

# **Young Men's Perceptions of Mother's Influence in their Development of a Masculine Identity**

Ngoakwana Nkaka Modubi: MDBNGO002

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town

November 2017



Supervisor: Doctor Mandisa Malinga

Word Count: 10225

Abstract: [233]

Main Body: [9992]

## PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is using another's work and pretending that it is one's own.
2. I have used the American Psychological Association (APA) as the convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to- and quotation in this essay/report/project/... from the work or works of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.
3. This essay/report/project... is my own work.
4. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Plagiarism Declaration.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Construction of Masculinity.....	6-7
Research on Single Mothers.....	7-8
Understanding the role of fathers.....	8-10
The influence of single mothers on their son’s identities.....	10-11
Research Aim and Objectives.....	12
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Research Design.....	12
Theoretical Framework.....	12-13
Participants and Sampling Procedure.....	13-14
Data Collection.....	14
Semi-structured interviews.....	14-16
Procedure.....	16
Data Analysis.....	16
Thematic Analysis.....	16-17
Reflexivity.....	17
<b>Ethical Considerations.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Consent and Confidentiality .....	18
Risk and Benefits for participants.....	18
Debriefing.....	18
<b>Analysis and Discussion.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Mothers Influence.....	19
The Young men’s relationship with their mothers.....	19-21
The young men’s engagement with femininity.....	21-23
The role of other female figures.....	23-24
Respect: A certain place for a boy child.....	24-26

Role Models in the young men’s live.....	26-7
Institutionalization of masculinity in schools.....	28-29
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Summary and Conclusion.....	30-31
<b>Reference List.....</b>	<b>32-37</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: Informed Consent Form .....</b>	<b>38-39</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: Debrief Form to take home.....</b>	<b>41</b>

## ABSTRACT

Female-headed single parent households are a global phenomenon. The role single mothers in South Africa play in raising son's has received little scholarly attention. Moreover, the role of women in female-headed single parent households and their influence on their son's masculine identity has not been well explored and was almost non-existent. With that in mind, the aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of young men, and their mother's involvement in their development of a masculine identity. The participants were ten black men between 18 and 30 who were purposefully sampled from the University of Cape Town and raised in female-headed single-parent households. A qualitative research methodology was employed with data collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews. The findings showed that the young men appreciated their mother's role in their development of a masculine identity. The young men also seemed to have had a good relationship with their mothers, which encouraged them to be strong independent men. The role models in their lives was another important factor for a healthy development of a masculinity. Though the generalizability is limited by the design of the research, these results may contribute to the body of literature in family research on the role single mothers and lesbian mothers raising boys have on their son's development of a masculine identity.

*Keywords:* female-headed-single mother households; single mothers; young black men; masculinity development; masculine identity.

## **Introduction**

Traditionally, men have been regarded as prominent figures for a boy's development of a masculine identity. This is due to the field of family research's historically and almost exclusive focus on the impact fathers have on children's development and functioning (Garbarino, 1999). This notion has fostered the implicit assumption that the mother-child relationship should only be through primary caregiving and little impact on a children's development more especially, a boy child's development of a masculine identity. Historically, much psychological research has investigated the father-son relationship, while largely neglecting the relationship between mothers and their son's. Female-headed single mother households have been regarded as particularly prominent within the South African context as global rates of single motherhood in the country are alarmingly high (Delany, Jehoma, & Lake, 2016). This comes in light of a report that 40% of children in South Africa are living with their biological mother without a father (Delany et al., 2016). Some dynamics responsible for this high rate of single motherhood include divorce, mortality of fathers, marital separation, fathers that are in a migratory system or termination of a cohabiting relationship (Bojuwoye & Sylvester, 2012; Doherty & Craft, 2011). In light of this high rate of single motherhood, it has been observed in various parts of the world that mothers are able to raise their son's without an involved father. However, within a South African context, there remains limited research on young black men that have been raised in female-headed-single mother households.

### **The Construction Masculinity**

Researchers have reported that there is no single form of masculinity that is found everywhere (Connell, 1996). This is because of different cultures and periods in history, which influence and shape the construction of masculinity (Connell, 1996). Masculinity is not equivalent to a man but it is concerned with the position of a man in a gender order in society (Connell & Connell, 2000). For the purpose of this paper, masculinity is defined as a pattern of practise by which people, more especially, men, engage that position (Connell & Connell, 2000). The study of men and their masculinity was brought upon by the social construction of sexuality and intimacy that feminist and scholars had developed (Kimmel, 1987). There is ample research by scholar that there are multiple forms of masculinities. Different cultures depending on the context, make heroes of soldiers consequently regarding violence as the ultimate test of masculinity (Connell, 1996). Other cultures make heroes of peacemakers, thus avoidance of violence seen as a test of masculinity (Connell, 1996). Others regard

homosexuality as incompatible with 'true masculinity' (Connell, 1996). There are some forms of masculinities that are more honored than others and some actively socially marginalised, for example, masculinities of disempowered ethnic minorities (Connell, 1996). A hegemonic masculinity is a dominant form of masculinity that exists in particular cultures (Connell, & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is held in high regard due to its dominant effect in society as a result of its reflection of emotional invulnerability, sexual dominance, toughness, as well as avoidance of anything deemed feminine (Adams, 2008).

In the 1960's, Britain experienced a minor panic due to the belief that schools were destroying boy culture because of the prevalence of female teachers and the feminine content of elementary education (Connell, 1996). Today, this notion has lost its place as feminism now influences public thinking with the aim of unsettling traditional ideas about men and masculinity (Connell, 1996). The underlying concept of masculinity is often argued to be flawed, in that it tends to emphasize issues of power and domination as a necessary guide for understanding men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Studies have discovered that when boys are raised by women, the mother facilitates at least some aspects of her son's development of a masculine identity (Biller, 1969).

### **Research on Single Mothers**

Single mothers world-wide represent an ever-growing prevalent phenomenon. This proportion of single mothers are found across all racial and socio-economic groups (Thompson & Gongla, 1983). Single mothers are often labelled by society as lacking the ability to raise a boy child alone. This is evident from literature that reported black males raised in single mother households as overrepresented and typically associating with negative behavioural outcomes (Noguera, 2003). This additionally adds onto the stereotype that categorise single mothers as a parent incapable of influencing a boy's development of a masculine identity (Roman, 2011). These stereotypes are evident from reports that boys who grow up with an absent father figure are deprived of an exposure to a male role model (Lewis & Lamb, 2004).

The above-mentioned viewpoints are problematic as Biller (1969) reported that a maternal figure is able to contribute positively towards various facets of a boy's masculine identity. This was evident from a study on single mothers and household chores. From the study it was found that, single mothers teach their boy's practical life skills through

household chores which instil a level of responsibility and better preparation for adult life (Berridge & Romich, 2011).

### **Understanding the role of fathers**

A child, especially a boy, is reported to need his father's love and care as a father's presence is said to enhance emotional, psychosocial as well as masculine development (Garbarino, 1999; Mandara, Murray, & Joyner, 2005). Fathers are as such, understood as having a unique and vital role to play in a child's development especially for boys who are believed to need a male role model in order to establish a masculine gender identity (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). Boys who grow up without fathers are often reported to be vulnerable to drug abuse and experience emotional disturbances that include aggression and gang involvement (Ramphela, 2002). McLoyd (1998) has reported that families without fathers are likely to be poor however, the negative effects of poverty rather than the absence of a father, lead to negative developmental outcomes. Contrastingly, it is also true that 75% of children from divorced families living with single mothers exhibit no adverse effects (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). The size of the destructive effects is considerably reduced when the upbringing and adjustment of the children are controlled (Hetherington, et al., 1998).

