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# Identifying Stressors Experienced by Single Fathers Who Are Parenting in New York City

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Stacey Melhado

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Identifying Stressors Experienced by Single Fathers Who Are Parenting in New York

City

by

Stacey Melhado

M.A., Walden University, 2008

B.S., John Jay College, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health Psychology

Walden University

January 2017

## Abstract

Fathers face difficulties when taking on the single parent role, including having to prove their ability to care for their children alone. Existing research does not address issues concerning single fathers and the stressors they experience in raising their children. This study addresses these issues and helps researchers understand single fathers by using a qualitative approach to understand their perception of parenting. Fourteen participants from New York City participated in semi-structured interviews to elicit information about this phenomenon. This study focused on experiences the men have while being a single parent, the impact of living in New York City on single fathers parenting, and helpful services for single fathers. After completion of the interviews, each discussion was input into the memos section of Nvivo for use in the analysis phase. Interviews were separated into descriptive nodes addressing each area of interest. Data was then dissected into subnodes, which assisted in determining the themes, represented by participant responses. The last analysis step included the establishment of important ideas for each of the three research questions. The findings show fathers experience stressors when being a single parent as they identified childcare, the absence of the child's mother, finances, housing, medical insurance, and communication issues as stress factors. Surprisingly, a majority of the participants felt living in New York positively impacted their parenting. Although a majority of the participants identified stress as part of their parenting experience, all the fathers identified services as a practical tool to help them improve their parenting. Several implications for positive social change after completing this research study include helping providers understand the needs of this population, and identifying the need for support to help improve parenting for this population.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband, Miguel, and my sons, Jason and MJ. Thank you for your support in all of my educational and work endeavors over the years. Your love and support has been a source of strength and encouragement. I also want to dedicate this study to the fathers who took time to let me get to know them, it was truly my pleasure speaking with each of you.

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I would like to give some personal praises to my unit who allowed me to take breaks and work on parts of my dissertation without complaint. A very special thank you to my husband for standing by my side throughout this process, for stepping up and taking on a huge parenting role, and for being the person you are. A million thanks to my parents for being my backbone, for standing by me, and supporting my decisions with their own sacrifices to assist me. To my son Jason for understanding that sacrifices come with success and for being my motivation to set an example for you to follow. Everything I have completed thus far has been for you. To my baby Miguel you have been a blessing in disguise, a motivation in itself. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this process, it is greatly appreciated.

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

Parenting involves the activities caretakers engage in for their children's benefit, which include nurturance (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), discipline (Dufur, Howell, Downey, Ainsworth, & Lapray, 2010), and provision of food, shelter, and healthcare (Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2010). Researchers use studies regarding parents to explore the differences between the parenting styles and patterns of individuals from varying ages, ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and an array of other societal influences. While parenting may look different depending on these demographics, one similarity is the fact that children require a particular level of care from their caretaker in order to function in society (Lawson, 2012). Part of this caring process includes meeting the child's needs, and research indicates that societal influences can affect the parenting process (DeJean, McGeorge, & Carlson, 2010). For example, Lawson (2012) notes that children in single parent homes have their needs met less than their counterparts in two parent homes. Jackson, Preston, and Thomas (2013) add that single parents often have less access to supportive resources. Research on parenting is helpful in identifying the needs of the family, but there is a need for continued research on the needs of single fathers. Given the increase in children residing with their fathers, it is important to understand how these individuals feel about caring for their children independently and obtaining a sense of what needs these fathers have when taking on this role.

Research on parenting identifies how there are daily struggles caretakers experience that require them to have coping mechanisms that allow them to deal with these struggles (Sanders, 2012). Dual parent homes allow caretakers to share in the

responsibility of raising their children. In Western cultures, primary caretaking has traditionally been the responsibility of girls and mothers (Cheng & Halpern, 2010). Research on American culture classifies women as being nurturing and caring (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), which can contribute to the roles assigned to females. While this is the role assigned to women, fathers traditionally have taken on the role of leader or breadwinner (Cheng & Halpern, 2010). The available research delineates that the expectations are for individuals to maintain specific gender roles; however, outside factors can affect how role assignment occurs (DeJean et al., 2012).

Research surrounding fathers demonstrates a rise in the number of males who are now part of the single parent population (Bronte-Tinkew, Scott, & Lilja, 2010; Jackson et al., 2013). Grall (2013) indicates that 28.1 percent of children residing in the US live with only one of their parents. Cook (2014) notes that men make up 15 percent of the single parent population. The rise in the number of single fathers has led researchers to focus more on this population (Bronte et al., 2010; DeJean et al., 2013). Although there are studies surrounding different aspects of being a single father, there is still a need for additional studies involving males and their experiences. This study will provide information about the specific stressors single fathers experience while raising their children. The purpose of the study is to add to the currently available studies by identifying information that can assist single fathers provide better care to their children.

