



DAUGHTERS AND THE PATERNAL FUNCTION IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FATHER

STUDENT NAME: GLORIA NJERI KAMAU

STUDENT NUMBER: 711133

SUPERVISOR: DR NICK DAVIES (PhD)

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DECLARATION

I, **Gloria Njeri Kamau**, declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed:

Date:

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to women.

To the older women who paved the way and continue to pass on and share their wisdom.

To the young women who are unafraid to call out injustices and fight for truths.

To the future women who will break barriers and reach new heights.

Thank you for constantly igniting a flame in me to want to speak, share and write about your lived experiences and truths.

This, I know, is only the beginning of change to come.

I am truly honoured.

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"I know this transformation is painful, but you're not falling apart, you're just falling into something different, with a new capacity to be beautiful."- William C. Hennis

This quote reminds me of the late nights that I worked on my research. It was physically draining, but I was learning and being changed by the experience...in an odd, but beautiful way.

Apart from this quote, there are human (beans) without whom this this research would not be possible.

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ABSTRACT

Given the increasing number of non-traditional households' such as single mother-headed households in the South African context, this research focused on the absence of fathers in relation to child development which is significant social problem within society.

It explored the experiences of daughters with absent fathers in South Africa with regards to the paternal function. It also explored daughters' experiences around the performance or non-performance of the paternal function and their thoughts on the potential impact of the absent father in their lives.

The research study was framed using a psychoanalytic lens with a focus on the unconscious. The participant group consisted of seven young black women in single mother headed households with absent fathers. Semi structured interviews were used to collect the data. The data was analysed using interpretive thematic analysis couched within psychoanalytic orientation.

The key themes that emerged were daughters perceived their childhood as 'normal' and utilised various defence mechanisms to protect themselves from the hurt of father loss. It was also evident that there was a longing for the 'real father'. Furthermore, the absence of the father was seen to impact their identity and relationships with men. In terms of implications, the study demonstrated the need for research that challenges and expounds on theoretical concepts that may require reconceptualization given the changing contexts. It also provided some evidence for clinical work in terms of tailoring appropriate therapeutic interventions.

Key words: daughters, paternal function, absent fathers, psychoanalytic theory

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION 2

DEDICATION 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4

ABSTRACT 5

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 8

1.1 OVERVIEW 8

1.2 RATIONALE 8

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS 10

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 11

1.5 STRUCTURE AND CHAPTER OUTLINE 12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 13

2.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT 13

2.2 ABSENT FATHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA 14

2.3 FATHERS AND POVERTY 15

2.4 FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 16

2.4.1 PSYCHOANALYTIC UNDERSTANDINGS AND WRITINGS 17

2.5 FATHERING AND EFFECTS ON DAUGHTERS 20

2.5.1 ACADEMIC 21

2.5.2 SELF-ESTEEM AND OTHER EMOTIONAL IMPACTS 22

2.5.3 SEXUAL IDENTITY 22

CONCLUSION 24

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 25

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN 25

3.2 PARTICIPANTS 26

3.3 DATA COLLECTION 27

3.4 SELF- REFLEXIVITY 27

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS 29

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONNS 30

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 32

4.1 NORMAL CHILDHOOD? 33

4.2 ADMIRATION OF THE MOTHER 37

4.3 THE PATERNAL FUNCTION: MALE OR SECOND PARENT? 41

4.4 IMPACT OF AN ABSENT FATHER 44

4.4.1 IDENTITY	45
4.4.2 RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN	47
4.5 ABSENT FATHER AS REPLACEABLE?	50
4.6 LONGING FOR A FATHER.....	52
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	54
5.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	54
5.2 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY	55
5.3 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS	55
5.4 CONCLUSION	56
APPENDIX.....	59
a. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	59
b. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER	60
c. INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION.....	61
d. INFORMED CONSENT FOR RECORDING.....	62
e. ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE.....	63
REFERENCE LIST	64

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This research study was inspired by previous research (Kamau, 2016) where the researcher interviewed fathers to explore their subjective experiences of fathering and their understanding of the role and importance of the father. In the current research, the goal was to expand the literature on fathers, fathering and fatherhood but to do this from a different angle, namely by exploring how father absence in a single mother-headed household is understood and experienced. The researcher's aim was to explore how the paternal function is understood in the absence of the father. According to Davies & Eagle (2013), the paternal function is defined as a set of functions, distinct from those traditionally performed by the primary caregiver, that can be performed by a caretaker of either gender. The literature (Langa, 2012) also suggests that most studies have investigated the lived experiences of sons' in relation to the absent father in the household. Based on this, the researcher decided to specifically focus on daughters' experiences of the absent father investigating their thoughts on who might have provided aspects of the paternal function in the absence of the 'traditional' provider. It appears that the majority of empirical research in this area has focused on effects on sons with sparse literature investigating the impact of an absent father on daughters (Richter, 2006).

1.2 RATIONALE

Over the last several years, statistics show there has been an increasing number of female-headed households in South Africa (Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012). Reasons for this might include socio-economic challenges (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). It might also possibly be ascribed to men's decreasing commitment to active fathering, for a whole host of reasons (Geddes, 2008). Regardless, single mother-headed households are generally viewed in a negative light especially with regards to raising children (Jones, 2007). There is research that suggests that the absence of the father negatively impacts the children (Mazembo, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). However, there is contrasting research which suggests that not all children are impacted negatively by an absent father and that some do develop in a normal and positive manner (Mazembo et al., 2013). Certainly, the absence of a

malignant and/or abusive father may well have benefits that exceed those of his presence in the home, but it is important to consider that perhaps a resilience in a family, in a single mother can mitigate the negative effects of an absent father. In this vein, contemporary research has alluded to constructs such as the paternal function and argued that there is certainly gender-neutral aspects to it and that in the absence of the father, the mother or even another woman may be able to perform some of the paternal functions (Davies & Eagle, 2013). This exploratory research study aims to explore how the paternal function is understood by daughters in the absence of the father. Furthermore, it seeks to explore their understanding of the performance or non-performance of the paternal function in the absence of a father and potential impact of an absent father on daughters.

The majority of the literature on absent fathers suggests that households are greatly disadvantaged and at risk of “adverse consequences” such as poor performance in education, teenage pregnancy as well as substance abuse in children (Mazembo et al., 2013; Richter et al., 2012). Regarding boys, it is suggested that absent fathers have an impact on the development and construction of masculinity (Clowes, Ratele, & Shefer, 2013; Langa, 2012). This more traditional understanding of the impact of father absence highlights the potentially detrimental and negative effects. It is important to note, however, that several sources have pointed out that an absent father often creates a multitude of economic hardships for his family (See Mavunga, 2013; Samuels, 1998) and it is these woes, rather than the absence of the father himself, which creates difficulties for his children and family.

More contemporary research around fathers adopts an arguably more sophisticated approach, as it argues for the concept of the paternal function (rather than the role of the father) as including a set of functions, distinct from those traditionally performed by the primary caregiver, that can be performed by a caretaker of either gender (Davies & Eagle, 2013). Some of the literature (see Davies & Eagle, 2013; Samuels, 1988) argues that the paternal function is non-gendered, which raises the question of the association of the absence of the father with inevitable negative consequences, given the implication that the paternal function, or certainly aspects of it, can be performed by the mother, or even another woman. This exploratory research study did not seek to undermine the literature established on absent fathers but rather to push the boundaries further on this issue.

Literature seems to be over-emphasizing this link between absent fathers and negative consequences as well as painting new family dynamics such as single mother-headed households as problematic (Davies & Eagle, 2013; Richter et al., 2012). It is also important to critically consider how perhaps due to the overlooked research, the mothers' ability to perform the paternal function in the absence of the father may be influenced. This study sought to explore and understand how daughters in single mother-headed households experienced the absence of the father, and the extent to which they felt and believed that this absence leads to negative consequences. Particularly, can the paternal function be carried out in a single mother-headed household, and if so, by whom? Such understanding could help contribute to the sparse literature around absent fathers and child development. It could also inform psychotherapeutic understandings and programmes for families as well as help develop appropriate forms of family therapy and therapeutic interventions (Richter et al., 2012).

As the researcher, I was aware of the range of different single mother-headed households (for example, non-resident fathers, undisclosed fathers) but, for the purposes of this research which was exploratory, capturing all possible formulations would have been going beyond the scope of this research. Hence to reduce the impact of all the complexities, for the purposes of the research, a single mother-headed household was conceptualized as a household where the primary head is the mother and the absence of the father is either due to abandonment, divorce, or death. Furthermore, the daughters needed to self-identify as having experienced an absent father in either a physical, emotional or psychological manner.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

For this study, the aims of the research are:

- To explore how the paternal function is understood by daughters in the absence of the father.
- To explore the daughters' understandings of performance or non-performance of the paternal function in the absence of a father.
- To explore the potential impact of the absent father on daughters.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this research study is largely a psychoanalytic lens with a focus on the unconscious. Broadly, the research shall draw on various schools of thought within the psychoanalytic sphere, drawing from the classic work of Freud to contemporary object relation theorists such as Winnicott. Given that the literature on 'paternal function' is relatively new, drawing on various schools of thoughts is crucial to get a better understanding as well a broad and holistic conceptualisation.

A psychoanalytic framework is premised on the notion of understanding the 'psyche' (Willig, 2017). Freud (1899) posits that the 'psyche' is motivated by unconscious motives/ forces and childhood experiences which shape personality and behaviour (Corey, 2013). Historically such forces were predominantly biological forces such as Freud's (1899) life and death drives (Corey, 2013). Subsequent additions to the psychoanalytic paradigm attribute unconscious forces and motivations arising in the realm of relationships (Corey, 2013). This paradigm also highlights unconscious defence mechanisms at play as people move to protect themselves against emotional pain (Corey, 2013).

Therefore, this research study will utilise a psychoanalytic lens prioritising emotional investment, importance of relations within the family of origin and role of unconscious motivations (Willig, 2017).

Based on the above, this research study will be guided by the following research questions:

- How do daughters understand the paternal function in the context of a single mother-headed household?
- How do daughters understand how the paternal function is performed or not performed in the context of an absent father?
- How does the absence of the father potentially impact daughters?

1.5 STRUCTURE AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

The **current introductory** chapter gives an overview of the research study. It sketches the foundation of the study through providing the background of the problem as well as the rationale for the study. The research aims, questions and chapter outline are also presented in the chapter.

The **following chapter** outlines the review of the relevant literature underpinning this study. It discusses six fundamental areas: The South African context, Absent fathers in South Africa, Fathers and Poverty, Fathers and Daughters, Psychoanalytic understandings and writings and Fathering and Effects on daughters (academic, emotional and sexual identity).

Chapter three presents a discussion of the methodological assumptions and methods chosen to conduct the study. It outlines the research design, research paradigm, participant group and sampling (demographics of the participants are presented in a table), instruments and procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter four presents the findings. There is a discussion of the six main themes identified in the interviews conducted. These are: Normal Childhood, Admiration of the Mother, The Paternal Function: Male or Second Parent, Impact of the absent father, Absent father as Replaceable and Longing for a Father. Each theme will be discussed in-depth in relation to the relevant literature with sub-themes also presented in the chapter. Interpretations of more latent content will also be offered.