Given the large percentage of predominantly single-mother-headed households, the prominence of fathers in their children's development is questionable (Mandara et al., 2005). Literature on absent fathers argues that the impact of the physical absence of a father, during his son's developmental stages, is often overestimated (Smit, 2004). Researchers that examined the effect of paternal absence on masculine gender role development found that boys who were raised without their fathers were passive and exhibited more feminine and fewer masculine traits like competitive and rough play (Mandara et al., 2005). Furthermore, a study on African American and European American boys with absent fathers found that the boys were less aggressive and participated less in physical games (Hetherington et al., 1998). Although the presence of a father is said to be important in its own right, researchers have found that men and women have a somewhat different contribution and approach to parenting children (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Studies on the competency of mothers and fathers and their parenting functions reported that although mothers are associated with caretaking and fathers with play, we cannot assume that fathers are incapable of child care (Levy, 1943). It is also worth noting



that mothers have been reported to be a bit more hands-on with regards to parenting than the fathers, making them more responsive, in tune, and aware of each child's characteristics and needs (Levy, 1943). The perception that boys acquire masculinity only with a father or a male figure in the household presumes that the only relationship a mother and her son should have, is through her performing primary parenting duties, which include feeding, dressing and comforting them (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Dufur, 1998; Drexler & Gross, 2005).

Biblarz and Stacey (2010) has demonstrated that they do not support this assumption as they reported that mothers are capable of more than primary parenting duties during the period in which a boy transitions from a toddler into a young man. Hays (1996) supported this statement, arguing that a mother contributes to her children's development through sound discipline and encouraging them to be of moral grounding which in turn yields successful, well-grounded and upstanding children.

A believed lack of masculine identity among boys is often blamed on single motherhood as a result of not having a father around. This is a problem as the assumption is that a boy should have a male role model in order to be in a position to establish a masculine gender identity. Drexler and Gross (2005), reported on a study that examined junior and elementary age sons of lesbian mothers and families that had both a mother and a father in San Francisco. It explored how boys grow up constructing their own masculinity without a masculine model (Drexler & Gross, 2005). From the findings, it was reported that the boys from the two groups showed no significant difference in moral reasoning and were able to develop a moral character without the presence of a father figure (Drexler & Gross, 2005). It was also reported that single mothers fostered independence in their sons, encouraging them to do whatever they could by themselves as well as encouraging free expression of a broad range of feelings (Drexler & Gross, 2005).

Scholars have shown evidence that boys who grow up in female-headed-single mother households do not present with underdeveloped masculine identities. This is evident from a research study by Drexler and Gross (2005) which found that boys who grew up in a female-headed-single mother household had an innate ability to get what they needed to establish a masculine identity. Similarly, a study examining male adolescents raised in single mother families found that despite parental loss and economic hardship, the adolescents were competent and positive in the face of adversity (Leung, 2017). The reason for this was

because they adapted well to adverse conditions and strived for excellence in their lives (Leung, 2017).

Overall, the body of literature on the role of fathers has provoked thoughts of the role and presence of a father and the development of a child especially a boy. It has shown that the presence of a father during the period in which a boy child develops is essential to positive child development. However, this is not to say that the absence of a father figure consequently results in boys with an underdeveloped sense of identity and masculinity. As such, the presence of a mother in her child's life facilitates constructive aspects of development, which according to literature explored above, seems to be undervalued and underexplored

### **The influence of single mothers on their son's identities**

Gender is not a static role nor is it a superficial display but is rather an interaction that is ongoing and embedded within daily interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In learning and understanding gender, children learn what a gender identity is and how this identity should be performed (Connell, 2002). Housework in the form of chores around the house is gendered. It is instilled through society by means of innumerable channels like storytelling, characters in books, television programs and interaction with peers. Parents are of the belief that housework is essential, especially for character building and the development of gender-appropriate behaviour (Goodnow & Lawrence, 2002). Understanding the manner in which housework operates affects gender beliefs (Goodnow & Lawrence, 2002). Berridge and Romich (2011) conducted a study to examine adolescent sons and household work in low and moderate income, single mother household, in the United States. It was found that single mothers appreciated the role housework plays as it teaches their boy's practical life skills, responsibility and is a better preparation for adult life (Berridge & Romich, 2011). They aspired for their sons to grow up to become exceptional husbands who respect women and not ones who expect them to do all the housework (Berridge & Romich, 2011). They also emphasised that their sons need to understand that being a man means doing household chores and in so doing, learning to appreciate housework in the reproduction of gender beliefs (Berridge & Romich, 2011).

Disciplining children has an influence on the manner in which boys develop their different gender identities. Researchers have opposed the role of mothers as a disciplinarian arguing that fathers are better at disciplining children (Downey et al., 1998). This is

supported by a study which reported that single mothers had difficulty managing their children than parents from a household with a mother and a father (Biller, 1974). Furthermore, Steinberg (1987) found that adolescents from single mother households are reported to be more impelled by peers than adolescents from a household consisting of both a mother and a father. While it appears that children from a female-headed-single mother household are believed to be disobedient, due to lack of a male figure, mothers often impart understanding in their sons that they should not belittle women and should respect them as equals (Berridge & Romich, 2011). This was done by means of not teaching their sons to excel in chores society presumes is only done by men, but to teach them to be proficient in daily life tasks that will be required of any individual (Berridge & Romich, 2011). Studies have further reported that differences in maternal encouragement of masculine behaviour among boys with absent fathers are often overlooked (Biller, 1969). This is because fathers generally serve as model figures for the construction of a masculine identity thus absconding the influence mothers have. Although studies seem to suggest that a relationship with a mother and her son can have either a positive or negative effect on a boy's personality development, a mother is able to facilitate positive aspects of her son's masculine development regardless of the presence of a father figure (Biller, 1969). This is achieved through instilling gender equitable ideas for the boys to be able to navigate their way around life.

### **Research Aims and Objectives**

#### **Aim**

The overall objective of this study was to explore the perception young black men between the ages of 18 and 30 in the University of Cape Town felt their mother had, in their development of a masculine identity. The research study aims to gain insight on the role of mothers and the meaning the young men make of the roles their mothers had while they were constructing a masculine identity.

#### **Main Research Question:**

- What role do mothers play in their son's development of a masculine identity?

#### **Sub- Questions**

- How do the young men understand the concept 'masculinity'?
- What type of relationship do the young men have with their mother?

- What are the young men's perception of the ways in which their mother influenced their development of a masculine identity?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This research study was conducted through the qualitative research paradigm. The research methodology draws on interpretation of experiences in the social world and meaning that is attached to it (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Qualitative research allows for the design to be flexible instead of fixed more so, not strict in following sequences (Maxwell, 2012). This allows the researcher to make sense of the participant's subjective experiences and be able to generate ideas and understanding about the phenomenon (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006). This methodology is appropriate for this study as it does not have pre-defined set of rules for possible explanations and is explanatory in nature. Furthermore, qualitative research design sheds insight on accounts of a first-person experience as well as the construction of social meanings rather than objectively testing variables (Wilson & MacLean, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is situated within a social constructionist framework. The social constructionist paradigm asserts that all knowledge that is constructed is in relation to the environment in which the knowledge is obtained (Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Social constructionism argues that the manner in which we understand the world, concepts and categories are historically and culture specific (Burr, 2015). Not only are the phenomenon specific to different cultures and period of history but also depend on the particular social arrangement prevailing the culture within a particular period of time (Burr, 2015). The most important element to this framework is how individuals rationalize their experiences by creating a model of the social world and the manner in which it functions (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Another important element is the use of language as it is the most essential system in which human beings construct reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Social constructionism is not concerned with how objective truths are uncovered but explores the ways in which different representations of the world are used and constructed (Burr, 2002). Social constructionism is not concerned with uncovering the objective truth but is rather interested in ways different representations of the world are constructed and used (Burr, 2002).