The social change implications for this study are to identify the stressors that single fathers living in the inner city experience when raising their children. This new information can be used to help improve services that will help single fathers raise their children. There are expectations that fathers should be the sole financial providers for

their families (Cheng & Halpern, 2010), but this expectation does not address the fact that some single fathers are unable to find employment or meet all the financial needs of the child. Conducting this research will provide additional insight into the needs of single fathers and aid in implementing programs geared towards helping this population alleviate some of the stressors associated with child rearing. Developing father-focused programs can empower fathers to take on the role of single parenting without the fear of being unable to meet the child's basic needs. The proposed social change will directly influence the perception of the stressors fathers experience and provide insight into their specific service needs. Moreover, it will provide an understanding of what needs fathers experience as single parents.

Background information surrounding the role of single parent will be presented in this chapter, with a focus on the demands single parents experience while raising their children. Caring for a child can be stressful, and for single parents there is an additional demand to meet all the needs of the child alone as a single person (Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). Social support is identified as a key assistance for single parents because it allows the parent to obtain assistance with meeting the needs of their children (Jackson et al., 2013). The reason for the current study is to help identify the stressors single fathers experience and to assist in developing ways to engage males in obtaining supportive services. The need for a better understanding of the stressors single fathers experience will be detailed in length.

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) Grounded Theory, which will allow for the interpretation of the collected data. The questionnaire being used is structured in an open-ended manner, allowing the participant

to provide a detailed account of his experiences as a single father. The qualitative design will be discussed within the context of the research. To understand the reasoning of the study, the reader will be provided with an overview of the significance of the study.

There is a lack of information surrounding single fathers experiences, which signifies the need for the current research.

### **Background**

The role of a single parent can be a difficult one because the parent has to juggle the obligations of being the head of household and financial provider while meeting all the child's needs alone (Umberson et al., 2010). Ostberg and Hagekull (2013) note that social support is significantly related to single parenting as the parent has to provide for the child, manage a household, and attend to their own personal care. This role also requires the parent to put the needs of the minor(s) before their own. Single parents who do not have support systems might become overwhelmed at the number of tasks and obligations they have to complete in one day. Current research delineates the role of the primary caretaker as the mother, which correlates with American culture's expectations (Cheng & Halpern, 2010). Although there has been this traditional expectation, the shift in today's society has allowed researchers to identify an increase in the number of single fathers providing primary care for their children (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). Fathers are taking on more childcare responsibilities in their new role of single parent (Parker & Wang, 2013). While a father raising his children as a sole provider is not an unfamiliar concept, these individuals are an understudied population requiring further examination (Rochlen, McKelley, & Whittaker, 2010). Studies identifying single fathers as the primary caretaker lack knowledge on the specific needs of fathers through their own

perceptions, and fail to identify vital information on single parenting as experienced by fathers (Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2010). The perception of single parenting through the views of fathers is significant, especially because there is an increase in the number of children residing on a primary basis with their fathers (Dufur et al., 2010).

Some single father studies include the feelings fathers have about their role as a parent, with a focus on the court system (Lawson, 2012) and societal views of them as fathers (DeJean et al., 2012). These studies examine the role the court has in determining the ability of the father to care for the child. Other studies explore the feelings children living in single father homes have about residing with their fathers and how the child's gender can impact the parenting process (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). Haire and McGeorge's (2012) study delineates differences between the gender of single parents, identifying economic struggles and societal views of fathers and mothers.

A review of the earlier research showed that there is a need for further studies on single fathers, with a focus on the stressors single fathers experience through their own perspective. This need is evident as there is a lack of qualitative studies using single fathers as the primary source of information. Completing a study that addresses fathers' own perceptions of what is stressful during the parenting process may provide insight into how this stress influences parenting. There is little documentation available to exemplify the stressors single fathers' experience, as opposed to the amount that is available on single mothers. This proposed study can provide a better understanding of their experiences, identify stressors of this population, and provide insight into their needs, but it does not purport to capture all of the needs of fathers in today's society. The current study will aim to identify the needs of single fathers living in the inner city,



specifically New York City. The purpose of the study is also to help community agencies provide adequate and efficient services to single fathers caring for their children. The study is necessary because fathers are more involved with caring for their children, and understanding their feelings about what is occurring may help this population be more successful at being single fathers.