Chapter five, the concluding chapter, summarises the main conclusions of the research study. It outlines the strengths and limitations of the study as well as the researcher's key reflections during the research process. It also discusses future recommendations and interventions for the area of study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of, and the role of, the father in child development is an area of current debate. There is substantial literature, mostly historical, which points to the absence of the father having deleterious effects on the emotional and cognitive development of the child (see Allen & Daly, 2007; Mazembo, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). There is another body of literature which suggests that it is not so much the absence of the father *per se* that is the issue, but the economic and financial problems that arise in the absence of a bread winner that results in developmental struggles in the child (Mazembo et al., 2013), as well as the possible cultural stigma that is associated with not having a father (Makofane, 2015). There is a third, significantly less developed body of literature which argues that an absent father does not automatically equate to disrupted development for the fatherless children. There are two strands to this argument. The first is that of the “social father” (Morrell, 2006, p.14), and the argument is similar to the African Ubuntu adage “it takes a village to raise a child”, (African Proverb, n.d) namely, that in the absence of a father, there are many alternative male role models in the form of uncles, grandfathers and older brothers (Morrell, 2006). The second strand focusses on the possible internal resilience that a mother and her children may be able to call upon, both as individuals and as a family, to overcome the adversity arising from an absent father. Part of this argument is that a mother may well be sufficiently psychologically able to compensate for the father’s absence either directly or indirectly through the help of another such as family members, uncles, aunts and grandparents (Mazembo et al., 2013).

This chapter will attempt to elucidate the important points in these different arguments as well as contextualise the relevance of this study.

2.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

This research focused on daughters with absent fathers in the South African setting. The South African setting is complex given its history of the apartheid system, with its policies and acts which caused certain race groups to gain power over others (Amoateng & Ritcher, 2007). It was a nefarious model that divided families, disrupted family systems as well as entrenched a racial hierarchy that hegemonized “whiteness” with the resulting unequal

distribution of resources among race groups (Bozalek, 1999). It separated children from their parents through policies that policed employment, education and housing (Amoateng, Makiwane, & Rama, 2004). In terms of employment, the majority of the jobs required a rural-urban migration which had severe impacts on family life, as men tended to leave women and children to seek work in urban areas. Once having found work they were not allowed to bring their families to live with them (Amoateng & Ritcher, 2007). Scholars have argued that the migrant labour system is the core factor responsible for the fracture and fragmentation of families in South Africa, a wound from which the country has yet to fully recover (Amoateng et al., 2004; Amoateng & Ritcher, 2007). It is argued that apartheid is the origin of the weakened family systems that we now see in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2011). Discriminatory policies have been long felt by many black South African families as they remain fractured by the past due to being the most disadvantaged by the system (Bozalek, 1999; Smit, 2001). As a result of an historical father absence due to apartheid, it might be argued that many men of today, not having had a consistent father figure, struggle to fit comfortably into the role of being a father (Mazembo et al., 2013). There is also the argument that for many reasons, one of which is the absence of a role model, many South African men do not take seriously the roles and responsibilities of being a father and have a diminished sense of responsibility to their offspring (Morrell, 2006).

2.2 ABSENT FATHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Absent fathers have been identified as a key social challenge by the South African Government (Mazembo et al., 2013). Both international and local research has associated father absence with negative outcomes (Allen & Daly, 2007). In South Africa, research on absent fathers has focused on understanding the prevalence as a social challenge within society, especially its negative impact on households in the communities and how interventions can be built to increase paternal involvement (Mavungu, 2013). Fathers have been known to be physically absent due to an array of reasons from migration, divorce, death and abandonment. Research in South Africa shows that an emotionally absent father, for whatever reason, is what affects children's development more than anything else (Morrell, 2006). More generally, Krohn and Bogan (2001) argue in their study that different causes (death, divorce and abandonment) of father absence affects daughters'

development differentially. Wassil-Grimm (1994) adds that how and why a father is absent will have an impact on the emotional and material outcome for the child. He argues that fathers who are absent due to divorce and abandonment results in daughters who tend to seek more attention from men (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). The inference is that a child who loses a father to divorce or abandonment struggles more with this absence than the child whose father is absent due to death, possibly because of the implication that they, the child, were insufficient to keep the father from departing. In South Africa, 45% of children under the age of 15 years in urban areas have absent fathers (Mazembo et al., 2013). Research conducted in South Africa on fathers and children shows that there is a decrease in the number of children who live with both of their biological parents and about 42% of children live with their mothers and extended family members (Franklin, Makiwane, & Makusha, 2015). This is the most common family type in the South African context (Mazembo et al., 2013). Research also shows that much of the time, the single parent tends to be the mother (Roman, 2011). A recent household survey shows that 55% of black rural children do not live with their fathers while 40% live with only their mother and 3% with only their father (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Richter et al., 2012).

2.3 FATHERS AND POVERTY

In developing nations, including South Africa, research (see Morrel, 2006, Ritcher et al., 2012). shows that poverty is very often a key cause and effect of father absence. As fathers head away from the home to seek employment, they are forced to focus their energies on provision rather than on emotional roles such as engaging and caring for their children (Makusha & Richter, 2015; Morrell, 2006). In more affluent contexts, access to resources may not be a factor and the father is seen to take on more nurturing and caring roles (Morrell, 2006, Ritcher et al., 2012). So far as poverty being an effect of an absent father, the argument is that two bread winners are better than one, and that men, in general, earn more than women. On either account, an absent father is seen to doom a family to a life of poverty (Makusha & Richter, 2015). Brody et al. (2002) suggest that the biggest problem facing single mother-headed households is poverty. Most research shows that single mother-headed households are three times more likely to be poor than dual parent-headed households (Buvinic & Gupta, 1997; Raniga & Ngcobo, 2014). However, in a study conducted

by Buvinic & Gupta (1997) they argued that single mother-headed households can be seen as disadvantaged, but that they should not always be associated with poverty. They suggested that the presence of single mother headed households may be due to other reasons such as class, economic means and individual choice (Buvinic & Gupta, 1997). Indirectly this suggestion undermines the position highlighted by Roman (2011) that most single mothers tend to be judged as having low self-esteem and are viewed as dysfunctional as well as being economically unstable. A mother may well have chosen to be single, and in a political climate in which women's earning power is rapidly increasing, a woman is able to adequately support her family on her own, which may in turn add to feelings of success and achievement rather than low self-esteem (England, 2004).

The above discussion dovetails well with the following argument: While the majority of research points to the negative effects of father absence with regards to child development (Loveline & Lohmann, 1987), there are a good number of studies (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Langa, 2012) which have looked at how social fathering (a practice in which uncles, grandparents and other male figures may fill the role of the paternal parent), may undermine the inevitability of an absent father impairing the normal development of the children. These studies seem to suggest that if there is adequate social fathering in the absence of the biological father or stepfather, a child may, in general, develop as well as a peer who has a present biological father (Makofane, 2015).

2.4 FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Recent studies in South Africa show that most research on the father-daughter relationship is mainly from a Western context and transporting these findings to a non-Western context has been questioned (Peyper et al., 2015). Few studies have emerged which focus on the father-daughter relationship in developing countries (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016; Makofane, 2015; Peyper et al., 2015). It is hoped that this research study will help to contribute to the sparse literature and provide relevant material upon which to base further studies in the future.

2.4.1 PSYCHOANALYTIC UNDERSTANDINGS AND WRITINGS

Historical understanding of fathers in psychoanalytic theories

Psychoanalytically speaking, Freud (1899) put much emphasis on the importance of the oedipal father but tended to weigh his theory more in terms of the boy child (Ahmed, 2012). He did posit some ideas around how the daughter's sexual identity is influenced by the father, but this was far less nuanced than his theory around the little boy and his Oedipus struggles (Khan & Haider, 2015). Lacan (1963) also emphasized what he termed the 'symbolic father' which he states is synonymous with the paternal function (Ahmed, 2012). The emphasis on the father in child development in psychoanalytic theory has followed an interesting trajectory. The early work in this genre of psychological understanding saw Freud highlight the importance of the Oedipal father for the development of gender identity and the super ego in the boy child (Ahmed, 2012). More contemporary psychoanalytic thinking suggests that the importance of the real, flesh and blood father in child development as the oedipal and symbolic fathers (See Davies & Eagle, 2013; Samuels, 1988).

With the waning of the Freudian star and the waxing of the theories of the likes of Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, the father became somewhat marginalised and the importance of the mother-infant dyad came to the fore. In recent times, the pendulum has swung somewhat back again with the once "forgotten father" now coming back to take up a position alongside the mother, as the "new father" (Jones, 2007). The label of the "new father" talks to the shift in gender roles in contemporary families wherein parental roles are far less distributed along gender lines with parents of both sexes sharing and engaging in parenting roles once attributed to only one of the sexes (Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002). Certainly, in more recent literature, the biological model of parenting has been challenged with the suggestion that it might be the role of an ungendered parent rather than the (male) father which is important in several important aspects of child development, regardless of whether the child is male or female (Hoffman, 2011; Morrell, 2006).

The Paternal Function

According to Davies & Eagle, (2013), the paternal function is defined as a set of functions, distinct from those traditionally performed by the primary caregiver, that can be performed by a caretaker of either gender. The role of the father and the paternal function have been concepts which have been unhelpfully conflated historically (Davies & Eagle, 2013). This, Davies and Eagle (2013) suggest that because the father has traditionally carried out many of these paternal functions. Their suggestion is that it might well be adequate in areas of separation, frustration tolerance, capacity to mentalise and ports of psychic safety, for there to be only a second caregiver and not necessarily a father. The areas mentioned above have been identified as crucial to healthy psychic development. Separation refers to an ability to facilitate a process of separating the infant from the early fused relationship with the mother (Davies & Eagle, 2013). This process begins the development of thought and symbolization for the infant which results in the capacity to mentalise; become aware of self and others' mental states (Davies & Eagle 2013). Frustration tolerance relates to affect management which is the ability to regulate various emotions and affects. Lastly, ports of psychic safety refer to 'ports' where the infant can escape to when the relationship with the mother feels hostile; physically and psychically (Davies & Eagle, 2013).

Davies and Eagle (2013) further argue that it may well be possible that the paternal function (as they call it, as opposed to the role of the father) might in fact be performed by a woman, and in some instances (for example the separating function) might not require a second parent at all, the mother and infant both being hardwired to separate on their own accord (Davies & Eagle, 2013). This seems relevant to hold in mind given the changing nature of family architecture with the once ubiquitous two parent, heterosexual parent couple no longer being the overwhelming majority (Hosegood & Timaeus, 2005). This line of thinking might be understood, in the context of this study, as suggesting that the absence of the father *per se* may not be as devastating for child development as historically argued, if indeed the mother, the grandmother or another second caregiver (of whatever gender) is able to provide aspects of the paternal function. It may well be the concomitant social conditions that accompany an absent father that impact the developing child. Within the South African context, given that paternal function is not limited to the biological father, the term 'fatherhood' is often used because it implies a more social role which can be carried

out by an individual who is not necessarily the biological father (Morrell, 2006). An example within the local context is 'social fathering' where other men such as uncles and grandfathers live with, care and provide for, the household (Morrell, 2006; Richter et al., 2012).