The social constructionist framework allows the researcher to explore categories like masculinity and femininity and in what perspectives they have been constructed. This framework is appropriate for this research study as it acknowledges that although masculinity is socially constructed, it has a material reality. Ignoring this material reality can be problematic as it does not confront the manner in which society views and understands masculinity (Burr, 2002). Although masculinity is an artificial category, there are different ways in which boys develop their ideal masculine identity. Discussions around masculinity and young men raised in female-headed single mother households inspire diverse reactions. Different participants attach different meanings to their experience of being raised in a female-headed single mother household as such, finding different perspectives and responses of which some are inconsistent and contradictory. It is these differences that social constructionism is interested in.

### **Participants and Sampling procedure**

Participants for the study were ten young men between the ages 18 and 30, who are registered students at the University of Cape Town. Purposive sampling was the method that was utilised for this research study. An invitation to take part in this research study was extended to all registered students at the University of Cape Town. Application for ethical approval to conduct psychological research was granted by the psychology department prior to the invitation being forwarded. It was only after that, that an application was made through the department of student affairs to gain access to all registered students within the institution. After having been granted approval, an email was sent out to all registered students at the institution, making them aware of the study and the criteria for being accepted into the study. Participants were selected based on their responding to the email that had been sent out, expressing an interest in voluntarily participating in the study. The particular group of participants were selected because they responded to the email and met the criteria of the study which was that they identified as a black male between the ages 18 and 30 and have been raised in a female-headed single mother household. Ten male participants were selected and interviewed. Of the ten participants, five participants grew up speaking Zulu, one speaking siSwati, one speaking Sesotho, two speaking Setswana and one an Ndebele speaker from Zimbabwe. The age range of the ten participants was between 21 years and 30 years of age. Four of the participants grew up in the township whereas four of the participants grew up in the Suburbs. One participant grew up in the homelands and one participant in a city in Zimbabwe.

## **Data Collection**

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

In this study, the method of data collection that was semi-structured, face to face interviews which were conducted from August to September 2017. Semi-structured interviews are a commonly used method in qualitative research as they provide descriptive data that can be analysed in distinct ways (Mason, 2002; Willig, 2008). In semi-structured interviews, there is an exchange of dialogue in a relatively informal style led by a topic guide (Esterberg, 2002). These interviews are designed to have a flexible structure so that the researcher and the participant can develop unexpected themes (Esterberg, 2002; Mason, 2002). In this research study, I had to build rapport with the participants before we commenced so that they can be able to feel free and comfortable talking about their experiences. This was done by starting off each interview by talking to them about what they are studying and the things that interest them.

The open ended questions were used as prompts so that the participants can open up about their experiences and be able to speak of their upbringing and their lives. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants the ability to choose which part of their lives they were comfortable talking about with the researcher (Willig, 2008). The interview was guided by relevant probes, comments and questions so that I was in a position to obtain sufficient answers relevant to the research question.

The interview guide that was used was adapted from some of the questions from previous research which used semi-structured interviews to investigate college men's positive masculinity development (Badaszewski, 2014). It was then decided that more questions on a mother's role in the development of a son's masculine identity should be added to assist in answering the research question. The interview guide consisted of three sections. Section one consisted of: the demographic and background details, section two being the amount of time the participants spent with their mother growing up and section three being the young men's understanding of masculinity. The interview guide explicitly asked the participants of their understanding of masculinity and through that, allowing them to construct meaning before they are asked about the role their mother had in their construction of a masculine identity. In the first section of the interview schedule, I asked the participants their demographics and details of their background, including where they come from, where they grew up and the number of siblings they had, if any. This was done so that I was in a position to create a

context within which the participants were raised and the amount of interaction they had with their mother while they were growing up. In the second part, I asked the participants about the kind of relationship they had with their mother and the amount of time they had spent with their mother growing up and currently. This was to have a better understanding of the amount of time they spent with their mother so that it can later be able to lead to the understanding of whether they were able to take anything from the amount of time that was spent with their mother or not. In the second section of the interview schedule, the participants were asked about their understanding of masculinity and if they felt like they related to it. In doing this, I was able to find out if they relate to a masculine identity and be able to further probe of the factors that were involved in them constructing a masculine identity. Throughout the interview, I used probes like ‘can you tell me a little more about that’, ‘what do you mean by that’ and ‘could you perhaps give me an example of that’ so that I can be able to extract greater, rich details from the participants.

Two pilot interviews were conducted with people that were not in the Department of Psychology so that I was able to assess whether the interview questions were suitable and applicable to address the aims of the research study. After the pilot studies had been conducted, it was found that there was no need to have to make alterations to the interview guide..

## **Procedure**

As the researcher, I communicated with the participants through email and asked them of a time and place that will be convenient for them to meet. All the interviews were done on campus and mostly in one of the rooms in the psychology department. Once the dates and times were set, I met with the participants individually at the agreed venue. There were two interviews done per day. The interviews were between 20 to 60 min in length and were conducted at places where the participants felt comfortable. Before each interview commenced, I gave them a consent and confidentiality form (see Appendix A) to read through and allowed the participants to ask me questions before signing it. It was clarified to the participants that the interviews will be recorded. The participants were also notified that if they at any point felt uncomfortable during the interview, after having discussed a distressing incident that they let me know and we either stop or take a break. This never occurred in any of the occasions that the interviews took place. At the end of the interview, the participant and I did a debriefing with the aim of finding out if they in any way felt distressed as a result

of the questions that were asked in the interview. They were then given a sheet (see Appendix B) that had all the details of services they are able to contact should they need to do so after leaving the interview session. It was then asked if they had any questions that they wanted to find out before they left the room of which most did and the questions were answered.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Thematic Data Analysis**

Data obtained from this study was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a procedure that places emphasis on examining, organising and recording patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although there has been substantial research on single mothers raising children, there remain a limited amount of research on young black men raised by single mothers, within the South African context and the contribution they have made in their development of a masculine identity. As a result, the thematic analysis is a suitable method to be able to provide a detailed description of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) have set six detailed phases that are required to carry out the thematic analysis. In this research study, I have adhered to the recommendations that had been stipulated.

In the first phase, it is required that the researcher read and re-read the transcribed data so that there can be familiarity with the data. During this reading, any ideas prevalent to the research question are written down. The second phase involves generating initial codes for the data set that had been transcribed. Participants were numbered after every data collection, as such, the first five interviews analysed first. During this process, the text of the completed interview was coded. At the end of analysing the five interviews, all the codes that had been obtained were written down on an A5 piece of paper. The next step that was taken was to group all the initial codes that spoke to the same topic. Once a well-defined list of codes was created, I was able to analyse the remaining five interviews guided by the first initial codes and noting any new codes from the data set. By the seventh interview, there were no new codes that were identified. It was then that I gathered all the relevant data for each code and grouped them. The third phase consisted of a search for the themes. Each code that was identified was subjected to the question: What does this code mean with regards to the phenomenon that is under investigation? (Holt, 2003). Codes that were found to be similar were grouped together. It was there that a group of codes that have been identified, were formed. Data that was seen to be relevant to the research question was organised within a



theme. The fourth phase involved reviewing themes that had been obtained. Each theme was checked individually to confirm that it had codes that formed a clear pattern. From each theme, it was important to re-read relevant data to ensure that the data was related to themes it was grouped into. It was then that I checked that the themes were linked to the research question. In phase five, the themes were defined and named. This allowed me to generate unambiguous definitions and names for each theme. The last phase, which is phase six, involved a clear and concise description of what the data is highlighting.