### **Problem Statement**

American culture's view on childcare has consistently been that it is the role of the mother (DeJean et al., 2012). As times change so does the role of the primary caretaker with there being a steady increase in the number of single fathers providing for their children (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). Parker and Wang (2013) add that dads are taking on more childcare responsibilities. Researchers also explore the role of the single father, with some studies addressing males' feelings about fatherhood (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), gender differences between mothers and fathers (Cheng & Halpern, 2010), and socioeconomic differences between single parents (DeJean et al., 2012).

Dufur et al. (2010) noted that single fathers are an understudied population, which hinders the current research on the role of single parents. While studies exist, there is a need for further research that focuses on how fathers feel about being single parents, with a concentration on the stresses these men experience. There remains a gap in the research surrounding the stresses single fathers experience when raising their children and how these stressors influence the parenting process. In addition, the available studies lack the fathers' verbalized feelings about being single parents. Research surrounding the father's view of the stresses they experience can help researchers understand this population's

needs and fill in the gap on what services can help alleviate some of these identified stresses.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Many studies involving single fathers use a quantitative approach; however, this study will use a qualitative method to obtain information on the male perspective surrounding this phenomenon. The purpose of this research is to obtain a better understanding of the stressors single fathers in New York City experience while raising their children. The intent is to explore fathers' feelings about being a single parent and provide these males with a voice about their own experiences. This study will make efforts to identify the biggest stressors that this population feels impact their parenting abilities. Obtaining this information can also help develop services specific to single fathers and ultimately help reduce this population's stress level.

There is an expectation for single fathers to be the sole provider even when they are raising their children alone (DeJean et al., 2012). Not being able to meet societal expectations may add to the level of stress this population experiences. As part of this research, single fathers have a chance to identify the stressors that affect their ability to care for their children. The goal of this study is to develop a list of key stressors single fathers experience during the parenting process and then use the identified stressors to develop supportive services that can provide assistance to this population. The supportive services may help facilitate some stress relief for single fathers in caring for their children. This research can also provide an understanding of what outreaches can occur in an effort to encourage fathers to utilize these services as a means of minimizing stress while providing care for their children. Given that the number of children raised by

single fathers is increasing, this study's focus is to fill in the gaps in the knowledge of the stressors single fathers' experience, and provide more insight into the phenomenon.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were derived from a review of the existing literature surrounding single father experiences. These questions will help the researcher address the research problem.

Research Question #1 - What experiences do males have while being a single parent?

Research Question #2 - Does living in New York City impact how single fathers parent their children?

Research Question #3 - Are there services that can help single fathers improve their parenting?

In order to answer the research questions, each participant will answer a questionnaire that will elicit information from them that will guide in the development of a new theory on the stressors of single fathers living in New York City. The first set of questions is for those fathers who are currently single fathers, and the second group of questions is for those fathers whose children are over 20 or are no longer residing with them.

#### *Set one*

Question #1 - What are the circumstances that led up to your role today as a single parent?

Question #2 - What is your daily routine?

Question #3 - What are the expectations you have for yourself as a single parent? How do you deal with the expectations you have for yourself when these are not met?

Question #4 - What are the expectations you have for your child? How do you deal with the expectations you have for your child when these are not met?

Question #5 - What is the role your child's mother maintains in parenting this shared child?

Question #6 - Do you have any family or friends who help you care for your child? If the participant answers yes, these are the follow up questions: A) Who is available to help you? B) How does each of these individuals assist you with the care of your child? C) How often does each of these individuals assist you with your child?

Questions #7 - As a single father, are there any stressors that you have experienced? If the answer is yes, the follow up question is Can you explain what these stressors are?

Question #8 - How do you deal with each of these stressors?

Question #9 - Do you feel that these identified stressors influence your parenting abilities? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) How do you feel they impact your ability at parent? B) In your opinion, what do you think can help minimize these stressors? And how do you think it can help minimize the stressors you have identified.

Question #10 - Do you feel your living environment contributes to the identified stressors? If so the follow up questions is: How do you feel your environment impacts these stressors?

Question #11 - Do you think there are services that could help minimize the stressors you have identified? If the answer is yes, the follow up question are: A) What services do you think would be beneficial to you and your child? B) How do you think these services can improve your parenting?

*Set Two*

Question #1 - What are the circumstances that led up to your role as a single parent?

Question #2 - What did your daily routine consist of when you were parenting?

Question #3 - What expectations did you have of yourself as a single parent? How did you deal with the expectations you had for yourself when they were not met?

Question #4 - What were the expectations you had for your child? How did you deal with the expectations you had for your child when they were not met?

Question #5 - What role did your child's mother maintain in parenting this shared child?

