implications present in the use of play, role play and storytelling techniques because they all hold potential to try out new ways of being within a dramatic realm and to engage with these experiences in both a conscious and unconscious realm.

Drama therapy can be a useful intervention to help with identity acquisition through its use of role play, play and storytelling techniques that can assist the child client in metaphorically exploring various identities within the therapy space. The child can interact in these various roles within the dramatic realm in order to make an informed decision as this space will allow the child to reflect on those roles while rehearsing possible conversations and behaviours. The drama therapy space also holds the possibility of the drama therapist engaging with the child through play which might enhance the child's experience of relational interactions in the real world that inform their psychological, behavioural and cognitive dysfunctionalities. The child can use role play to rehearse how to form relationships and this can be furthered by an enquiry through storytelling. The therapist and child can play out scenes within the dramatic realm in order for the child to make sense of their at-risk behaviours, and from there begin to act out changes within the therapy space where this material can be used as a resource to inform behaviour in the child's real world.

Role-play can assist the child by expanding their role range and repertoire and this will be vital for integrating aspects necessary for a balanced ego and sense of self. Drama therapy can help with working on unconscious communications and bringing this to awareness for the child's well-being in aid of psychological development. Because the therapist can step into social, psychological and dramatic roles within therapy, it is certain that the therapist-client intersubjective relationship is a possible platform for the reinforcement of the mother-child relationship. Drama therapy can provide a space for the child to express dramatically and verbally issues that they might find difficult to discuss with their mothers as the role play technique is not bounded by gender identity and a female drama therapist can play male roles while male drama therapists can also take on female roles. Drama therapy's oblique and imaginal realm allows for possibilities that are challenged in the real world.

This review of the literature has supported my understanding that drama therapy can be a useful intervention to help with identity acquisition, psychological, behavioural and cognitive dysfunctionalities in children of absent fathers.

7.1 CONCLUSION

My personal and professional prior experiences, as well as an engagement with the conceptual thinking and literature presented in this paper, confirm my understanding that the absence of the father in single-mother households in the South African context not only poses financial strain on the single-mother household but contributes to the child's psychological and behavioural strain. It is my opinion that the financial responsibility often placed solely on single mothers might pose a threat on the parent-child attachment bond. Although the rearing of children of absent fathers in the South African context takes the form of a communal approach, the positive or negative implications of this collectivist culture is informed by the child's immediate male role models. It is my opinion that positive role models are vital for the development of a child's self-concept where a negative male role model, or lack of such, might lead to the heightening of destructive behaviours and emotions.

Drawing upon Western developmental psychology as well as an African perspective with regards to the development of personality, the father role is important for personal and social identity formation. This also translates to an ancestral connection to social identity through paternal surnames. I believe that where a child lacks a positive male role model for identity formation, they might resort to dysfunctional behaviours as an alternative approach to identity formation. In the literature reviewed, children of absent fathers expressed same sex parental roles as vital models in modelling gender appropriate skills, masculinity and socialization patterns. Contextually, there are gendered role responsibilities in South Africa and this poses challenges to the single-mother headed household. It is my opinion that, given that father absence might be inevitable in certain circumstances, the aforementioned gendered

role responsibilities might pose psychological, behavioural, cognitive, and relational effects on children. I believe that in this situation drama therapy might be a significant therapeutic intervention for children of black single-mothers of low-earning occupations. With this in mind, I am proposing that drama therapy might be useful treatment option for working with children of absent fathers in single-mother households in the South African context.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I was prevented from infield clinical placements and facilitating in person drama therapy consequently affecting my ability to assess the efficacy of drama therapy interventions with this population. In view of the literature I reviewed on drama therapy, I do think that drama therapy might be useful for the children, the single-mothers and absent fathers. I further anticipate that brief therapy might be a useful method due to the schedules of working mothers in single family households. If fathers were available there is every indication that drama therapy might be a useful way for them to explore their feelings about being absent fathers. Finally, I look forward to expanding my understanding of the perceived effects of father absence using drama therapy as I continue with my work infield.

7.2 Research limitations

There was a challenge in sourcing literature about black single-mother households within the South African context. Some of the literature currently referenced combined the phenomena of unemployed and single mothers employed in low-paying occupations. There was a further paucity on literature about specific therapeutic interventions for black single mothers rearing children of absent fathers within the low earning socio-economy.

In inquiring about the effect of absent fathers on their child's personality formation, identity acquisition and psychosocial development, I found a paucity of literature about these effects on the development of black children in the South African context.

Further limitations to this study are, as previously mentioned, the psychoanalytical model of development not relating specifically to the development of children in single-mother households in the South African context.

A final limitation to this study is that I have not worked clinically with this population and the recommendations regarding the use of Drama therapy derive solely from a review of the literature.

7.3 Recommendations

My international student migration status and child-rearing role came with the consideration of what I am calling virtual parental reverie where I borrow from Bion's "maternal reverie" concept that notes the mother as a containing object who is receptive to the child's projections (Gooch, 1998). After spending months searching for tools and techniques to maintain a somatic experience with my children, I was met with various digital platforms that offered opportunities for engagements in real-time virtual realities. These digital platforms facilitate the creation of relational connections (Whitty and Carr, 2006). With this knowledge along with a consideration of the drama therapy implications for children of absent fathers, I recommend the further investigation of a virtual drama therapeutic approach for the psychological, cognitive and behavioural effects that father absence has on children and single-mother headed households where there is a time-space conflict. In response to this conflict, short term online interventions can be a useful tool.

When thinking about absent father re-integrative therapeutic goals, I further recommend the investigation of a holistic and integrative approach that could be extended for absent fathers who would like to be present in their children's lives.

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