## **Reflexivity**

Qualitative research methods and the social constructionist framework acknowledges the role of a researcher during the research study. Reflexivity involves acknowledging the dynamics that come to play during the course of the research that is not often spoken about nor explicitly noted in the research report (Finlay, 2002). It also involves the researcher being aware of the contribution made towards the construction of meaning throughout the journey of the research. One particular type of reflexivity will be addressed and this is introspective reflexivity. Introspective reflexivity refers to the acknowledgement the researcher's experiences, emotions and attitudes that could affect engagement with the participants and analysis of data (Patnaik, 2013). Introspective reflexivity as such, maintains research focus by bracketing attitudes and biases in order to prevent their influence on the research process (Patnaik, 2013).

With regards to my identifying as a woman, I acknowledge the gender difference that exists between me and the participants. Coming from a background grounded by feminist ideologies, I reflected on my perception of meaning the participants placed on their understanding of what it means to be man. I was aware of the possible belief that I will be critical of the manner in which the participants will potentially regard the position of men in society to be superior. I as a result had to bracket my feminist ideologies so that I can be able to get as much information on the research study. I was also aware that my position as a woman may have meant that some participants felt uncomfortable voicing particular views on their opinion of women's role in society because they did not want to offend me.

## **Ethical Consideration**

This research study has adhered to the ethical guidelines stipulated by University of Cape Town with regards to using humans as research subjects. This research has gained the approval of the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology.

### **Consent and Confidentiality**

At the beginning of each individual meeting with a participant, they were presented with an informed consent form (see Appendix 1), so that they can be able to read through. Before signing, I made it clear to them that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any given point. It was also made clear that the interviews will be recorded. The participants had an opportunity to ask questions about the research study and any aspect of the form they may have needed clarity on. I ensured the participants that their names will not be used in the transcription nor write up of the thesis as such, enabling them to remain anonymous.

### **Risk and Benefits for the Participants**

This research study did not propose any significant risk to the participants. However, there was a potential risk of the participants experiencing psychological distress during the interviews a result of having shared their experiences. To make sure that none of the participants were affected by the research study, it was important for me as the researcher to ask them at the end of the interviews if they felt in any way distressed as a result of them having discussed some of their life events.

### **Debriefing**

As the topics that were discussed were sensitive to some of the participants, a formal debriefing was done at the end of each interview. I provided the participants with a debrief sheet (see Appendix 2), which provided recommendations to the participants if they felt they need to see someone after the interview had been completed. I encouraged them to ask me any questions they may have regarding the research study. My contact details and those of my supervisor and the postgraduate in psychology receptionist (See Appendix A), should they have any further questions regarding the research study.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore the perceived influence young men between the ages of 18 and 30 felt their mother had towards their development of a masculine identity. This chapter discusses the results of the study. Four main themes emerged out of the data. The first was the way in which the young men spoke of the influence their mothers had in their development of a masculine identity. Related to this was the respect the mothers were reported to have shown their sons within the households as a way of building their self-worth. Thirdly, the role models the young men reported having looked up to were men closely acquainted with the mothers such as uncles, grandfathers, neighbours and teachers. Finally, schools were reported by the young men to institutionalize masculinity development which consequently makes it a central structure for the young men's development of masculine identities. Thematic findings were presented along with selected quotations from the individual interviews to provide a rich description.

### **Mothers influence**

The most personal theme involved the influence the young men felt their mothers had in their development of a masculine identity. All participants, demonstrated an understanding of the role of their mother and the impact it had on their development. This theme was linked to the young men's relationship with their mother and the engagement they have had with their mother's femininity in developing a masculine identity.

**The young men's relationship with mothers.** All the participants reported having had a certain relationship with their mother. This theme was related to the kind of relationship the participants had with their mother which was believed to have been close. The young men are reported to have had a close relationship with their mother. The participants continued to express that the close relationship they had with their mother was as a result of her being the only parent in the house:

Participant 4: *"I would actually say that we were very close. I mean she was a single parent and I didn't have a dad around."*

Participant 9: *"I would say a very close relationship, for obvious reasons."*

These extracts are in line with existing literature on a child that is raised in a fatherless household as it is reported that they experience more interaction and closeness with the mother (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). Additionally, another study on parent and child relationships in single parent households, reported that as a result of the child having only one parent, greater care and closeness in single parent households makes sense (Walker & Hennig, 1997). This is especially when the parent has no partner with whom to divide the affection with (Walker & Hennig, 1997). Findings from my study are not surprising given that the young men mentioned that the mother is the only present parent of whom they could have an interaction with.

While the interaction and closeness of a mother and a child in a household without a father is reportedly inevitable, studies have argued against it especially when looking at the sex of the child and the mother. As such, findings from my study has shed new light on literature regarding the sex of the child and sex of the single parent as it is suggested that matching the sex of the parent to the sex of the child is important (Downey et al., 1998). This comes in light of findings that suggest that in a single parent household, children thrive better and have a better relationship with a parent they have the same sex with (Downey et al., 1998). In addition, a study by Holden (2007), supported the findings, emphasising that single mothers are most likely to invest less time and emotion in their son's than they would with their daughters. Although researchers agree that same sex matching of a child and parent is important for gender identity development, Drexler (2001) has argued the opposite, more especially in light of changing dynamics of family structures. He reported that same sex parent was not crucial in the development of young boys as they are just as able to thrive in single-mother households as they would in a household with a father (Drexler, 2001).

Relative to the study, even though some of the participants reported to have had a close relationship with their mother while growing up and at the particular moment of the interview, some reported to only have had a better relationship with their mother when they were older:

Participant 1: *"...it wasn't an intimate relationship growing up. Only when I got older, did it become more intimate as we started to be able to speak about the things we have gone through..."*

Participant 3: *"It eased up when I got older as I started to understand the things that she went through and so became more chilled and relaxed"*

Participant 8: *“I think when I became much older, we became really close friends.”*

The reason the young men felt they were only able to have a close relationship with their mother was because for some she was supportive and another encouraged him constantly:

Participant 1: *“I am able to come to her with anything. She is supportive and yeah, it is a good and positive relationship.”*

Participant 3: *“...she pushes and encourages me a lot. When I was older, I started to understand things more and what was happening at home and the sacrifices my mother had to make...”*

While some of the participants were able to form a close relationship with their mother earlier, for some it only occurred later when they were older. This was notable, with a study reporting to be in accord with these extracts. It was reported that single mothers that are loving, encouraging and supportive are usually what sons need (Waltz, 2007). Furthermore, in doing so the sons of single mothers are more open to building a stronger intimate relationship with them (Waltz, 2007). This is because when a female parent encourages her son’s growth and independence, the sons usually appreciate it (Waltz, 2007).

Research has been forthcoming for suggesting that the kind of relationship young men have with their mother is important. Quite distinct is the link between the nature of a young man’s relationship with his mother and his development of a masculine identity that has been seen to be prominent. Robb (2011), indicated that a close maternal relationship plays a significant part in the emergence of a more ‘caring’ masculinity as a result of the young men being in contact with their mother’s femininity.

In exploring this further, we look at the following section that will discuss how contact with femininity has had an influence on the young men’s development of a masculine identity.