Question #6 - Did you have any family or friends who helped you care for your child? If the participant answers yes, these are the follow up questions: A) Who was available to help you? B) How did each of these individuals assist you with the care of your child? C)

How often did each of these individuals assist you with your child?

Questions #7 - As a single father were there any stressors that you experienced? If the answer is yes, the follow up question is: Can you explain what these stressors were?

Question #8 - How did you deal with each of these stressors?

Question #9 - Do you feel that these identified stressors influenced your parenting abilities? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) How do you feel they impacted your ability to parent? B) In your opinion, what do you think could have helped minimize these stressors? And how do you think it could have helped minimize the stressors you have identified.

Question #10 - Do you feel your living environment contributed to the identified stressors? If so the follow up questions is: How do you feel your environment impacted these stressors?

Question #11 - Do you think there are services that could have helped minimize the stressors you have identified? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) What services do you think would have been beneficial to you and your child? B) How do you think these services could have helped improve your parenting?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework helps the researcher and reader identify the main concepts and ideas of the study. This framework also details what answer the researcher is seeking to obtain. This study focuses on the stressors fathers experience as single parents and how they feel they are doing at raising their children. Many of the available studies address single mothers and the experiences they go through as the primary parent. This study seeks to obtain background on the experiences and stressors of single fathers living in the inner city through their own words.

The primary framework for this study will be Grounded Theory, which provides predictions, explanations, interpretations, and applications of the collected data and allows the researcher to formulate a theory from the collected research (Hall, Griffiths, & McKenna, 2013). Grounded Theory will allow for an interpretation and formulation of a new theory surrounding the needs of single fathers. In choosing grounded theory as the framework for the researcher, I had to review the different variations. There are currently three prominent forms of Grounded Theory. The first is the original theory founded by Glaser and Strauss in which they focus on generating and developing a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) through identifying patterns of behavior derived from the collected data (Hall et al., 2013). Glaser also believed that the relationship between the researcher and the participant should be objective (Hall et al., 2013). Strauss and Corbin later added to

Grounded Theory by focusing on the cultural influences that impact behavior (Breckenridge, 2012). The main difference between Glaser and Strauss's original concept and Strauss and Corbin's concept is that the latter focuses on the cultural influences on the phenomena, while Glaser focuses on the participants and their socially constructed realities. Charmaz also contributed to Grounded Theory by developing Constructivist Grounded Theory, which follows the idea that the creation of a theory is based on the researcher and participants' perspectives (Charmaz, 2014). For purposes of this paper I will use the original theory, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

The second framework for this research is Attribution Theory, which expresses the belief that things occur because of internal and external factors. Heider first proposed the theory of attribution, but Weiner and his colleagues developed the theoretical framework (Weiner, 1974). Weiner focused his theory on how an individual's past can impact the present and examined how rewards and punishments can influence a person's motivation (Weiner, 2012). According to Weiner (2012), people use their past experiences to influence how they act in the present and future. For instance, if a child is spanked for touching a stove, the child will use that reference the time he thinks about touching the stove. Further discussion on this theory will occur in Chapter 2.

During the research review, the identification of one study stood out because of the similarities to the current research proposal. In this study, Coles (2009) examined the role of African American fathers in the upbringing of their children. Coles research provided some insight into the path she chose while conducting her qualitative study. Each of the participants answered a questionnaire to elicit demographic information, as in the current study. Once completed, the participant will then move on to the next phase of

the study, which involves the semi-structured interview. This type of interview will allow the researcher to have a two-way conversation with the father that will address specific topics, but would allow the father to speak freely about his experiences. Coles (2009) also incorporated the semi-structured interview to obtain information on the father's experience while maintaining structure to gather the necessary information for the study. At the conclusion of Coles' study, there were recommendations for future studies that could compare the gender differences of African American single parents and examine the differences between single fathers of different races. In reading the recommendations, it is noted that the current study aims to address the stressors of single fathers living in the inner city. This study will allow fathers of different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds to participate in the study.

### **Nature of the Study**

Qualitative methods allow researchers to study the social and cultural aspects of a specific phenomenon (Toloie-Eshlagy, Chitsaz, Kariman, & Charkhchi, 2011). Qualitative studies also allow researchers to interview participants in a manner that incorporates excerpts from the interview into the literature. A qualitative approach will be used to help expand the understanding of stressors and obstacles single fathers experience. Creswell (2013) notes that qualitative research is an approach that aims to understand an individual's perception about a social problem through the use of questioning. This approach allows for participants to express their own views on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), which adds to the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach to this study.