Emotional Development and Defence Mechanisms

Psychoanalytic studies have also explored how father absence impacts a child in terms of their cognitions and emotional well-beings as well as their development of defences (Jones, 2007). For example, father absence has been associated with regression in terms of psychosexual development in adolescents (Williamson, 2004). It is posited that an erotic element needs to be present between the father-daughter relationship, which is metaphoric rather than incestuous, in order for gender identity to develop, and additionally the mother needs to allow it (Williamson, 2004). A lack of attention, care and love in daughters with absent fathers was found to influence their emotional developments (Nielsen, 2007). In a study conducted by Nielsen (2006), it was found that daughters without fathers tend to lack self-esteem and confidence in relationships with others. Overall, research shows that daughters use various defence mechanisms to deal with father absence such as denial, regression, repression and avoidance (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). It was also found that there was a presence of separation anxiety and desire/identification for a lost object/male (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). This is seen by the way daughters attach strongly to the one parent, in this case the mother, but also how they have a longing for the other parent, the absent father.

Father Hunger

Father hunger is a term coined by Herzog (2001) which arose from his work treating twelve male toddlers whose night terrors were interpreted as a need for their absent father. It was also understood as the toddlers managing their aggression, and how they act out their desire for a father figure, indiscriminately with other male figures (Herzog, 2001). While Herzog (2001) acknowledges that "father hunger" is most apt for male children, he does suggest that it may also manifest in girls, although it might take on a different appearance. Garfield (2004) elaborates on this idea suggesting that very often such a longing may manifest as a "longing for a closer, more caretaking and collaborative relationship with a father" (Garfield, 2004, p. 38). She also notes from her clinical experience that women with

absent fathers often share a common “sugar daddy” fantasy of an idealised man entering their lives to “take care of them, and provide a life of affluence, freedom from stress and responsibility” (Garfield, 2004, p. 41). This quote strikingly suggests such women hearken back to a childhood relationship with a father who would protect them from the hardships of life. These women may well project this idealised father figure into the men they have relationships with. This clearly destructive practice would impede the development of healthy relationships with men.

Indeed, Herzog (2001) proposes that women with father hunger often find themselves chasing “phallic” men (read: men they view as powerful and idealise) and find themselves in relationships where they tend to be passive and compliant. The ‘father’ has historically been viewed as the object that disrupts the connection between the mother and child and introduces the child to the world (Garfield, 2004). In the case of father absence, the girl is left longing for the “freedom” such a father offers and what occurs is that “the daughter is left disappointed and angry which further develops into feelings of powerlessness and idealization” (Garfield, 2004, p. 42). These ideas are at one with other less psychoanalytically inflected ideas.

2.5 FATHERING AND EFFECTS ON DAUGHTERS

Traditionally, the role of the father has been viewed as the provider, protector and impregnator (Diamond, 1995). This is often based on the notion of masculinity which is a male’s identity, that is socially constructed, meaning it changes over time and in different contexts (Morrell, 2006). With time, the role of the father has evolved to encapsulate more maternal-like roles including emotional involvement, caring and nurturing roles (Banchefsky & Park, 2016; Yarwood, 2011). This has given rise to what is termed the “new father” (Banchefsky & Park, 2016).

It is also important to comment at this point that the overwhelming proportion of the literature appears to discuss the importance of the father with regard to the son’s development. In South Africa, there are many studies examining the father-son relationship (Langa, 2012; Makofane, 2015; Ritcher, 2006), but one is faced with some difficulty when looking for literature that focuses on the father-daughter relationship (Bowling & Werner-

Wilson, 2000), (and those that do are often from a Western perspective). The trend of focussing on the father-son relationship, it might be argued, follow on from Freud's (1899) relative neglect of the father-daughter relationship. While there is another argument (Way & Gillman, 2000) which suggests there is a cultural difference in parenting around the gender of the parent and the gender of the child, more specifically, fathers raise sons and mothers raise daughters, this too might be an artefact of Freud's (1899) gender bias.

Many studies have highlighted the lack of research on the father-daughter relationship despite there being evidence that this relationship is crucial to in psychological development (Bowling & Werner-Wilson, 2000). Looking more specifically at the development difficulties that have been associated with problems related to fathering, there is a substantial amount of research that delves into the importance of the father during child development (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2007; Jones, 2007; Williamson, 2004). Rohner and Veneziano (2011) emphasize that the father plays a significant role in child development. In their study where they statistically controlled for mother love, they argue that a father's love is associated with the healthy development of a child (Rohner & Veneziano, 2011). Their study showed that a father's love can be linked to gender role development for sons (Rohner & Veneziano, 2011).

In the case of girls, the literature seems to suggest that there are three main areas in which the absence of a father may manifest, namely: academic performance, self-esteem and sexual identity (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Lesch & Scheffler, 2016; Makusha & Richter, 2015; Peacock et al, 2008; Peyper, de Klerk, & Spies, 2015; Richter et al., 2012). These shall be briefly discussed.

2.5.1 ACADEMIC

The absence of the father has been associated with negative outcomes specifically for adolescents such as risky sexual behaviour, adjustment difficulties as well as low academic performance. A study by East et al. (2007) explored the lived experiences of young women growing up in an environment with an absent father. The results showed that daughters with absent fathers do not perform well in mathematics (East et al., 2007). Studies also show that females with absent fathers often have diminished cognitive development, poor school performance, lower test scores and lower IQ scores (Wassil-Grimm, 1994). In Krohn

and Bogan's (2001) study, they examined the effects of absent fathers on females in college. They reported that when father absence was due to divorce, abandonment or separation, it was more detrimental to daughters' academic performances than when it was due to death (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). As mentioned in the earlier discussion, Krohn and Bogan (2001) argue that daughters who lost their fathers through death understand that their father did not abandon them, while for those who lose their father through divorce or abandonment, an element of anger is present which impacts their academic performance (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). While seemingly contradictory, they also add that this anger and related emotions might also serve to produce overachievers who strive to perform and attain higher qualifications because they need a sense of control, believing that if they accomplish more, their fathers will accept them (Krohn and Bogan, 2001). Nielsen (2014) also argues that at an adolescent level, if fathers remain engaged, daughters' academic achievements increase. The better the relationship between the father and daughter, the better the academic performance (Nielsen, 2014). Lesch and Scheffler (2016), in their study, confirm the finding that fathers appear to promote academic success in their daughters.

2.5.2 SELF-ESTEEM AND OTHER EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

Several studies report that children with absent fathers have low self-esteem (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016; Peyper, de Klerk, & Spies, 2015; Wineburgh, 2000). Specifically, children with divorced parents have been said to have significantly lower self-esteem due to thinking they did something wrong for one of their parents to leave (Wineburgh, 2000). The children place value with regards to their self-worth based on the involvement of the father. (Wineburgh, 2000). Fathers are seen as providing a sense of protection which assists in developing of self-esteem and deters from risky behaviours such as teen pregnancy (Lesch & Scheffler, 2016). Krohn and Bogan (2011) add that the sense of security and stability arising from a 'good-enough' present father results in daughters having higher self-esteem and confidence.

2.5.3 SEXUAL IDENTITY

Many studies discuss the connection between daughters with absent fathers and their challenges with heterosexual relationships (Bowling & Werner-Wilson, 2000). Indeed, the

evidence suggests that daughters learn from their fathers, how to relate to men in terms of dating and marriage, by fathers providing important knowledge and information such as sexual education (Bowling & Werner-Wilson, 2000). It has been postulated that father absence impacts and influences the development of young girls in the sense that daughters who had better rapport and communication with their father on issues of sex and relationships were found to be less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2007). The findings showed that daughters with absent fathers developed feelings of mistrust towards men, engaged in high-risk sexual practices when there was no communication in the father-daughter relationship (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2007).

Krohn and Bogan (2011) appear to concur with these findings by suggesting that minimal contact with a father during adolescence results in difficulties forming relationships, the daughters in the study attributed the difficulty to the absence of a male-female relationship upon which they can rely on. It is also argued that daughters learn their gender identity and sexuality through patterns of interaction with the father (Wineburgh, 2000). Nielsen, (2006) adds that the lack of communication from a father can cause lack of clarity on sexual matters. In a study by Wineburgh (2000), father absence was found to deter daughters from developing a feminine identity which further resulted in poor heterosexual relationships in the future. Williamson (2014) also argues that a woman's sexuality is impacted by her childhood experiences of being fathered. From her study, she suggests that there needs to have been an erotic element in the relationship with the father which is metaphoric rather than incestuous (Williamson, 2014).

Daughters without fathers might also be seen as idealizing the absent father (Wineburgh, 2000). This can result in various emotions, such as disappointment and anger which become displaced onto other men in their relationships (Wineburgh, 2000). It is seen as a way of expressing their feelings around their sense of loss/abandonment (Wineburgh, 2000). Research studies also speak to the notion that father absence can lead to delayed identification sex-role identification, the ability to align with patterns of behaviour associated with either sex (Wineburgh, 2000).

CONCLUSION

There is some contestation around the importance to be given to the presence or absence of the father in child development. The bulk of the literature tends to suggest a strong correlation between the healthy development of children and the presence of the father. It is important to note that this reference to the father assumes a relatively healthy and benign father: there is no arguing that there are many instances of a present father who was psychologically unwell and inflicted significant harm on the development of his children. Contemporary research (see Harris, 2002; Perlesz, 2005) however, has challenged this notion with studies reporting positive outcomes with regards to children raised with absent fathers. Studies have shown that many young women develop adequate self-esteem, gain academic qualifications and form trusting intimate relationships despite the absence of a father (East et al., 2007). East et al. (2007) highlight that while there is longing for the absent father and associated feelings of rejection and abandonment present in such daughters, there is a certain robustness in the daughter, her mother and her environment which may rather result in a sense of resilience, empowerment and independence.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This section delves into the frame in which the research study was conducted. This chapter will discuss the overall research design and paradigm that informs the study. It will provide information regarding the criteria for the participant group and sampling strategies. It shall speak to the process and instruments that will be utilised with regards to collecting the data. Additionally, it will highlight and describe the chosen approach towards analysis of the data. This chapter will also discuss ethical considerations in relation to data collection and analysis of the study.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

For this research study, the nature of the design is qualitative. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to gain a “rich and contextual description and understanding of phenomena” (Roberts & Ilardi, 2005, p. 7). The research study aimed to explore how the paternal function is understood by daughters in the absence of the father, their understandings of its performance or non-performance and the potential impact of the absent father on daughters. A qualitative approach will be the best method as it will allow the researcher to capture the participants experiences, thoughts and emotions. A key element to a qualitative approach is that it allows for interaction with the phenomena in a natural setting, as well as provides a deeper understanding from the participant’s perspective (Roberts & Ilardi, 2005). Within the qualitative paradigm, an exploratory research approach was chosen. Exploratory research refers to gaining a better understanding with regards to depth of the phenomenon rather than through a solution to the problem (Dudovskiy, 2016). It is important to keep in mind that objectivity cannot be achieved in qualitative research studies as the researcher is an active participant in the research process who co-constructs meaning (Finlay and Gough, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial that the researcher is aware of themselves with regards to their ideas, opinions, positionalities and worldviews as they can influence how the data is interpreted. This was achieved through active self-reflexivity and the use of reflexive journal.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participant group for this study consisted of seven black, urban (residing in the larger Johannesburg area), educated (University level), working-middle class women; aged between 19 and 25 years. The women self-identified as having lost their fathers through death, divorce and abandonment. This age group was chosen to avoid interviewing minors, and to also access information and feelings around the paternal function in the family of origin, before memories and emotions began to decay. Demographic information is provided in the table below.