**The young men’s engagement with femininity.** In addition to the young men having reported to have a good relationship with their mothers, another perception that emerged was that the young men expressed that since they were constantly in the presence of a female figure, their masculine identity was closely linked to femininity:

Participant 2: *“I wouldn’t say that I identify with it (a masculine identity) a lot because my personal views are moulded by a very feminine domains in my life...”*

Participant 8: *“...there is a huge feminine influence in how I am and how I became masculine”*

Throughout the young men’s account, it appeared that the mother’s had an influence on their development through their interacting with her feminine attributes. Here the feminine attributes are understood as one being in contact with their emotions, being understanding towards others, and being aware of other people’s feelings (Fagenson, 1990). The young men felt that their mother’s feminine attributes allowed them to be expressive and develop a masculine identity that is closely linked to femininity:

Participant 4: *“...I always got to see emotions and how women react to certain things whether its death in a family or a joyous time. So yeah, I was always in that emotional space and saw that it was okay to express your emotions...so that shaped me to be sort of caring and to have that presence of mind and the effect it has on someone else and what you do has an effect on other people.”*

Participant 8: *“...my masculinity is very, I would say somehow different to men who were raised with both parents in that there is a huge feminine influence in how I am and how I became masculine.”*

Participant 7: *“...what qualities do I take from the feminine side and what qualities do I take from the masculine side and how to combine the two to form a well-rounded individual...”*

In their research, MacCallum and Golombok (2004), found that in families that do not have a father, the boys who are raised with a single-mother are more likely to show more feminine characteristics. Similarly, Mandara et al. (2005) reported that boys raised fathers were passive and exhibited more feminine characteristic traits. Goldberg (2007), further reported that in the absence of a male parent, a boy turns to his mother as a mirror of identification thus consequently leading to less masculine behaviour. Similarly, Khudyakova, Gridyaeva, Yuliya and Klepach (2016) reported that a boy that is raised in a single-mother household subconsciously adopts female features and behaviours of the mother as he lacks the opportunity to witness characteristic features of an ever present male figure. These findings are relative to studies by a feminist philosopher, Butler (1990), who reports that masculinity should be performed by demonstrating behaviour characteristics and attitudes defined as masculine within a given culture. Goffman (2002) further illustrates that the identity of a man should be well acted out so that it is well interpreted and evaluated by

others. These findings show that the young men taking on their mothers feminine attribute is not a fair representation of their manhood. Egan and Perry (2001), disagrees with the findings as they reported that young men that are raised in a single mother household are often reported receiving female perspectives on a lot of things which allow them to develop positively.

While literature is in between with the kind of influence mother's feminine attributes on their son's development, narratives of the young men showed that the mothers allowed their sons to observe the manner in which people express their emotions and feelings to be able to develop positively. These findings are supported by a study which found that when a young man grows up with a single mother, he is more aware of people's needs and emotions (Alaburda, 2015). As such, the young men normalise the act and in so doing construct a masculine identity with the reported feminine attributes.

Another issue that was raised in literature was the extent to which male and female body gains its meaning through a historically mediated expression in the world (Butler, 1988). The participants showed that regardless of the fact that they are young men, they are also able to be influenced by a woman. Literature however suggests that a boy ought to model features of a male so that he can be able to perform the ideal gender role (Butler, 1988). However, from reports, evident that a woman can be able to facilitate her son's development of a masculine identity, thus challenging the notion of the need to have a male figure in the house for a boy to model gender roles.

**The role of other female figures.** The young men in the sample described the importance of having female-figures that were closely acquainted with their mothers. This theme was particularly important to the participants as they expressed that the female-figures had an impact on their development:

Participant 4: *"...the upbringing of my mother and you know the women figures in my life including my gran and some of my aunts had a great contribution..."*

Participant 7: *"I grew up around my mother and my grandmother and those are the people that I would say raised me in the real sense and ones I would say I drew from."*

Participant 2: *So I had my mother's sister who is my aunt, who passed away in 2011. I saw them both as my mother's because we stayed in the same house and I would say*

*that they both had a very important role in which they played in my identity and my life.”*

Participant 10: *“I know my masculinity was influenced by growing up with my mother and my sister because my sister was always home...”*

This theme was notable given two findings that were presented relevant to literature regarding black single mothers having significant adults like an immediate or extended family member involved in the upbringing of their children. Jones, Zalot, Foster, Sterrett, and Chester (2007) indicated that African American single mothers are more likely to either reside in a home of a relative, including a grandparent, aunt or sibling, even so, more likely to invite other family members to reside with them. It is further reported that the tendency for black single mothers to reside with other family members may be, at least in part, a practical decision as it has been suggested that the relationship with the adult that lives in the home serve valuable roles (Jones et al. (2007) This was in part fruitful having observed that from another study on African American single mothers, the maternal grandmother, maternal aunt, older sisters as well as other relatives and neighbours were involved in co-parenting the single-mother’s children (Jones et al., 2007). This prominent finding utilizes the co-parenting framework to conceptualize black single mother families to one that considers relevant people closely acquainted with the mother, in shaping the family (Minuchin, Colapinto, & Minuchin, 2007). Furthermore, it was also reported that having a family member and other adults actively participating in child rearing in black single mother families has a prominent impact on the child’s upbringing (Gonzalez, Jones, & Parent, 2014). These findings are consistent with the extracts expressed by the young men who saw the female-figures that were involved in their child-rearing to have had a prominent role in their lives.

While it is evident that single mothers often have other female figures that help them raise their son’s, the role of their son’s in the households has a significant meaning placed on it. The role of the household will as such be discussed further in the section below.

### **Respect: A certain place for a boy child**

The young men expressed more directly, how their mothers showed them a level of respect in the house. The respect the young men felt they were shown was with regards to their mothers involving them in family discussions and seeking their input when decisions were made in the house:



Participant 8: “...there was a time when my mother called me to ask for advice about a particular matter that needed an adult’s point of view and I was out gallivanting around South Africa and they waited for me and I was like ‘Oh, okay, so this is how we role now’.”

Participant 4: “I think now my mother is aware of the fact that I have grown and am much older especially when it comes to decision making...she trusts my decision.”

From these extracts it is evident that mothers acknowledge that their sons are adults with well-defined preferences, have formal reasoning skills and independent actions. Moreover, a study that supports the findings indicated that as children grow into teenagers, it is important to model them not only as individuals but also as agents who are capable of influencing family outcomes (Lundberg, Romich, & Tsang, 2007). This is closely related to a report by Kalpana (2017), that young adolescent boys who are raised in single mother households like to be acknowledged as adults. This is because when a mother seeks her son’s input and suggestion with regards to family discussions and decisions, they feel respected (Kalpana, 2017). The respect that they report feeling is believed to increase their confidence and self-esteem (Kalpana, 2017).

In addition to the young men feeling respected as a result of their mother involving them in household decisions, the other young men reported that they felt they were shown respect by being encouraged to perform their pre-described gender roles in the households:

Participant 2: “There are certain things that I wouldn’t be allowed to do as they were allocated to the girls like mopping the floor, that is something my mother would do and I would be given the task of taking out the trash.”

Participant 6: “...the toys that she bought us, the stuff she let us watch like WWE even the clothes she bought us.

Housework and chores in a household is able to reveal how gender is learnt by boys in a single-mother household (Berridge & Romich, 2011). From the extract by Participant 2, it is evident that his mother has associated gender with certain tasks in the household. These acts then allow the young man to conform to an expected gender identity (Butler, 1988) in which the young men have come to appreciate. A study on gender roles in single mother households supports these extracts by the young men as it was found that the most consistent manner by which a parent treats boys and girls differently is through the encouragement of

gender stereotype activities (Leaper, 2013). This as a result allows the young men to be able to distinguish themselves from what is believed to be work done by girls and in so doing, makes them feel more masculine.