The participants for this study will be single fathers who reside in the New York City area. The age of the participant can vary as long as the father is the primary caretaker for the child. Recruiting of participants will occur through the use of flyers and word of mouth at different community agencies within the New York City area. Each participant will go through a screening process to determine inclusion criteria. The next step will include an interview consisting of specific questions that will provide information into the stressors that single fathers experience when raising their children alone. After the collection of all the data, a review of the information will occur, and then coding will occur to classify key concepts and patterns identified by each parent.

### **Definitions**

*Father-Child Relationship* is the quality of interactions between the father and child (Galovan, Holmes, Schramm, & Lee, 2014).

*Inner City* is the central part of the city, characterized by lower socioeconomic status and high rates of violence (Schwartz, Bradley, Sexton, Sherry, & Ressler, 2014).

*Parenting* is the process of providing care to a child, including economic and emotional (Waldfogel, Craigie, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010).

*Primary caretaker* is the parent who has been more involved in the child's day-to-day activities (Mason, 2011).

*Single father* is a man who is providing for the emotional, material, and physical needs of his minor child without the assistance of a co-parent (Trolie & Coleman, 2012; Threlfal, Seay, & Kohl, 2013).

*Single Parent* for purposes of this study is a parent who has the sole responsibility for the care and custody of the child (Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 2014).

*Social Support* is the assistance provided to the parent, including childcare, emergency assistance, friendship, and financial help (Patulny, 2012).

*Stress* refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological impact environmental situations have on a person (Behere, Yadav, & Behere, & 2011).

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions of a study are the expectations that participants will follow during the research process. This study assumes that participants will be open and honest about the stressors they have experienced as single fathers, as participants are volunteering to be an active member of this study. As part of the process, participants are completing questionnaires and partaking in interviews, which the study assumes they will complete truthfully. It is also an assumption that participants will provide useful and accurate information about their experiences as single fathers. During the interview process, fathers will be asked about services they feel could benefit single fathers, making it an assumption that participants will give an honest opinion about their feelings.

Another part of the assumptions is that the researcher will be open and fair with all participants. To ensure this occurs, I will ask each participant the same questions to elicit information from them and all follow up questions will be based on the information the participant provides from the previous questions. It is also an assumption the researcher will fairly interpret the information by not being biased. In an effort to reduce those concerns, excerpts from the interviews will be incorporated. The interviews will also be screened for common themes. Using the themes can minimize the likelihood of bias.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of the study includes what areas the current study will address. Although there are single fathers all over the world this study's focus is on single fathers who are living in the inner city of New York. Those fathers who live within the five boroughs will have an opportunity to participate in the study. Also, the term single father will be specific to those fathers who are providing care for the children on a regular and consistent basis. The single father must act as the primary caretaker, meeting the child's needs including: feeding the child, getting the child ready for school/daycare, helping with homework, purchasing clothing and other necessities for the child, taking the child to the doctor, and taking care of the child when s/he is sick (Mason, 2011). Males who split custody with the mother on a 50/50 ratio will not be able to participate in the study.

The delimitation of the study will detail what in the study is out of the researchers' control when conducting the research. The study is a qualitative study approach that involves single fathers participating in an interview focusing on their experiences. The included information will be taken directly from their expressed thoughts and feelings. The information for the study is going to come from the participants, consequently the researcher cannot control how the individuals will express their feelings or if they will be honest about their experiences. Another area out of the researcher's control is whether or not the fathers will complete the process. Given that the research involves human participants, there is no way to control their behavior or reaction to the study, and this can lead to individuals deciding not to continue with the process.

### **Limitations**

The limitation in a study surrounds situations that can occur during the research process that result in the researcher lacking information. This study may be limited because of the use of a qualitative approach, which does not account for findings of previous quantitative studies, as qualitative studies use a smaller sample size. The sample size does affect the results, because it is harder to generalize the findings of a diverse population when they are not included in the sample size. This study examines the experiences of single fathers in New York City, thus the findings may not apply to individuals in rural areas. The sample size is a limitation of participants including single fathers living in the New York City area. New York City is an inner city, with a large population living. While there is a diverse population within New York City, there are still concerns with the population. Fathers who do not live in the inner city will not fall within the scope of this study, which limits the single father experiences to the circumstances experienced by inner-city fathers.

### **Significance**

This study adds to the existing research that describes the stressors single fathers who live in inner cities, such as New York City, experience while parenting. Given the current increase in single father homes and continual implications of stress on health and family functioning (Umberson et al., 2010), this research will provide information into the role of stress in single father homes. The majority of the available research incorporates quantitative approaches to understanding single father experiences, but lacks insight into the single fathers' views of their experiences and how they feel these stressors affect them. The findings of this study can add to the current literature by providing an interpretation of what stressors influence single father parenting. Using this

study, researchers will have a better understanding of the self-identified stressors in these single father homes.