Participants	Age	Father Status
Participant 1 (P1)	23	Divorce
Participant 2 (P2)	22	Death
Participant 3 (P3)	21	Divorce
Participant 4 (P4)	22	Divorce
Participant 5 (P5)	24	Abandonment
Participant 6 (P6)	19	Abandonment
Participant 7 (P7)	25	Abandonment

The sampling strategy for this research study was purposive and convenience sampling. This type of sampling strategy is based on the aims of study which were to explore an understanding of the paternal function in the absence of the father. Additionally, daughters were selected given the accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Babbie, 2016). This strategy was coupled with snowballing sampling. Snowball sampling is utilised when the proposed participant group proves difficult to access. It is the process of asking initial participants to refer to similar people who would be interested in participating in the study (Babbie, 2016).

Therefore, for the study, daughters from single mother-headed households were found from nearby urban communities through word of mouth and social networks. Once they were identified, they were approached and the purpose and aims of the research were explained and they were then invited to participate in the study. This process continued until such time as a willing participant was found. The interviewer and participant then negotiated an appropriate location and time to conduct the interview. Upon completion of each interview, the participant was asked to suggest similar people who they felt met the criteria and who could also be potentially interviewed.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A). Kajornboon, (2005) states that interviews are a way to gain information from individuals to get a better understanding of their thoughts, ideas and feelings about something with which they are familiar. This is aligned with the research study because it is concerned with understanding how the daughters understand the paternal function in the absence of the father, their understanding of its performance or non-performance and performed and the potential impact of an absent father.

The interview schedule for this research was based on two pillars. In the first instance relevant material from the extant literature was used as a basis. Secondly, the interview schedule was informed by the aims of the research study which were to explore, from the daughters' perspectives, an understanding of the paternal function in the absence of the father. While the interview schedule listed a set of questions, these represented the main ideas that were to be explored and the interviewer did ask other questions to elicit further information as a function of the responses given by participants. The questions were not asked in the order they appeared in the interview schedule, and the order of questions differed between participants. The type of questions asked included: Did you feel growing up with only your mother impacted you? What does the role of the father mean to you? Did you experience the role of the father in your household? The interviews were also audio recorded after the required consent to record the participant was acquired. The data from the interviews were then transcribed by the researcher and used for the analysis.

3.4 SELF- REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is an emerging and evolving concept within the social sciences realm (Finlay & Gough, 2003). More attention is being paid to the importance of reflexivity within research studies. It is about "critical self-reflection of the ways in which the researcher's social background, assumptions and positioning and behaviour may impact on the research process" (Finlay and Gough, 2003, p. 17). Hence it paramount to critically self- reflect throughout the research process especially when using an interpretive thematic analysis where possible latent themes are being identified and interpreted.

The reflections regarding this research study can be understood on various levels; personal, academic and social. On a personal level, the researcher's positionality as a young, urban and educated woman meant that they identified with the participants selected for the study. This identification served the research in a positive manner; it assisted in building rapport and connecting with the participants. However, it was important to think about differences between the researcher and the participants, which was that the researcher comes from a nuclear family with a present father. The researcher was very aware of the possible bias of othering single mother-headed structures and unwittingly associating this structure with a lack in the interpretations. Additionally, it was also very important to engage with the question of whether the researcher had purposefully chosen participants with very present mothers, so that the effects of the absent fathers were almost not as felt. This perhaps unconscious behaviour by the researcher was brought to light, and engagement with the supervisor which assisted in ensuring that the findings were not swayed by the researcher's unknowing choice of participants.

Furthermore, from an academic perspective, the researcher was quite cognisant of their views, opinions and arguments going into the research process. One of their core arguments was that fathers/paternal functionary plays a crucial role in families and that aspects of the paternal function can be performed by any individual who is a caretaker, which could have influenced the interpretations as the researcher would be more inclined to see findings that supported these interpretations. The researcher was able to guard against personal biases as a researcher by ensuring they questioned held assumptions, immersed themselves in contemporary literature which challenged and elaborated diverse views and perspectives on the paternal function, as well as heavily shaped how they interpreted the participants' experiences.

Lastly, socially engaging with the participants, academic peers, supervisor and other scholars allowed for an ongoing process of reflection for this research study. This process, which was documented in a reflective journal, allowed the researcher to note down possible held views and assumptions as well as become aware when these views were driving the entire research process from the data collection to analysis section. Overall, becoming aware of the researcher's bias and positionality in relation to the study allowed them to counter its

effects. The process of inputting entries into the journal every step of the way guarded against one-sided views as well as making broad statements without sufficient evidence.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

In terms of the data analysis for this research study, the qualitative analytic method used is a form of thematic analysis known as interpretive thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78) a thematic analysis is a method that is used “to provide a rich and detailed account of data”. It does this by identifying, analysing and reporting patterns, known as themes, found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of a thematic analysis is described by Braun and Clarke (2006) in six phases which were used for this research. The phases are well described and regularly enunciated, but for the sake of completeness are briefly mentioned here as follows: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interpretive thematic analysis moves away from simply identifying surface level themes to asking: what do these themes mean in relation to the broader context and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006)? This study will consider what these themes mean using psychoanalytic theory with a focus on the unconscious. These approaches align well together as they both strive to move beyond the from the accounts of experiences and further gain a deeper understanding of what motivates people (Willig, 2017).

It important to discuss the standards of rigour with regards to qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The standards of rigour for qualitative research strives for what is termed as ‘trustworthiness’ to ensure the analysis is accurate and objective (Flick, 1998; Shenton, 2004). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness of a study can be checked using the following criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which will be discussed in relation to the study.

Credibility refers to “the question of how congruent are the findings with reality” (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Triangulation, discussions with the supervisor and reflections were some of the strategies utilised in the research study to ensure credibility. Triangulation refers to the

combination of different methods, groups of people and data sources (Flick, 1998). This was ensured through discussions with the supervisor which assisted in contributing new perspectives and ideas as well as reducing the researchers' bias (Shenton, 2004). Both the researcher and supervisor were involved in reading the transcripts, analysis and arriving at themes and interpretations agreed upon. The researcher also engaged in a reflexive process by keeping a journal throughout the whole research process to monitor and engage with their own subjectivities.

Moving on to the second criteria, transferability is defined as the ability for the results to be applied in other situations (Shenton, 2004). Given that the research study was mainly exploratory, transferability was not a priority. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) bring forward the argument that it is the researcher's responsibility that sufficient contextual information is provided to allow the reader to decide on the transferability of the study. Therefore, the contextual information of the research study was given in detail.

According to Shenton (2004, p.72), the "qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity is known as confirmability". This simply refers to a degree of neutrality in the research study's findings; they need to be based on the participants' responses and not the researcher's bias or subjectivity (Shenton, 2004). To ensure confirmability, the researcher and the eyes of a second person (triangulation) - the research supervisor, used to increase the chances of an unbiased reading of the data. Additionally, the use of a reflective journal was used to keep the researcher aware of internal biases around the research.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), if the previous criteria of trustworthiness are ensured, it is likely that the dependability of this research is also ensured. Dependability refers to the ability that another researcher working in the same paradigm would be able to arrive at the same finding (Shenton, 2004).

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONNS

Ethical considerations are paramount to any research study that is to be conducted (Babbie, 2016). They are crucial and essential because they help build support for research but also

promote moral and social values such as social responsibility (Resnik, 2015). Given that father absence is a sensitive issue, the participants were made aware of the availability of post-interview psychological support available at the Wits Emthojeni Center.

In terms of participation, all participants were briefed using a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) which outlined that participation was voluntary, as well as their right to withdraw from the study prior to the write up. They were informed that all the information collected would be stored in secure password protected folders on the researcher's laptop. The researcher also explained that the research data would be used for analysis and write up of the academic research report as well as any future use such as possible local/international conferences and journal publications. They were also made aware that upon request, once the research is completed and submitted, the researcher will provide the participants with a one-page summary of the conclusions.

Informed consent was obtained through written consent forms (see Appendix C). These consent forms consisted of; consent to partake in the study and consent to record the interview (see Appendix D). The purpose and aims of the study were outlined before delving into ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality was guaranteed through signing of the consent forms by the participants. It is a key ethical consideration in research studies, and it is essential that the identities and information of the participants are protected. This was ensured by using pseudonyms to remove any identifying information linked to the participant's responses. Essentially, participants were also made aware that direct quotes from the interview may be used in the research, but a pseudonym will be assigned. Additionally, participants were informed that only the researcher and researcher's supervisor will have access to the transcripts. In terms of anonymity, although the researcher will be able to link identifying information to the participant responses during the interview phase, anonymity is guaranteed in terms of reporting the results of the study. Lastly, the data for the research will be not be destroyed in accordance to the ethics committee and could be used for further research on the topic in the future, which was made known to participants. The data shall be stored in password protected folders for future use as well.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the analysis of the data collected will be presented along with a discussion of these findings and their relationship to the literature. To recap, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven daughters with absent fathers raised in single mother-headed households. Once the data was collected, it was transcribed verbatim by the researcher and upon completion of transcription, the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) on thematic analysis were used, beginning with re-reading of the interview transcripts, followed by coding and eventually settling on key themes. For a theme to be significant, the theme had to occur in at least four of the seven interview transcripts. This process yielded quite a number of significant themes, many of which though, seemed to collapse naturally under one of six key themes which were identified. The six themes have been titled as follows:

- a. Normal Childhood?
- b. Admiration of the Mother
- c. The Paternal Function: Male or Second Parent?
- d. Impact of the Absent Father
 - a. Identity
 - b. Relationships with Men
- e. Absent Father as Replaceable
- f. Longing for a Father

After the description of a theme, each will be further discussed using an interpretive thematic analysis approach which goes beyond just identifying themes, but further explores latent themes, meanings and broader links (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willig, 2012). Hence this chapter is a combination of the presentation of the findings as well as discussion. It will conclude with a summary as well as draw links back to the research questions. Before introducing the first theme, it is important to note that in line with ethical considerations, the participants will be kept anonymous and referred to as Participant 1-7 (P1-P7). For the analysis of the data, quotations from the participants will be presented as supporting evidence.