### **Role Models**

Many of the participants reported that although they stayed in a female headed single mother households and felt that their mother's contributed to their masculine identity, they looked to other men that are closely acquainted with their mothers, as models of masculine ideals:

Participant 2: *"I saw my grandfather from my mother's side as a father-figure a lot. So I would say primarily my grandfather contributed to my masculinity..."*

Participant 4: *"...being in a space that I thoroughly enjoyed, which is boarding school, the male teachers I came across had a lot of influence..."*

Participant 7: *"...My pastor, who stayed next door to us in the Free State in Qwa-Qwa was the person I can say became my first contact with masculinity and I would go fishing with him."*

Participant 8: *"...she would invite my uncle, who is her brother of whom I looked up to, to come and talk to me and help me deal with whatever I was dealing with at the time."*

These findings supported existing literature which has reported that grandfathers, uncles and male friends are legitimate male role models with whom boys from single-mother households have contact with (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005). As a result, it is common for an adolescent male who did not live with their fathers to have a substitute role model like a big brother or uncle (Nelson & Valliant, 1993). Cochran, Larner, Riley and Henderson Jr (1993) further reported that single parented boys in elementary school, that had an active role model like an uncle, who did activities them and took them to special places were essential for success in life. As such, having access to male figures who encourage and support boys is likely to raise the children's feelings of self-worth and efficacy thus leading to a better social functioning life (Coley, 1998).

While the boys had male role models of whom they looked up to, the young men also reported their mothers to be their role model. They felt that their mother played a significant

role in shaping positive characteristics which were seen through the mother's hard work and sacrifices:

Participant 1: *"My mother represented what a man should be. She provided financially and she looked after us. These are the things that when society says that if you are a man, 'you are a man among men' these are the things you should do."*

Participant 2: *"I was raised by a strong woman who took the lead in many aspects that I do not believe that women should be regarded as deficient in other areas. For example, it is believed that a man provided but I have been provided for by a woman my entire life, what then are we trying to say?"*

Participant 5: *"...my mother was a hard working woman and so it makes me a man to want a woman who is hardworking because my mother is a hard worker and is very responsible..."*

Participant 8: *"So I mean in many ways, I try to emulate my mother because she is my role model that I have had for the longest time and half of the things I know I have learnt from her. So in how my masculinity is, it is directly influenced by her..."*

From these extracts, it can be argued that helping a child who is a boy develop a masculine identity is not limited to a father figure. As a result of the mothers helping them achieve their masculine roles, it can further be argued that their mothers took on what is believed to be masculinity roles. This is evident from a participant describing that his mother was a financial provider while for another, his mother was a hard worker. From this it could also be argued that the participants are conflicted about what constitutes masculinity as a result of not having a male role model in the house. This as a result allowed the participant to see their mothers as their role model. Symbolically, the mothers were able to perform the role of father figures in the absent of fathers.

These findings are contrary to existing literature that has reported that single mothers are the source of emotional problems for boys raised in female-headed single-mother households (Garbarino, 1999). Nevertheless, the findings are consistent with a study by Bozalek (1997), which found that some female-headed single-mother households are more than competent to raise young adolescent boys that are well adjusted.

The section below will take a closer look at the role of schools in boys development of a gender identity.

## **Institutionalization of masculinity in schools**

It emerged that most of the young men went to a boarding school. The boarding schools the young men reported to have went to, are private schools that predominantly consisted of boys. This theme describes how the mother's role manifested from the schools the young men were taken to, as the schools developed the type of men they became. For one young man, he expressed that his mother sending him to the school he went to was a way in which she can let him be around other boys:

Participant 3: *"...I remember the one time when she decided that...so I went to an all boy's school...so some of the reasons for that was because my mother and sister felt that I needed masculinity in me and needed to be a man. I remember in grade 7, she made a comment that I needed to man up and the next thing I know I was going to boarding school."*

Swain (2006), supports this finding, reporting that school settings are recognized as one of the principal site for masculinity development. Additionally, Bantjes and Nieuwoudt (2014) supported these findings, further reporting schools do foster a site for masculinity development more so, specifically through the way the school is structured, the administration of the school, the way authority is exercised in the school, the content of the curriculum, type of sport offered and the way teachers and pupils address each other. This is parallel to a report by Connell (1996), suggests that gender performance in school is as a result of the different mechanisms that are found within these schools.

For other participants, their mother taking them to good schools was so that they can become men, independent men and leave a mark in society:

Participant 4: *"...she took me to the best schools you know, white schools and so on...and she emphasised that yah, you need to become a man you know, and leave a mark in society."*

Participant 6: *"...my mother sent us to a good school, so at school we didn't have any issues. I mean we did fairly well academically, three of us are here at University of Cape Town. So we were able to be quite independent in that regard and yeah a lot of things we had to figure out on our own..."*

Participant 4: *"...going to boarding school it was that thing that 'yah, you need to become a man' you know, the kind of man that will leave a mark in society."*

The young men saw the schools they went to as good schools that were able to serve a purpose of moulding them into independent young men that are going to contribute significantly to the better good of society. Literature about boarding schools has associated the schools with privilege (McGeevy, 2014). Which is closely associated with the manner in which the young men describes the boarding schools they went to, with emphasis placed on the fact that they were good schools. It has further been reported that boarding schools foster a sense of independence and self-confidence thus providing a structured platform for achievement later in life (McGeevy, 2014). This is as such evident that the schools have had a significant effect of the young men's development of a masculine identity.

## Summary

### Summary and conclusion

The themes that have emerged from the research study complimented and further supported existing findings from previous literature. Several implications for young men's masculinity development as a result of having been raised in a female-headed single mother households emerged from this research study. More generally the study highlighted the significant value the young men placed on the role their mother had in their gender developmental experience. This value was emphasised in terms of their description of the kind of relationship they had with their mother and how this had an influence on their own developing selves. Such findings substantiate the need for single mothers raising boys to aim to build a relationship with the child from the time they are young right till they are adults. The young men shared feelings of the manner in which male role models were able to facilitate their gender development where they felt they needed a male figure in their live. Knowledge of this nature is necessary in understanding the role of men that are closely acquainted with the mothers and their involvement with young men that are raised in single mother households.

This study was limited in that there was a limited sample size which meant that the group of participants were underrepresented. This was as a result of the time limit allocated to this research study. Interviews with more black young men raised in female headed single parent households may offer a more thorough and nuanced exploration to the topic. Furthermore, this study was specifically conducted on students in the University of Cape Town of which the experiences of students in other universities in South Africa may be different. Despite the limitations that have been encountered, it is hoped that the subjective experiences of the young men raised in female-headed-single parent households may be of use to both the single mothers that are raising sons and the son's that have been raised by single mothers. Future studies should continue exploring and analysing black single mother headed households and their relationship with their son's through multiple lenses. It is particularly the black single-mother headed households in South Africa that should be explored and the manner in which masculinity and femininity is balanced within the household. Recommendations for a similar study in future should include subjective experiences of the mothers. In so doing, the study will have a better understanding, and be able to answer questions like 'as a mother, what role do you think you had in the gender

development of your child'? Exploration and dialogue with the mother's on what role they perceive to have had during their son's development of a masculine identity.