In addition, this study can provide other researchers with a foundation for future research involving single fathers. The findings may help medical and mental health providers' work with single fathers by addressing the physical, emotional, and mental concerns they experience. These professionals can use this study when serving these fathers and have some understanding of the stressors that fathers feel impact their parenting. By having some insight into the problem, those servicing this population may become more focused on their needs. Another area of social change is how this study can lead to better health care decisions. In single family homes one parent, the primary parent, makes all medical, dental, educational, and mental health decisions for the child, making it imperative to work with and engage that parent in making the best decision for the child. Often, resolving an issue is easier when the barrier is known, and this research seeks to provide information into those things that impact single fathers.

The results of this study may also help improve the relationship between single fathers and social service agencies by using the identified service needs of this population to engage fathers. Lemay, Cashman, Elfenbein, and Felice (2010) note that single fathers tend to have higher rates of disengagement from their friends, which in turn negatively affects their support systems. Along with this concern, there is evidence that individuals living in lower income areas experience higher levels of stress because of socioeconomic conditions (Borjas, 2011). The current study explores the stressors single fathers living in the inner city experience, and the participants are also being asked about what they feel can help reduce these stressors. This information can help service agencies within the

community to work on developing outreach programs that target engaging these men. It can also encourage and guide providers to ensure that the necessary services are available to these fathers. With the increase in fathers taking on a child caring role within their children's lives, society has an obligation to support them in their parenting journey, and one way to do so is to provide services that meet the needs of this specific population.

### **Summary**

Studies outline the struggles parents face while they are raising children, especially in lower income areas where the stressors can increase because of environmental influences. Although it is known that parenting can be stressful, research notes that single parents experience higher levels of stress (Umberson et al., 2010). Documentation clearly identifies the experiences single mothers go through when raising their children. Throughout history, single mothers have taken on the role of the primary caretakers, but researchers have found an increasing number of fathers taking on the role of single parent (Mason, 2012). Given this increase, the current study seeks to understand the circumstances that cause fathers to become single parents. The qualitative approach will allow for a better understanding on how fathers feel about their role as single parents. Chapter 1 also demonstrated how information on single fathers can help provide more effective services to this population.

Chapter 2 opens with an overview on the role of parenting, detailing cultural stereotypes of father's role as the breadwinner (Cheng & Halpern, 2010) and disciplinary (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). The court systems have an influence on fathers' ability to obtain custody of their children and can influence fathers' experiences in obtaining custody of their children, which is discussed in Chapter 2. Low income neighborhoods

can impact parenting as families within these areas tend to be below the poverty level. How living in these environments can influence the childrearing process is discussed further in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2

### **Introduction**

Many of the available studies focus on single mothers (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Parker & Wang, 2013), which is a concern because the rates of fathers becoming single parents is rising (Cook, 2014). Fathers are taking on more childcare responsibilities (Parker & Wang, 2013) and engaging in more activities with their children (Olsen, Oliffe, Brussoni, & Creighton, 2013). The current study focuses on the specific stresses single fathers self-identify as a concern while raising their children. Father's voices are important in understanding their experiences and developing systems that are tailored to their needs. Having single fathers identify these stresses can help in developing ways to assist these males to provide better care for their children.

Caretakers are responsible for meeting the needs of their children, but society can influence the specific role each caretaker plays during parenthood. Western society identifies the mother as the primary caretaker and the father as the breadwinner (Cheng & Halpern, 2010). Fathers are known as the disciplinarians, while mothers are the nurturers and caretakers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the role of the father has been to marry the future mother of his children and provide financial support to the family (Mason, 2012). While this thought process surfaced centuries ago, it may still be a belief among adults whose elders taught them this expectation, which they learned from their elders. Assignment of the financial role to fathers requires them to obtain and maintain employment that allows the family's needs to be met. This role assignment can affect society's perception that fathers should be able to provide for their children. As Cheng and Halpern (2010) note, the expectation for single fathers is to be sole providers,



which is a concern because this viewpoint can negatively impact the thought process of individuals taught these gender role expectations. This thought process can also cause males to feel pressure when raising their children. The fear that others may view fathers negatively if they cannot meet this expectation can be a reality for some unemployed men.