4.1 NORMAL CHILDHOOD?

A remarkable finding in the research study was how all seven of the participants described their childhood experience as normal, stable and adequate. This was a significant finding because it showed how daughters in single mother-headed households can both experience and perceive (which includes the operation of any unconscious defences) their childhood as normal despite an absent father. Evidence for this theme can be seen in the following quotes:

“It was ok. I lived a good childhood. I don’t think there was anything I was restricted from” (P2)

“ummm..I would say I had a pretty happy childhood, it was the four of us and majority of the time we lived in a flat and then a complex so always surrounded by neighbours and yeah, it was just the four of us... so pretty good” (P4)

Both Participant 2 and 4 highlighted that they experienced their childhood as “happy” and “good” despite an absent father. They expressed their childhood experiences as one that was without lack and fairly full of other elements such as extended family and access to a substantial household.

“Yeah...except for the times when they were fighting it was, it was normal” (P5)

“it was life...whether it was they had been someone else or not, it was the way you grew up, the way it is...you did not really know better so it was not...it was normal” (P6)

In the case of P5, although she experienced the process of her father being periodically present and absent, she still reported experiencing it as normal. For P6, it almost seemed that she was indifferent to the absence of her father and the lived experience that she engaged with and had chosen to engage with was one of normalcy and stability. It is important to note, though, her statement “you did not really know better” suggesting that while at the time there may not have been a feeling of loss, retrospectively there may well

be a feeling of having missed out. Nevertheless these quotes are quite fascinating given that the literature argues that most daughters experience emotional hurt and significant challenges when raised without their father (Guardia, Nelson, & Lertora, 2014). Research indicates that society continues to perceive single mother-headed households as “damaged” or “lacking” and hence this perception translates into a negative view of the daughter’s childhood (Nash, 1999). In reading the literature, it appears that a considerable number of articles and studies pathologise the single mother-headed household. Most highlight the negative effects of growing up with an absent father and this literature tends to be pushed into the front line of research around fathers rather than exploring the possible positive effects of an absent father (Nash, 1999). However, the findings in the shared quotations, correlate with a study by McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider (2013) which showed that school children with absent fathers described their childhood as stable rather than unstable

Although the participants seemed to respond that they felt their childhood was normal and adequate, it appeared that unconsciously there could have been more occurring. Initially, the findings seemed to indicate that daughters’ experiences of father absence lead to a normal childhood, further nuances emerged that pointed to possible denial or avoidance of emotional hurt due to father absence. A sense of denial could be detected in the narratives of some participants, which could allude to something more occurring unconsciously than simply what was expressed.

“I mean I was not the only person with an absent father so if I maybe was...it would hurt...like have negative...but I had friends who were also raised by single parents and cousins and things like that so it was not a big deal in that sense...it was not as bad as...if it would have been...an isolated case” (P1)

“At first, it’s fun...because you know growing up... but growing up with a single mum, I would not say its bad cause I learnt a lot from that...soo” (P3)

“I’d like to think I had a very nice childhood even though he wasn’t around. Like I don’t think I ever noticed. Well I noticed, but you know kids are very materialistic, so I got very nice things all the times because he’d travel [absent father but would visit infrequently during early years] and come back with nice things and yeah” (P5)

In the above quotes one is privy to the methods a daughter might use to normalise her experience and avoid acknowledging the possible pain of the loss. P1, for example, points to the fact that she was not the only one without a father, the implication being that not having a father is normal, and if it is normal it surely cannot be painful. On the other hand, P3 seemed to not really have engaged with the effects of father absence and rather focused on the presence of the mother and how it influenced her childhood. It is important to note this focus seemed to be present particularly for participants who had minimal contact with their father before his total absence. Finally, other participants such as P5 engaged with the possible impact of the absent father in her childhood but focused on or remembered the little involvement the father brought when he was intermittently present. For example, both P5 and P6 had their fathers intermittently in their lives and the memories shared were pleasant as “he would bring presents” (P5) or “he bought me an encyclopaedia for my birthday” (P2). The literature supports these findings as it speaks to the complexities around the effects of the loss of the father during childhood and how coping mechanisms and defences translate into adulthood from adolescence (Guardia et al., 2014).

These diverse views from the participants place their experiences of a ‘normal childhood’ in question. For example, it appeared that no matter what the participants said about their childhoods, whether they portrayed it as good, interesting or normal, it was invariably followed by a justification that seemed like a coping strategy or mechanism sheltering them from engaging with deeper feelings towards their absent father. Underneath their expression of their childhood as ‘normal’, a range of defences were employed by the participants against acknowledging the pain of the absent father. This can be seen in the following quotes:

“It was ok I lived a good childhood. I don’t think there was anything I was restricted from” (P2)

“ummm...I would say I had a pretty happy childhood, it was the four of us and majority of the time we lived in a flat and then a complex so always surrounded by neighbours and yeah, it was just the four of us.. so pretty good” (P4)

“it was great! People always find that funny, but I always say I had the absolute best childhood. Absolute” (P7)

Each participant portrayed a different defence despite their perception of a ‘normal’ childhood. P2 brief and direct responses could indicate an element of avoidance and repression of the pain of the absent father and focusing on the present parent which was a mother. This is evident in that P2 seemed to be avoiding engaging in depth with the topic of her childhood growing up with her father and shifting the narrative to discussing her relationship with her mother. The result of avoidance is usually a repression of the thoughts, emotions around an experience in childhood in order to protect the child (Freud, 1899); Corey, 2001). These coping mechanisms appear to have allowed the participant to detach from psychological pain and allow her to perceive her childhood as normal and stable. Other participants like P4 chose to utilise other defence mechanisms such as rationalization, which justifying experiences in a logical manner such as deciding to focus on elements that were present despite the absence of the father (Corey 2001). For P7, she appears to utilise a combination of denial and use of humour to cope with the absence of the father. Each defence mechanism, as Freud (1899) would term them, assisted the daughters at a young age to deal with the absence the father. It was interesting how evident this was in the findings that despite the surface level responses given, it was possible to see the more latent themes of loss. Krohn and Bogan (2001) argue that daughters utilise various defence mechanisms in order to cope with the emotional hurt of their fathers’ absences. The key defences are “denial and avoidance of feelings associated with the loss of a father” (Krohn & Bogan, 2011, p. 3). These defences work to mask underlying feelings that a daughter may potentially feel due to her father’s absence.

In concluding this theme, it is noteworthy that while all of the participants portrayed their childhood as ‘normal’, most of the participants used pejorative labels for their fathers during the interview. Such labels included ‘lazy(P7)’, ‘unbothered’(P5) and ‘self-absorbed

(P4)'. It might be that this tendency is indicative of two things: the first being defences against the possible "non-normality" of their childhood; secondly, by construing their fathers in a negative light, the daughters may be attempting to mitigate the loss they feel by undermining the value of the lost father. Literature posits that daughters who are raised without fathers have been known to endure trauma and significant emotional/psychological hurt (Allen & Daly, 2007). As seen above, the participants' responses on a surface level seemed to indicate there was no presence of emotional hurt (normal childhood?) given their defences, however further unpacking showed the presence of emotional/psychological hurt which aligns with literature. The argument put across by Krohn and Bogan (2011) is that the father enriches a daughter's life by introducing stability - a secure base which ultimately leads to normal childhood development and the absence of it is deleterious to the child's development (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Although most impact on daughters is seen to be negative in terms of academic, social and psychological development, daughters have been known to succeed despite father absence (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). This is linked to the experiences of the participants in this study of their childhood as possibly being normal, as illustrated in the above quotes. It appears that there may be evidence that the paternal function could have been performed by the mother (or another extended family member). It also showed how the daughters with absent fathers unconsciously used defence mechanisms in order to protect themselves. Critically thinking beyond, it would be important to consider if the participants were perhaps protecting their mothers from the criticism, they felt might accrue to her if they shared more of their struggle arising from an absent father. Moving forward, the next theme shall focus on the mother.

4.2 ADMIRATION OF THE MOTHER

An analysis of the transcripts suggested a level of admiration by the participants towards their mothers. The findings also revealed a strong sense of gratitude by the participants for their mothers. The mother-daughter relationship was described as protective, nurturing and supportive by most of the daughters in the research study. Six of the seven participants interviewed indicated their strong adoration and admiration for their mothers. This can be seen in the following quotes:

“I thought she was amazing and I still do actually, I mean she went over and above, you know what I mean...for having four kids and doing it all on your own, my mum was the Mum that would go to all our netball matches, our debating things at school. She helped at the tuck shop, she had a job, she was a Mum, you know what I mean” (P1)

*“I appreciated her more...umm just as an individual, I think she is a very strong woman, she went through all of that, she took care of all of us...umm and she stayed *laughs* that was that and she’s always been around” (P4)*

“she was everything, a mother and father...very affectionate but strong also...umm after we left, she started working again, she was the breadwinner, the one who would take us out...yeah she became it [everything]” (P6)

Each daughter expressed the immense admiration they have for their mothers, specifically around their abilities to take on multiple roles and functions for them. The quote from P6 seems to suggest quite overtly that her mother was able to take over much of the paternal function, from the daughters’ perspective. This ties up with the literature in which Davies and Eagle (2013) suggest that aspects of the paternal function (and the maternal function) might well be gender invariant, and if a single mother has the capacity in terms of energy and time, she may well be able to fulfil certain functions traditionally attributed to the father. P1 highlights all significant childhood activities that she remembers her mother attending and alludes to the notion of presence as being a very important function. While both P1 and P6 expressed viewing their mothers as strong, P4 appears to emphasise the notion of the presence of the mother.

Each daughter indicated how their mother was able to take on all the duties and roles and how they admired these characteristics; strong (P4), independent (P1) and hard-working (P5) that they saw in their mother. The participants appeared to exhibit this immense amount of gratitude towards their mothers for everything they had been able to provide for them. Evidence for this can be seen in the following quotes:

“It always been one of those because of the situation that we found ourselves in, or how we have been raised and we have to work harder than our counterparts, not to disappoint my mum and not to waste her money, you know school and things like that...so it was one of those pressures, I mean for us” (P1)

“like if you see your mum one day crying and like feeling so helpless and the next day she’s making money any way and how she can, you may not appreciate it when you are a 10-year-old kid, but when you are 21 and you think about how she was paying school fees to get you out of that school it will motivate you to get her out of that situation” (P5)

*“like ten years old, okay.. here is your vision board, what do you wanna do in five years.. and at ten years old, I am like I want go play..*laughs* but it has helped me become a critical person like I would say if I could become half of the woman my mother is, I would have succeeded in life that's how much I value her and her opinion and our relationship...all of that” (P7)*

P1 expressed feeling pressure growing up with a single mother that she highly admired, feeling that she had to emulate her mother qualities (strong) in order to not disappoint her. On the other hand, P5 depicts viewing her mother’s qualities (hard- working) as motivation to work hard for a better life for herself. While at other times, like in the case of P7, her mother’s attitudes, behaviours and achievements inspired her to want to aspire to be like her mother (identification). Hence it seems that it was two-fold, a sense of gratitude for the mother, but also aspiration. These characteristics and qualities that daughters see in their mothers become heavily internalised into their own characters and identities. This is seen in how strongly they identified with their mothers by likening their characteristics to ones they had or aspired to have. Literature points to the significance of the mother-daughter relationship and how it impacts identity development (Smith, Mullis, & Hill, 1995). Smith et al. (1995) argue that mothers reproduce [character traits] themselves in the process of raising their daughters through social interactions. This means that as mothers raise their daughters through social interactions, they transfer their own traits which are part of their identity to their daughters. This appeared to be evident in single mother-headed households

as well. The admiration for their mothers turns into immense gratitude because they strive very hard not to disappoint their mothers because of all they have provided for them. This was seen in the following quote:

“how we have been raised and we have to work harder than our counterparts, not to disappoint my mum and not to waste her money, you know school and things like that” (P1)

P1 felt that even though her mother reassured her that she could make mistakes, she still saw how difficult it was for her mother and how being strong and working hard (like her mother) was strongly desired in order to not disappoint her mother. There was a sense that this need to not disappoint was linked to the admiration and gratitude felt towards the mother for her presence, hard work and parenting and not wanting to see the efforts of the mother amount to nothing. The results also revealed that as much as the majority of the daughters expressed admiration for their mothers, there was also the feeling that their mothers could be over protective at times, even to the point that they felt smothered and almost suffocated by this. This is evident in the quote below:

“it's a thing of she will know where I am, she knows what I am doing, I always have to be in communication with her, tell her where I am, how long I will be... if I will be home late. She wants to be like my phone she's like my phone” (P6)

Other daughters perceived their mother's concern and dedication to them as over protecting such as P6 who expresses an almost lack of differentiation between her and her mother. This is spoken immensely in the literature on the attachment between the mother and the daughter. Primarily psychoanalysts argue that the father (paternal function) acts to separate this attachment (Smith et al., 1995) Literature argues that the paternal role is dual in that it separates the mother-child relationship to make way for a father-mother relationship and father-daughter relationship (Smith et al., 1995). Once these two relationships were not present, the daughters seemed to take the role of protecting the mother, sort of replacing the father role for the mother. Hence it can be hypothesized that

given the absent father, mothers' attachments to their daughters can become symbiotic which daughters can perceive as over protectiveness. This strong attachment to the mother can be seen in the following quotes:

"Yeah we are, it's kind of like we're best friends really. I think it's also because my mum herself hasn't grown up yet. She's quite youthful so it's easy to relate to her as well" (P5)

*"she wants to be my best friend and am always like leave me alone, we are not friends you are my mother *laughs*. but at the same time in some ways I would say that she is my closest friend of course" (P7)*

Both P5 and P7 echo the sentiment of how they perceive their mothers as their best friends. For P5, it does not seem to be a problem, this blur of roles, because she sees it as being able to relate better, while for P7 it seems like she would prefer not to blur the lines between the roles played in the household. This was very interesting because it shows the nuances of daughters' relationships in single mother-headed households, that although most daughters adore their mothers' presence and qualities, they also seem to yearn for less of her at times, indicating that the mother can be an overbearing figure that requires a balance, which most participants alluded to would be the presence of another parent - a father.

4.3 THE PATERNAL FUNCTION: MALE OR SECOND PARENT?

As discussed in the literature review, the paternal function might be seen as a non-gendered function. The implication of this idea is that the second parent does not necessarily have to be a male figure, certainly for some aspects of the paternal function (see Davies & Eagle, 2013) However, traditionally it was always seen as being performed by a man, the biological father (Baron, 2006). This discrepancy also arose in the interviews. Six of the seven participants shared their understandings of the paternal function in a single mother-headed household. Some of the daughters alluded to the idea that the paternal function could only be performed by a male figure while others leaned towards the presence of a (non-gendered) second parent who performed roles distinct from maternal roles. This will be

further discussed and understood by interpreting a selection of quotations taken from the interviews. In the first two quotes that follow below, the participants are lamenting the absence of their fathers as alternate attachment figures or 'ports of psychic safety' during conflict with their mothers (Davies & Eagle, 2013).

"like just be there for us cause you know sometimes with both parents if you don't get along with your Mum, say you have a fight with your Mum obviously your dad maybe,, your dad is going to step in...because you're not mad at your dad, his gonna show you the reasons...you gonna listen to what he has to say and his gonna be like your wrong...1...2...3 so you have to apologize to your Mum and stuff. so maybe if he was there he would do the same...when I didn't get along with my Mum or something" (P2)

"my Mum when he left, because now I did not have my cool dad and when my mother was stressing me I would run to my father" (P4)

While both P2 and P4 are saying something about the paternal function being linked to 'the father' in their minds, they are not making any direct link to the maleness of the provider of the paternal function. One might interpret their statements as being based on traditional family and parental roles, but the absence of any mention of the importance of the father's maleness, leads to the possible inference that they attach no importance to that characteristic in these particular instances. In the quote below, P6 is referring to a largely similar function, but does not overtly equate this with gender, understanding this function or role as simply about being "not mother".

"I think just not having another person there was difficult cause you know human people are emotional beings so their partners usually level them out, they speak about certain things, they grow in a certain way, they change decisions and what not, so if my mother is being unreasonable and she's being emotional, that's it, there's nobody there that's going to calm her down" (P6)

Each of the participants (P2, P4 and P6) highlighted their understanding of the paternal function as the presence of a second parent. P2 spoke about the presence of another parent

as almost a mediator or balance to the mother. P4 also conceptualized it as the second parent who could offer a different view or perspective. Lastly, P6 also implied the presence of a second parent in relation to the mother, having another person to deal with the single parent. In each of the participants' responses, what seemed to be implied was the paternal function as the presence of a second parent, who could in a sense co-parent and be there for the child as well as the mother. Contrary to the above participants', non-gendered associations to the paternal function, other participants leaned towards understanding the paternal function as one linked to maleness. Some participants linked certain behaviour as being performed solely by a male figure which implied their understandings of the paternal function as gendered. Often the paternal function is conflated with the role of the father in the literature (Davies & Eagle, 2013) and hence it was not surprising to hear the participants respond in ways such as:

“for my mum it was a bit difficult to ask her that because she’s also a woman, she’s not in a man’s position to give me a man’s perspective [regarding relationships]” (P2)

“it’s just that I have such a strong mother that umm I didn’t need that balance. I didn’t need that other person, and also umm I did have like other male figures in my life that I could look up to if I needed another male figure in my life” (P5)

“umm they should be there..our backbones to, teach us the practicalities of life, if it’s how to fix a car, like I have always wanted to know how to fix a car...I figured a man will teach. I wanna know like how to fix a TV, I wanna know that I can do that work type of thing” (P6)

P2 highlighted her mother's inability to fully understand some of her issues because they were linked to issues, she felt only a male figure would be able to give accurate information. This indicates that daughter with absent fathers understood the paternal function as having certain gender elements that were crucial to their development particularly in terms of relating with a male figure. P5 also provided reasons for a second parent but indicating specifically the need for them to be male, in order to balance the behaviour of the mother. Interestingly, P5 may inadvertently be voicing her ideas around the dispersibility of the father. She claims that her mother was 'strong' and hence there was no need for a male

figure to provide that. This quotation also simultaneously highlights, and undermines, the stereotypical thinking that men are the ‘strong’ ones. P6 describes stereotypical tasks such as fixing a car or a TV that are commonly associated with a male figure which implies the unique role of the father as a male. These descriptions of certain ‘manly’ tasks were common as most of the participants stated that handy work was a key role of the father and that male figures were traditionally seen performing these tasks. It can thus be hypothesized that their understanding of the paternal function is based on gender.

Lacan (1963), a psychoanalyst, wrote intensively about the nature of the paternal function, highlighting in his work that the father is merely a representative of the paternal function and hence it is crucial to distinguish between the two (Baron, 2006). In addition, Fink (2009) argues that the “paternal function is not only distinct from biological fatherhood, but it need not be played by a man at all” (Fink, 2009, p.79). This is the non-gendered view of the paternal function which argues that gender is not an essential factor to the performance of the paternal function. It has led to an understanding of the paternal function that detaches the function itself from the person who performs the function (male figure-the father) (Davies & Eagle, 2013). This view is said to have emerged due to changes in society such as the rise of feminism, and changes in household dynamics such as the rise of single parent families and same sex couples (Davies & Eagle, 2013). However, there remain authors who beg to differ, and take on a gendered stance in terms of the paternal function, arguing that maleness cannot be detached from the concept (Diamond, 1995). The findings highlighted in this theme suggest a mixed view on whether the paternal function requires maleness in addition to thirdness, or just thirdness. It was also evident that there was a mix in experiences with regards to longing for the other parent. One might argue that P5 is less convinced of the necessity of a male father, while some of the other participants suggest that the absence of a male father does have a negative impact. This leads us into the next theme, namely the impact of the absent father.

4.4 IMPACT OF AN ABSENT FATHER

This theme will discuss the participants’ views regarding the extent to which they feel their fathers’ absences impacted them. The data revealed that some participants felt there was

an impact on their developments while others were more tentative in acknowledging a link between their absent fathers and aspects of themselves. For this section, although literature points to the manner in which the father becomes absent as having specific effects on daughters, it was found that despite the various ways (divorce, death or abandonment), they all expressed similar effects (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). An analysis of the findings showed that the absence of the father had an impact in the following areas: identity and relationships with men. These will be discussed further as sub themes.

4.4.1 IDENTITY

The development of the self is said to occur through socialization, with the institution of family and households being key spaces for the development of an identity (Ogle & Damhorst, 2003). Studies by Krohn, 2001; Mazembo et al., 2013; Wineburg, 2000 report the negative psychological, cognitive and social impacts father absence has on a child's development. It is striking that five out of the seven participants stated clearly that, contrary to popular belief, and at some odds with the literature, the absence of their fathers has impacted their identity positively. Indeed, the following quotes illustrate this:

"I think it made me stronger...and it made me kinda work harder because I kinda knew what was on the line, you know what I mean" (P1)

"it has shaped me into the person I am today. that experience and what forced me to go through...it's made me stronger person" (P4)

P1 and P4 both share how the absence of their father impacted their identity positively in terms of pushing or forcing them to work harder than their counterparts as well as to experience different hardships compared to a nuclear family setup. Apart from strength and becoming hard working, three of the participants described how their identity was positively shaped by how they saw their mother approach and deal with situations. This is seen in the quotes below.