## References

- Adams, L. A. (2008). Making a perfect man: Traditional masculine ideology and perfectionism among adolescent boys. *South African Journal of Psychology, 38*(3), 551-562.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800309>
- Alaburda, B. (2015). 5 things to know about kids who grew up with single parents. Retrieved from [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/yourtango/5-things-to-know-about-kids-who-grew-up-with-single-parents\\_b\\_7904160.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/yourtango/5-things-to-know-about-kids-who-grew-up-with-single-parents_b_7904160.html)
- Amineh, R. J., & Asl, H. D. (2015). Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of Social Sciences, Literature and Languages, 1*(1), 9-16.
- Badaszewski, P. D. (2014). *Beyond the Binary: How College Men Construct Positive Masculinity* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia).
- Bantjes, J., & Nieuwoudt, J. (2014). Masculinity and mayhem: The performance of gender in a South African boys' school. *Men and Masculinities, 17*(4), 376-395. doi:10.1016/b978-0-08-097086-8.63081-7
- Berridge, C. W., & Romich, J. L. (2011). "Raising him to pull his own weight:" Boys household work in single mother households. *Journal of Family Issues, 32*(2), 157 -180. Doi: 10.1177/0192513X10380832
- Biblarz, T. J., & Stacey, J. (2010). How does the gender of parents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 3-22. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00678.x
- Biller, H. B. (1969). Father absence, maternal encouragement, and sex role development in kindergarten-age boys. *Child Development, 40*(2), 539-546. doi: 10.2307/1127421.
- Biller, H. B. (1974). *Paternal deprivation: Family, school, sexuality, and society*. Lexington, MA: Heath
- Bojuwoye, O., & Sylvester, F. (2012). Patterns of gender socialization of adolescent boys in single-mother households: Respective from a community in Cape Town, South Africa. *Gender Technology and Development, 16*(2), 197-222. DOI: 10.1177/097185241201600204
- Bozalek, V. (1997). Representations of the family and South African realities. *Contemporary issues in human development: A South African focus, 7-24*.



- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Burr, V. (2002). An invitation to social construction
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre journal*, 40(4), 519-531. doi:10.2307/3207893
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Clarke, V., & Kitzinger, C. (2005). 'We're not living on planet lesbian': Constructions of male role models in debates about lesbian families. *Sexualities*, 8(2), 137-152. doi:10.1177/1363460705050851
- Cochran, M., Lerner, M., Riley, D., & Henderson, C. R., Jr. (1993). *Extending families: The social networks of parents and their children*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coley, R. L. (1998). Children's Socialization Experiences and Functioning in Single-Mother Households: The Importance of Fathers and Other Men. *Child development*, 69(1), 219-230. Doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.1998.tb06144.x
- Connell, R. W. (1996). Teaching the boys: New research on masculinity, and gender strategies for schools. *Teacher College Record*, 98(2), 207-235.
- Connell, R. W., & Connell, R. (2000). *The men and the boys*. University of California Press.
- Connell, J. W. (2002). *Gender*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the concept. *Gender of Society*, 19 (6), 829-859. DOI: 10.1177/0891243205278639
- Delany, A., Jehoma, S., & Lake, L. (2016). *South African Child Gauge*. Cape Town, University of Cape Town Child Institute. Accessed online on [23 May 2017] from [http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2016/Book\\_Child\\_Gauge\\_2016\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2016/Book_Child_Gauge_2016_lowres.pdf)
- Doherty, W. J., & Craft, S. M. (2011). Single mothers raising children with "male positive" attitudes. *Family Process*, 50 (1), 63-76. DOI: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01346.x

- Downey, D. B., Ainsworth-Darnell, J. W., & Dufur, M. J. (1998). Sex of parent and children's well-being in single-parent households. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60 (4), 878-893.  
DOI: 10.2307/353631
- Drexler, P. F. (2001). Moral reasoning in sons of lesbian and heterosexual parent families: The Oedipal period of development. *Gender & Psychoanalysis*.
- Drexler, P., & Gross, L. (2005). *Raising boys without men: How moms maverick moms are creating the next generation*. United States of America: Holtzbrinck Publishers.
- Egan, S. K., & Perry, D. G. (2001). Gender identity: a multidimensional analysis with implications for psychosocial adjustment. *Developmental psychology*, 37(4), 451.
- Esterberg, K. G. (2002). *Qualitative methods in social research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Fagenson, E. A. (1990). Perceived masculine and feminine attributes examined as a function of individuals' sex and level in the organizational power hierarchy: A test of four theoretical perspectives. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(2), 204.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative research*, 2(2), 209-230. doi:10.1177/146879410200200205
- Garbarino, J. (1999). *Lost boys: Why our sons turn violent and how we can save them*. New York, NY: Free Press
- Goffman, E. (2002). The presentation of self in everyday life. 1959. *Garden City, NY*.
- Goldberg, A. E. (2007). (How) does it make a difference? Perspectives of adults with lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(4), 550. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.77.4.550
- Gonzalez, M., Jones, D., & Parent, J. (2014). Coparenting experiences in African American families: An examination of single mothers and their nonmarital coparents. *Family process*, 53(1), 33-54. doi:10.1111/famp.12063
- Goodnow, J. J., & Lawrence, J. (2002). Work contributions to the family: Developing a conceptual and research framework. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 94, 5-22.  
DOI: 10.1002/cd.28
- Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

- Hetherington, E. M., Bridges, M., & Insabella, G. M. (1998). What matters? What does not? Five perspectives on the association between marital transition and children's adjustment. *American Psychologist*, *53*, 167-184.
- Holden, K. (2007). *The shadow of marriage: singleness in England, 1914-60*. Manchester University Press.
- Holt, N. L. (2003). Coping in professional sport: A case study of an experienced cricket player. *Athletic Insight*, *5*, 1-11.
- Jones, D. J., Zalot, A. A., Foster, S. E., Sterrett, E., & Chester, C. (2007). A review of childrearing in African American single mother families: The relevance of a co-parenting framework. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *16*(5), 671-683. doi:10.1007/s10826-006-9115-0
- Leaper, C. (2013). Parents' Socialization of Gender in Children. *Gender: early socialization*, *6*.
- Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (2009). Social construction of reality. *Encyclopedia of communication theory*, *2*, 891-894. doi:10.4135/9781412959384.n344
- Leung, J. T. Y. (2017). Cultural family beliefs, maternal sacrifice and adolescent psychological competence in Chinese poor single-mother families. *Social Development*, 1-16. DOI: 10.1111/sode.12239
- Levy, D. M. (1943). *Maternal overprotection*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Lewis, C., & Lamb, M. E. (2004). Fathers: the research perspective. Supporting fathers: contributions from the international fatherhood summit 2003. Den Haag: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 78-107
- Lundberg, S., Romich, J., & Tsang, K. P. (2007). *Independence Giving or Autonomy Taking? Childhood Predictors of Decision-Making Patterns Between Young Adolescents and Parents* (No. UWEC-2007-23).
- Kalpana, M. (2017). Mother-son relationship: Why it is important and how it evolves over years. Retrieved from [http://www.momjunction.com/articles/mother-son-relationships\\_00428471/#gref](http://www.momjunction.com/articles/mother-son-relationships_00428471/#gref)
- Khudyakova, T. L., Gridyaeva, L. N., & Klepach, Y. V. (2016). Specific Features of Gender Identity Formation in Children from Single-parent and Nuclear Families in Ontogenesis. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *233*, 393-396. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.10.167
- Kimmel, M. S. (1987). *Changing men: New directions in research on men and masculinity*. California: Sage.