While gender can highlight what expectations a caretaker faces, culture can also impact the assignment of roles to mothers and fathers. Cultural norms can contribute to gender expectations that then influence parenting patterns (Cheng & Halpern., 2010). Some cultures encourage mothers to stay home and tend to household activities, while fathers spend long hours away from the home working to meet the family's financial obligations (Parker & Wang, 2013). Culture can also place stress on fathers who are unable to meet the expectations placed on them. For example, some researchers note that most mothers maintain a nurturing person-centered role when caring for their children (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), which gives them an opportunity to participate in more bonding and emotional activities. The thought process can then be that fathers have a harder time with being warm and affectionate towards their children (Cook, 2014). Generalization of these assumptions may contribute to societies' perception that fathers cannot provide emotional support to their children. Overall, gender, cultural, and societal expectations and assumptions may contribute to fathers questioning their ability to care for their children as single parents.

In the beginning part of the literature review, a discussion about the role of the single parent as seen through societal and individual expectations while highlighting the experiences of single fathers. The chapter will proceed with an overview on how single

fathers parent their children, which will provide insight into the struggles they face due to societal expectations. One area that is thoroughly discussed is the role expectations and hardships fathers experience when rearing their children. There is a section on social supports helping fathers deal with raising their children (Cook, 2014), and there is information on how these supports can help eliminate some of the stressors they experience during this process (Trolio & Coleman, 2012).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature review searched specific keywords in several different databases. The Walden Library System and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Library System were used to locate articles online. In addition, different authors were contacted to obtain copies of articles that did not have a full text online. A broad search of terms *father* and *single parenting* in the Academic Search Complete/Premier, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX with Full Text database occurred to locate potential articles for the literature review. A search of additional terms helped to minimize the results, focusing on the area of interest. These terms included *single fathers*, *father-child relationship*, *father stressors*, *fathering*, and *parental services*. Additional terms used to search the social supports aspect included *social services* and *inner city living*. Upon reviewing the identified articles, an additional search of resources using the reference lists of those articles pertinent to the literature review was conducted. During the review, studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria of parenthood, social services for parents, and concerns with inner city living was rejected. Further analysis of the inclusion criteria occurs in the following chapter. Some of the included studies compare the roles of the father and mother, the socioeconomic background of single

fathers, and the role of family and friends in helping single fathers; therefore, there is a limitation in contents of the literature review to the mentioned factors. One area of concern is the lack of current research surrounding the phenomenon. In an effort to address this concern, there was a broadening on the research criteria so that more studies were located. Also, studies that are comparative between mothers and fathers were screened to determine if they fit the current study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the current study uses a qualitative approach; therefore, the framework surrounds the use of one of the available qualitative methods. For this study, the preferred method is the Grounded Theory approach.

The Grounded Theory approach is best because the intent of this study is to develop a theory on the stressors single fathers' experience. Grounded Theory allows for predictions, explanations, and interpretations of the accounts provided by these fathers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This theory will rely on the voices of those directly affected by the problem and provide insight on what stressors these individuals experience. The information can then be used to help researchers devise techniques for service providers to use in developing service plans to help this group. The use of the Grounded Theory will allow researchers to explore new ideas surrounding single fathers, which can help supportive service providers' work with this group in a productive and effective manner. It will further allow for an interpretation and formulation of a theory on the service needs that can support single fathers in raising their children. While the narrative method was useful for this study, there is a limitation in detailing the perspective of one person. As the design of the current study is to examine the experiences of fathers, the narrative

design would not be useful. The case study approach examines aspects of the group the study is examining, which conflicts with the purpose of the current study. Ethnography is not useful because it examines the cultural aspect as a whole and Grounded Theory examines the person's viewpoint (Hall et al., 2013), which is the purpose of the current study.

The second conceptual framework for this study will be the Attribution Theory, which Heider founded (1958). At the early stages of this theory, Heider felt that researchers were examining people's behavior until they were able to devise an explanation for the individual's behavior (Heider, 1958). Heider noted that there are two forms of attribution, internal and external. Internal attribution notes that an individual behaves in a manner because of something within that individual. For example, a single father may choose to obtain custody of his child because he believes it is a father's responsibility to raise his child. Internal attribution focuses on the person's attitude, beliefs, or personality (Heider, 1958). External attribution focuses on the individual's behavior in relation to a situation outside of the person's control. For example, a father may become a single parent after the death of the child's mother. The external view incorporates the idea that environmental or societal entities can affect other circumstances.

Weiner also has contributions to the Attribution Theory, with his work providing researchers with a better understanding of the relationship between self-concept and achievement (Weiner, 1974) which is useful in understanding the experiences fathers go through when they are raising children independently. Attribution Theory focuses on how researchers explain causes of behaviors and events through prior experiences

(Weiner 2012). Weiner and his colleagues expanded on Heider's ideas, creating three forms of attribution: explanatory, predictive, and interpersonal attribution. Each of these attributions provides insight into the different factors that contribute to individual's behaviors. The specific use is to obtain a sense of fathers' responsibility as a single parent and to help determine if they feel internal or external factors influence their parenting abilities. The use of this model will provide a better understanding of why single fathers identify certain stressors and why they think these stressors are occurring. It will also help to identify causes of particular behaviors single fathers display. The application of the Attribution Theory will also offer a rationale for fathers' feelings about the stressors they experience while parenting, thus allowing for insight into the perception fathers will have on services in the future.