"...because with my Mum I saw that as a woman you don't really need a man, cause she has three kids so she managed to raise her all on her own without depending on anyone so that taught me you don't really need a man in your life, you can do

everything on your own so I basically learnt like independence from her and that if life knocks you down you can get back up and everything. I feel like am strong today because of her, I learnt from her "(P3)

"I think it's made me less naïve. I think it's made me stronger. Ummm, I think stronger in the sense that ...I'm just not the person that when things happen or come my way I just cower away and things like that. I face things a lot more now. And I'm more able to handle difficult times. Like to problem solve and find solutions rather than ... go and cry away, because she didn't do that you know... I've learnt to figure things out alone" (P5)

"I mean after a while, I have a common thing that I say, when I accomplish things and it's probably things that are... let's say it's physically asserting, a male it would be easier for him to do this job, we in school ...I knocked down shelves and what not...they climb walls and use hammers, that I finish and am tired and am sweaty and am like who needs a man right?" (P6)

Each of the participants seemed to draw strongly on their mothers' behaviours and attitudes in terms of developing their sense of self. The findings show positive outcomes in terms of the daughters' identities. P3 highlights how she learnt independence as well as resilience from viewing her mother's experience of raising children and not having a man. Similarly, P5 also appears to allude to the development of independence and resilience, along with courage and problem-solving abilities which she was able to learn as a result of having an absent father. P6's experience can be linked to P1's in terms of independence, but also via the notion of not needing a man which seems to stem from their mothers. Upon further probing in the interview, the independence stated by P3 and P6 appeared to be construed by them as a direct result of growing up in a single mother-headed household. The majority of the past studies (Mazembo et al., 2013) conducted on the impact of an absent father on children shows that effects on daughters are mainly negative. Even the sparse research (Nielsen, 2006) that focuses on daughters, argues that father absence has detrimental effects. At face value, the findings of this research do not seem to agree with these past studies, being more supportive of contemporary studies which argue that

daughters can experience a normal childhood and their identity formation can occur without detrimental outcomes (Goh, 2011; Perlesz, 2005). However, at a deeper level, there does seem to be evidence of negative consequences of an absent father. In both P3's and P6's quotations above, but particularly in P6's, there is a hostile attack on men – "Who needs a man right?" Such hostile and rejecting exclamations, it might be argued, cover over an underlying pain which drains psychic energy from productive endeavours to the end of defending against inner pain and conflict (Jones, 2007).

4.4.2 RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN

Fathers have been said to teach their daughters about men (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). In particular, it is suggested that a daughter's future intimate relationships are impacted by the relationship they have with their father (Guardia, Nelson, & Lertora, 2014). This is mainly because the father-daughter relationship acts a model for the daughters on how to relate, receive love and trust men in future intimate relationships (Guardia et al., 2014; Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Out of all the areas impacted by an absent father, the impact of the daughters' abilities to form stable intimate relationships is the most frequently written about (Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Nielsen, 2006). It was thus not surprising that five of the seven participants spoke about how the absence of their fathers negatively impacted their relationships with men. This was a significant theme, not only because it is widely written about in the literature (Guardia et al., 2014; Krohn & Brogan, 2001), but also by virtue of its occurrence within the South African context. Evidence for this is given below:

"I think [my father's absence] definitely did have an impact on me, I mean even just...I have seen it with my...how I relate to men is very different. I don't necessarily trust them umm.."(P4)

"... I think it [my father's absence] has affected me with relationships. For relationships, its... I know that it has taken me a really long time to get to a point where I can actually say okay I am willing to get into a relationship" (P5)

“my brother would just hug me and I would just stand there I crawl into myself cause I don't know what to do, somebody would do something and I would just act a certain way, I didn't know how to respond type of thing in terms of presence, it wasn't something that I was used to” (P6)

“So, I have tended to get into relationships where men have financially relied on me and who may not treat me the best way but in some cases, I have accepted that ill treatment because I didn't want them to leave. And I definitely, definitely see that stemming from the lack of a father” (P7)

P4 was able to directly state the link between having an absent father and her inability to trust the men she related to; this seemed to span not only into intimate relationships but also casual. Similarly, the acknowledgment by P5 of the impact of her absent father on her relationships with men was also evident; she seemed to show a level of discomfort when she had to relate to men in an intimate way. Struggling with physical intimacy with a man was also implied by P6. P7 was the only participant who spoke about a specific romantic relationship and the trends she had noticed within herself and how she could associate her difficulties to her absent father. Most of the participants interviewed expressed being in relationships or having been in relationships and struggling to maintain their relationships mainly due to issues of trust. Specifically, P7 spoke about her fear of abandonment as she highlighted noticing herself staying in relationships that were not fulfilling but yet not wanting to leave, ostensibly to avoid the feeling of being abandoned, alone and bereft of a longing for a relationship with a male figure. This might well be interpreted as a ghost from the nursery in the sense of her absent father leaving her, thus she arranges her relationships with men so that she is not left by them.

Participants were also clear that their struggles to engage easily with men were a result of there not being a father-daughter relationship on which to model female-male intimacy and interaction. Indeed, the following quotes show how daughters felt the presence of father and father-daughter relationship was valuable in terms of learning to form intimate relationships with men.

"... it's one of the first you know male relationships that they have so they should set a good example, should be consistent and stuff to their daughters because of that and ultimately how your father treats your mother, that's the first relationship you see so that's kinda what you think of men.."(P1)

"I think the father is always the first one I would go to ask for advice like what sort of guys should I look out for and what sort of guys should I keep as friends for future reference and all, yeah I think father figures are there for mainly for that reason because you know as a woman, you think as a woman, as a man you think as a man, so yeah "(P2)

"it's limited me..for sure with my mother she's a very lovable person but I was also trying so hard to be like my father.. that love was not a thing that I accepted so easily now so I just got used to her loving nature but anybody else outside of that it was a whole different story so males I never I don't know.. I tried with my father I tried for his affection and that was also a fail so anybody else I wasn't as forthcoming" (P6)

P1 spoke about the mother-father relationship as the first significant relationship a child sees in terms of intimate relationships. It acts as a guide for daughters in the future of how intimate relationships should be. Given the nature of the absence of the father, a daughter sees the absence of this relationship as influencing how she may approach or relate in future intimate relationships. P2 echoes the importance of a father-daughter relationship in terms of the role a father plays in teaching a daughter how to relate to men. The relationship between the father and daughters acts as the first relationship to which daughters use to guide their future relationships but given the absence, literature indicates that daughters tend to struggle due to the lack of this concrete relationship (Nielsen, 2006). P6 speaks to the fear of rejection and abandonment and the lack of understanding that daughters have in terms of loving someone who could possibly leave like their fathers. Daughters with absent fathers tend to be very tentative in relationships because of fear of a loss of the male figure (Nielsen, 2007). The findings under this sub-theme agree strongly with the literature that suggests that the absence of the father denies the daughters the

father-daughter relationship which is foundational for learning to trust men, accept love and be intimate with men (Wassil-Grimm, 1994).

4.5 ABSENT FATHER AS REPLACEABLE?

While several of the participants made comments such as “Who needs a man, right?” (see earlier discussion), most participants in the research did highlight what they felt was the unique and important roles that a father might play in a person’s life. Furthermore, the majority of them highlighted that they had alternative paternal figures who played a significant paternal role in their lives. Six out the seven participants stated that there was a presence of a social father who played the role of the absent father. Very often other male family members such as older brothers, uncles or grandparents were seen as filling, in some way, the void left by the absent father. This ties to the literature which has highlighted how, in the absence of the biological father, extended family and community males can fulfil that role (see for example Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Langa, 2012). The social father which the participants are referring to above is a very common phenomenon in South African society, given the high rate of absent fathers in this context (Makofane, 2015). In the quote below, P1 goes so far as to suggest that the biological father is not the only potential father figure:

“so with our uncles and things like that so as much as we have not our father in our lives, we have always had father figures around. Whether it is my uncle, like my brother, my brother way older than me, his like 38 or something so...”(P1)

With reference to a father’s role in promoting healthy male-female relationships in later life, P2 felt that, in the absence of her father, there was hope because her uncle was able to add value in this area:

“mainly my uncle, my mum’s elder brother cause he’s the one whenever we’d meet, it would just be randomly sit down and tell us hey if you were to meet a guy this is.... You do one, two, three, four” (P2)

On the topic of who might fulfil the paternal function in the absence of the father, the literature also discusses the possibility that not all paternal functioning is gendered (Davies

& Eagle, 2013; Samuels, 1988) and that in some instances, the mother herself, as well as other women can fill the role traditionally filled by the father. This was reflected by P2 who spoke about her nanny, Sarah (refers to as her aunt), whom was always been present since the loss of her father. Given that her mother was busy with work, she felt that her nanny was able to replace her father in certain aspects

“Sarah moved with us from Kenya. She’s also been a mother to us so I would also go to her for advice if I didn’t want to go to my mum, or if I felt my mum would take it a certain way. So I think both of them being here also filled the gap of my father not being there” (P2)

P7’s contribution to the matter appears to combine a reflection on how alternate male figures may provide some relief from the loss of one’s father, bookended with a denial of what the literature suggests, namely the ever-present longing for a father, or father hunger (Garfield, 2004) a topic which will be taken up in theme 6:

“But it wasn’t ever that I wanted a dad... yeah. Cause I had that, my grandfather before he passed away he was practically... he was my.. he was my father figure. And my mum’s brothers, his brothers... like I’ve had a lot of male figures in my life that I didn’t really.. I don’t feel like I missed out on anything” (P7)

The contributions from the participants above might lead to the idea that the father can be replaced by another male figure. It is also important to bear in mind that the longing for the father is a more existential, symbolically infused longing: it is a hunger for the father that loves, protects, nurtures, and does all the ‘good things’ fathers are held to do (Garfield, 2004). This distinction from the girl’s real father is important, for there may not be a longing for the real father, but rather an idealised father-figure. Indeed, in this research the majority of participants felt their fathers were not capable of fathering adequately and there appeared to be little hunger for the real father.

4.6 LONGING FOR A FATHER

In discussing, the above themes, reference has been made to occasions when it felt as if the participants were employing defences (for example denial, rationalisation) against the pain of not having a present father. Even though the participants may have portrayed and expressed themselves as strong, independent women, there was still often an apparent underlying wish for a present father. Indeed, six out of the seven participants expressed having a desire for a father.

“obviously you feel those times when its Father’s Day or something and then you’re like oh yeah that’s missing but it wasn’t a worry... just like you know in school when they have those events of your father-daughter this and the races and all this, of course you know I missed out on that. Other than that everything was ok”. (P1)

“the only time I really think about what it could have been like is like on Father’s Day and when people put up these statuses of how their fathers are always there for them, taking care of them and everything that’s what when I think about that sort of value” (P4)

P1’s sharing on this matter is a good example of how longing and denial are plaited together. Here reference to the school setting suggests a pain of having to bear being fatherless when many of those around her were perhaps not. P4, while also reflecting on how Father’s Day provokes introspection (and possibly pain) around her absent father, also points to how social media such as Facebook intrudes into this challenging area of her life, creating an awareness of her own status as being fatherless.

P6 poignantly, in the quote below, articulates how, despite being ‘tired’ of fathers, and wanting to banish the prospect from her mind, there is always a hope, a hope that her father will return and be all that she longs for. She is also saying something about no matter how much she tries not to think about this pain, it is always present in some small way.

“after that I was tired of fathers so I just figured that I didn't need them, they always be like, they will forever be this slight hope just like at the back of my corner, you're not going to wish for but it'll just be there if it happened you don't mind, that a father will just be there...but you don't dwell about it, you don't think on it, it's just that..but yeah” (P6)

This same longing for her father, and the pain of him not being there for her is easily identifiable in P7's thoughts:

“When I got to about 18, I used to think it would be nice? But I was like maybe he'll come and he'll buy me a car...Or you know, he'll give me extra pocket money because he feels so bad about leaving me all these years” (P7)

The reference to material gifts such as the car and the extra pocket money seems worthy of comment. It might be suggested that P7 is trying to put into more concrete words the less tangible aspects of her father that she has missed. It could be understood literally as a desire for a car or perhaps an unconscious childhood desire to sit on her fathers' lap and pretend she is driving an imaginary car. The reference to the extra money “because he feels so bad about leaving me”, seems a projection of P7's deep pain she has felt at being abandoned by him, hoping that he will find it inside himself and know the heartache she has been left with. These complex feelings of the participants' longings for the absent father, or for an idealised father-figure have been referred to as ‘father hunger’ (Wineburgh, 2000).