- MacCallum, F., & Golombok, S. (2004). Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: a follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers at early adolescence. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 45(8), 1407-1419. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.00324.x
- Mandara, J., Murray, C. B., & Joyner, T. N. (2005). The impact of father's absence on African American adolescents' gender role development. *Sex Roles*, 53(4), 207-221. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-005-5679-1.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*. London: SAGE Publications
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage publications.
- McGeevy, R. (2014). Do boarding schools foster independent thinking or are they psychologically damaging? Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/boarding-schools-foster-independent-thinking-or-are-they-psychologically-damaging-1.2013074>
- McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist*, 53(2), 185-204. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.53.2.185
- Minuchin, P., Colapinto, J., & Minuchin, S. (2007). *Working with families of the poor* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Nelson, C., & Valliant, P. M. (1993). Personality dynamics of adolescent boys where the father was absent. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 76(2), 435-443. doi:10.2466/pms.1993.76.2.435
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The trouble with black boys: The role of the influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 431-459. DOI: 10.1177/0042085903254969
- Patnaik, E. (2013). Reflexivity: Situating the Researcher in Qualitative Research. *Humanities and Social Science Studies*, 2(2), 98-106.
- Ramphela, M. (2002). *Steering by the stars: Being young in South Africa*. Cape Town, South Africa: Tafelberg.
- Robb, M. (2011). Mothers, sons and masculinities. Retrieved from <https://martinrobb.wordpress.com/2011/03/31/mothers-sons-and-masculinities/>
- Roman, N. V. (2011). Maternal parenting in single and two-parent families in South Africa from a child's perspective. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 39(5), 577-586. DOI:10.2224/sbp.2011.39.5.577

- Silverstein, L. B., & Auerbach, C. F. (1999). Deconstructing the essential father. *American Psychologist*, 54(6), 397-407. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.54.6.397
- Smit, R. (2004). Involved fathering: Expanding conceptualisation of men's paternal caring. *Koers*, 69(1), 101-120. Doi:10.4102/koers.v69i1.299
- Steinberg, L. (1987). The impact of puberty on family relations: Effects of pubertal status and pubertal timing. *Developmental Psychology*, 23, 451-460. Doi:10.1037/0012-1649.23.3
- Swain, J. (2006). Reflections on patterns of masculinity in school settings. *Men and masculinities*, 8(3), 331-349. doi:10.1177/1097184x05282203
- Thompson, E. H., Jr., & Gongla, P. (1983). Single parent families: In the mainstream of American society. E. D. Macklin & R. H. Rubin (Eds.), *Contemporary families and alternative lifestyles: Handbook on research and theory*. (pp.97-124). New York: Sage.
- Terre Blanche, M., Kelly, K., & Durrheim, K. (2006). Why qualitative research?. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim & D. Painter (Eds.), *Research In Practice* (pp.271-284). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Walker, L. J., & Hennig, K. H. (1997). Parent/child relationships in single-parent families. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 29(1), 63. doi:10.1037/0008-400x.29.1.63
- Waltz, V. (2007). Raising boys without men. Retrieved from <https://www.bu.edu/today/2007/raising-boys-without-men/>
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1, 125-151. doi:10.1177/0891243287001002002
- Willig, C. (2008). Discourse Analysis, in J.A. Smith (ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage
- Wilson, S., & MacLean, R. (2011). Introduction to qualitative research. In S. Wilson & R. MacLean (Eds.), *Research methods and data analysis for psychology* (pp.177-197). Maidenhead: MacGraw-Hill Education.
- Wilson, S., & MacLean, R. (2011). Ethics. In S. Wilson & R. MacLean, *Research methods and data analysis for psychology*, pp. 593-619. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

## Appendix A



### Informed Consent Form

#### DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Young men's perception of mother's influence in their developing of a masculine identity.

**Invitation:** I am a postgraduate student from the Department of Psychology and would like to invite you to take part in this study that explores young men's perceptions of their mother's influence in their development of a masculine identity.

**The purpose of Study:** The purpose of the study is to understand the perception you have on the influence you believe your mother had on your development of a masculine identity. Questions will be asked about what masculinity means to you and what influence your mother had in the development. The study is conducted for the purpose of a Psychology Honours degree at the University of Cape Town.

**Procedure and Duration:** Information will be obtained through a face-to-face semi-structured interview. The interview will take place at any place of your convenience, provided you are comfortable with the location. The interview will be approximately 20-60 minutes long. The transcribed interviews will be analysed and written into a report which will be submitted to the University of Cape Town.

**Recording and Storing of Data:** With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded using a recording device. The interview will be transcribed, analysed and the findings reported into a broader perspective. Only the course convener, my supervisor and I will have access to the digital recording. The digital recording will be kept on a password-protected computer system. Once the research study has been completed the digital files will be stored for 5 years and after that, will be destroyed. The results may be submitted for publication in future.

**Voluntary and Confidential Participation:** Your participation is completely voluntary. You may stop participating in this research at any time during the research or choose not to answer any questions, without penalty. Information obtained for this study will be kept confidential and participation will be anonymous. This declares that you will be unidentifiable from the information presented in the research study.

**Risks and Harm:** There are minimal risks psychological (emotional) risks that may be anticipated during this study. Should you encounter any unpleasant feelings after having taken part in the research study, do contact me at contact provided below and I will put you in contact with professional assistance

**Contact detail:** My contact details are number: 076 963 6745; email: [mdbngo002@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mdbngo002@myuct.ac.za). If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study, please email Dr Mandisa Malinga on [mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za](mailto:mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za) or email Rosalind Adams on [rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za](mailto:rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za)

Please feel free to ask me any questions should there be anything about this study you do not understand or would like clarity on. I am happy to answer all your questions.

Please sign this form to show that you have read the information provided.

**CONSENT:** I have been informed of any and all possible risks and discomforts. I have had the opportunity to fully discuss my concerns and questions, and fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research, and hereby consent to participate in this study:

Signature..... Date .....

**RECORDING:** I have been informed that the interview will be audio recorded and as such, consent to being recorded during this interview.

Signature..... Date .....

## *Appendix B*

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Section 1**

- Please tell me a little about yourself, where were you born?  
-Name; surname; age
- Have you ever had any contact with your father?  
-If so, tell me a little more about that.

#### **Section 2**

- What kind of relationship did you and your mother have growing up?
- How much time did you spend with your mother?
- What kind of relationship do you currently have with your mother?
- Please tell me about your experience of being raised in a single mother household?

#### **Section 3**

- What do you understand by the term masculinity?
- What has influenced the development of your masculinity?
- Would you say that you relate to or associate with a masculine identity?
- Does your mother have any influence in the construction of your masculine identity?
- Has your masculinity had an impact on the choices that you make?  
-If so, what kind of impact?
- How would you define what it means to be a man?  
-What kind of things or people influenced your definition?
  - Describe yourself as a man.  
-How does your description of a man relate to your definition?
  - Tell me about a time you were proud to be a man here at the University.
  - Tell me about a time you were ashamed to be a man here at the University.
  - Have you learnt anything about yourself as a result of our conversation?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I appreciate the insights and the time you have spent here with me today.



## *Appendix C*

### **De-Brief Form**

At the end of the interview the participants will be asked the following questions:

- How did you feel about the questions that were asked?
- Do you feel that any of the questions offended you in any way?
- How do you feel about this entire sharing experience?
- Do you feel the need to talk to a professional after this research study?

Should you feel that you require counselling or support, below is a list of organisations which could be contacted?

#### **Life Line**

##### Services:

24-hour telephone counselling service

Trauma counselling

Face-to-face counselling

##### Payment

Services are free of charge

Contact

Office: (+27 21) 461 1113

Crisis: (+27 21) 461 1111

#### **UCT Student Wellness Centre**

##### Services:

24-hour telephone counselling service

Counselling services

Health services

##### Payment

Services are free of charge for all UCT students

Contact: UCT Careline: 0800 2425 26

Office: (021) 650 1020