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will conclude and summarize the main findings of the research study. It will consider and highlight theoretical and practical implications that arose from the study. It will also highlight the limitations of the research study followed by offering recommendations for future studies.

5.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a theoretical perspective, this research provided evidence for challenging the traditional hypotheses and assumptions of psychoanalytic concepts in relation to the changing contexts, non-traditional households such as single-mother households. It also demonstrated how gender was understood historically and has been used to conceptualise concepts such as the paternal function.

On a practical level, this research demonstrated that clinicians within in therapeutic practice, can better begin to understand and tailor their approaches in a specific manner in order to better assist clients with absent fathers. For example, family therapies can focus on the emotional challenges faced by dynamic between the children and mother. Additionally, therapist can specifically target their therapeutic interventions based on their understanding of the paternal function.

Given the increasing studies on fathers and sons in the South African context, this research on focus on daughters and father absence adds dynamically to the body of literature. Furthermore, given the increase in single mother headed households, this research provides evidence that can assist with policy change and interventions within the socio-economic context.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

There were several limitations of the research study that were also noted. The sample for this study consisted of daughters with absent father, the manner in which the father absence occurred was specified into three categories; death, abandonment and divorce. These categories were used as inclusion criteria to ensure experiences of father absence could be captured. Furthermore, the participants had to self-identify as having their father either physically, emotionally or psychologically absent. This inclusion criteria appears to have opened up the study to several more permutations that indeed for example the father being intermittently in the lives of the daughters. This occurrence created another layer of complexity to account especially in analysis of data.

On a more practical level, the target participant group may have been over defined leading to possible exclusion bias and resulting in challenges acquiring participants given the limited participants who matched the selection criteria. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for openness in the conversation, however at times led to ambiguous and lengthy responses which deviated from the intended topic of focus.

Furthermore, majority the participants were urban, educated and working-middle class. These contextual factors influenced the type of responses that arose in the study. It also limiting because it does not account for young women of different educational backgrounds, socioeconomic status and geographical location.

5.3 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with limitations of the study discussed above, it is recommended that more attention be paid to sampling and the limits it can place on the findings. It would be important to conduct future studies with a more diverse participant group in terms of education level, socioeconomic status and geographical location. This would be more in line with the exploratory approach taken by this research study. It would also be beneficial to decide on types of father absence based on frequency in the South African context or specified location such as non-resident fathers, undisclosed and absent due to incarceration.

In South Africa, father absence has been identified a social problem, but more research studies need to be conducted in order to get a better understanding, to develop appropriate policies and interventions. The study demonstrated that the young women were impacted emotional and psychological due to an absent father. This is crucial understanding that would inform policy change and interventions by government and organizations to mitigate the effects which result in social challenges with the household.

Future studies should focus on challenging the understandings of absent fathers and young women in various contexts in South Africa. It would be beneficial to grow the body of knowledge within the African context given that majority of the literature is based in the Western context.

Furthermore, it is suggested that given the findings on the mixed view of the paternal function in terms of maleness and thirddness, it would be interesting to further explore how the absence of a second parent can be offset by a strong, robust caregiver and what support might be given to mothers in such situations to encourage their independence and resilience.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This study focused on the experiences of daughters with absent fathers. In particular, it was interested in how the paternal function is understood by daughters in the absence of the father. Furthermore, it sought to explore their understanding of the performance or non-performance of the paternal function in the absence of a father and potential impact of an absent father on daughters.

The research study found that a significant number of the participants experienced and perceived their childhoods as 'normal'. Although, most of the participants shared that their childhoods were 'normal', an analysis of the interviews suggested that they could have been utilising defence mechanisms such as denial, rationalisation and repression in order to cope with the hurt and loss of their father. This was contrary to the literature (Mazembo et al., 2013; Ritcher et al., 2012) which linked absence of fathers to a dysfunctional childhood. It

was also interesting to note how the participants constructed their fathers in a negative light as another way of minimizing their losses.

On a positive note, an interesting finding was the evidence suggesting that each participant both admired and seemingly internalised their mother's attitudes and traits in terms of independence, resilience and strength. As the researcher discovered, out of the participant group of young women chosen, all had quite present and competent mothers which begs the question of whether the participants may have responded differently if their mothers were less robust, resilient and independent. Nevertheless, this particular group does appear to convey the idea that, while there needs to be a process of simultaneously mourning and tolerating of father hunger, the presence of a strong, independent and resilient mother or environment can mitigate, to some extent, some of the negative outcomes of an absent father.

Furthermore, it emerged that some of the participants viewed the paternal function as being a function of maleness (gendered) while others viewed it as more of a function of being a second parent (ungendered). This split in views was interesting in so far as it reflected a split in the literature with some authors (Way & Gillman, 2000) arguing that the paternal function is gendered and others that it is not. Similarly, the participants appeared to share mixed views regarding the debates which implies that more in-depth work and research is required to settle on an answer.

The research study also tapped into the potential impact of an absent father on daughters. The findings of this research showed that all participants felt an impact due to the absence of the father, the consensus being that all the participants felt that a father-daughter relationship would have provided the grounds for identity formation and future relationships with men. Surprisingly, most of the participants indicated that the absence of the father had impacted them positively, how the absence motivated them to pursue their goals and pursuits, as well as how having very resilient and driven mothers strongly influenced them. This was contrary to literature (Mazembo et al., 2013) which suggested negative impacts such as academic failure, low self-esteem and confidence. However, some participants made mention of challenges in terms of relationships with men, which they

attributed to a lack of a father-daughter relationship. They indicated that the relationship acted as model and guide for future intimate relationships as it tapped into elements of intimacy and trust. This finding was found to be synonymous with the literature (Bowling & Werner-Wilson, 2000).

Moving forward, the study also revealed that almost all participants found that they had alternative figures who played a significant paternal role in their lives. They spoke to these figures being male figures in the immediate and extended family or community. An interesting finding was that one of the participants also alluded to other female figures in the household playing a paternal role. However, overall the participants still had a longing for their 'real father' although the alternative figures were able to have significant impact. This links well with the idea of social fathering spoken about in the literature (Holborn & Eddy, 2011) but also to with the previous finding around parts of the paternal function being gendered and ungendered.

Lastly, linked to the main finding of the participants' experiences of their childhoods as "normal", another key finding found was a desire (masked under defences) for a father. This was evident through the research process, as well as within and across themes. It was clear that the participants all seemed to have an idealised father figure and had to navigate complex feelings of hurt and pain, but also longing and desire. This speaks to the complexity of the daughters' experiences in relation to father absence. It also ties in well with the concept of father hunger described in the literature (Herzog, 2001)

APPENDIX

a. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Tell me a little about yourself?
 - a. Your age, occupation/education, family dynamics
 - b. Tell me a about your childhood (growing up)
 - c. What your favourite memory of your childhood?
2. From your family dynamics
 - a. What is the nature of the relationship with your mother?
 - b. Growing up, how has it been? Close? Distance?
 - c. Has it changed growing up?
3. Do you think growing up with only your mother impacted your childhood?
 - a. Do you think it has impacted you? Past your childhood?
 - b. Do you ever feel like it was significant? Like there was an absence? Or was it normal?
4. What were/are some of the interesting/unique things that you got to experience growing up with your mother as the head of the household?
5. What were/ are some of challenges/ difficulties growing up with only your mother
 - a. What do you think some of the challenges could be?
6. Sons is associated with father? Daughter associated with mother. When there is absence of father, the impact is usually seen as negative in terms of their masculinity and various other things. What do you think is the impact on daughter?

Shifting to thinking and discussing the absent father in relation to single mother headed household.

7. At what age, did your father stop being presence?
 - a. How did you father stop being present? Emotionally, physically, financially?
8. Do you think not growing up with a father had on impact on you? Over the years?
 - a. If so, how? Socially, gender, academics, confidence
 - b. If no, why?
9. What does the role of the father mean to you?
 - a. Do you have any expectations of what a father is supposed to do?
 - b. What do you think the role of a father is?
10. Have you experienced the role of the father within your household given your father wasn't there?
 - a. Was there someone who performed the role of the father?
 - b. If so, how was it?
 - c. Do you feel your mother took on some of the role of the father?
11. What do you think might have been different if you had grown up with a father?
12. I have asked your questions around the presence of your mother and the absence of your father, but you gave me different answers. Why do you think that is?
13. Do you think growing in a household without a father has a negative connotation?
14. Do you think society expectations have influenced/impacted how you possibly feel about growing in a single mother headed household?
 - a. If so to what extent?

Thank you so much for your time.

b. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER



PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Hello

My name is Gloria Njeri Kamau. Currently, I am Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand studying Community Based Counselling. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct a research report. My research is about how daughters experience growing up in a single mother headed household and the impact of the absent father.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Kindly note that participation will involve being interviewed by me. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Everything we speak about and discuss during the interview will remain confidential. The interview will be last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The interview will be audio recorded and only I and my supervisor will have access to the recordings. The transcripts and audio recordings will be kept in password protected folders on my laptop.

In terms of confidentiality, this will be maintained through the assignment of a pseudonym within the research report for your information. With regards to anonymity, this will be guaranteed in terms of all the results and written report. Direct quotes may be used in the research report but no identifiable information will be used. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the right to refrain from answering any questions should you wish to do so. Please find attached my contact details as well as my supervisors should you have any further questions.

Before beginning the interview, I will need you to carefully read through and sign these two consent forms. These forms just confirm that you are aware of everything that we have discussed concerning confidentiality, privacy and consent to being recorded.

Yours sincerely,

Gloria Njeri Kamau

Student-0798070488

gloria.njeri@gmail.com

Dr Nick Davies

Supervisor – 011 717 4520

Nick.Davies@wits.ac.za

c. INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION



PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

I, _____ consent to being interviewed by **Gloria Njeri Kamau**, for her study around daughters experiences of single mother headed household and the impact of the absent father.

Please note the following;

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- I may refrain from answering any questions.
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time.
- All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research report.
- If I am quoted in the research report, a pseudonym will be used.
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report.
- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of the degree, Masters in Community Based Counselling.
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

d. INFORMED CONSENT FOR RECORDING



PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

I, _____ give my consent for my interview with **Gloria Njeri** Kamau to be audio recorded for her study. I understand that:

- The audio recordings will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the interviewer.
- The transcripts will not be seen by anyone other than the interviewer and research's supervisor.
- The audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in password protected folders on the researcher's laptop.
- Direct quotes may be used within the research report.
- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by a pseudonym.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

e. ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/17/002 IH

PROJECT TITLE:

Daughters and the paternal function in the absence of the father

INVESTIGATORS

Kamau Gloria

DEPARTMENT

Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

06/06/17

DECISION OF COMMITTEE*

Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 06 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON



(Dr Hugo Canham)

cc Supervisor:

Mr Nick Davies Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and one copy returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 1 (P floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

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