Examination of several quantitative methods was conducted to gain an understanding of the experiences single fathers had while raising their children alone, but much of this information came from mother-focused studies. A majority of the studies use a mother-centered approach, making it difficult to obtain information directly from fathers about their experiences. During the literature review, there are three key qualitative studies that use the viewpoint of fathers. The study by Ceglowski, Shears, & Furman (2010) involved a single, Caucasian, middle class father who addressed his concern with obtaining childcare. This research was specific to one father's struggle with obtaining adequate, quality childcare for his child. In this study, the father identified issues with locating and maintaining child care, dissatisfaction with child care quality, and concerns about paying for care. The limitation of this study is that the father lives within the middle class population and does have support from his parents. The second

study details the feelings of young fathers living in a city in central Massachusetts have about fatherhood (Lemay et al., 2010). This study provided concrete information on what these young males felt being a father was and how other entities play into their perceptions of fatherhood. The limitation of this study is that not all of the participants were fathers, there was no indication if they were single fathers, and mothers were also included. The third study by Threlfal et al. (2013) focused on 29 African American fathers' views of being a good father. The study includes fathers who were experiencing financial issues and some who were residing in urban or low-income areas. The limitation that surrounds the demographic used was that all the fathers were from one racial background.

### **Literature Review**

Single fathers have not consistently been an area of interest in research, which has led to a lack of studies focusing on their roles in the single parent population. Research surrounding the experiences of single fathers is currently a topic of increasing interest because of the rise in children living solely with their dads (Cook, 2014). Fathers taking on the single parent role may not be a new concept, but it is more recognized as the times change. Many fathers are engaging in childcare (Parker & Wang, 2013) and are more readily accepting the emotional and financial responsibility of their children (Threlfal et al., 2013). Statistics show that males are accepting their role as fathers and assuming primary responsibility for their children at higher rates (Troilo & Coleman, 2012). The realization of this parental shift has caused researchers to examine this change so there can be a better understanding of this population's experience. The following literature

review provides information about the experiences of these fathers based on the available research, which focus on quantitative studies.

### **Role of the Single Parent**

The single parent household is no longer an anomaly because of the drastic increase in the number of children living with only one parent. While the traditional American home structure consists of a mother and father, history and statistics show that dual parent homes are less common, with single parent homes becoming the norm (Waldfogel et al., 2010). Lewis (1978) notes that research on single parents became an interest to sociologists in the 1930s, when the issue began to surface. During this time, research focused on the causes of single parenthood, with a primary focus on mothers; many of these studies examined the effects on children living in these homes. The findings revealed that the key reasons for this change were an increase in divorce rates (Flood, 2010), death of a parent, and children born out of wedlock (Waldfogel et al., 2010). These external influences often led to parents having to take on a dual role to fulfill the gap created by the absent parent. Through these findings, researchers gained a better understanding of the causes of single parenthood.

### **Parental Stressors**

Parenthood can be stressful for any adult because of the pressure associated with caring for another individual (Ponnet et al., 2013); however, single parents face these challenges alone. Many of the available studies on single parents examine how females deal with being single parents, causing males to be lumped into the single mother studies (Ceglowski et al., 2010). By the 1960s, researchers provided a wealth of research on single mothers, with many of these studies examining the experiences of this population

(Mendes, 1976). Given that women are traditionally the primary caretaker, it is not surprising a majority of single parent studies focus on the role of the mother (Wade, Veldhuizen, & Cairney, 2011); however, this often causes researchers to use mother-centered information to generalize the experiences of fathers (Ceglowski et al., 2010). The generalization of this information can be problematic when addressing single fathers because they face different struggles and parent differently (Dufur et al., 2010).

Reviews of these studies identify role demands as a prominent area of these struggles for single parents. Role demands include all areas of child care and do not take into account gender, although Dufur et al. (2010) note that there is a difference between the parenting patterns of mothers and fathers. DeJean et al. (2012) highlighted the role demands of single mothers as being harder for them than fathers because single women have to carry the burden of meeting all of the child's needs. Threlfal et al. (2013) note that limited finances can affect the level of care a parent provides to their children. Waldfogel et al. (2010) adds that financial responsibilities are a stressor for single mothers as there are barriers women face in securing jobs that pay enough money to meet the family's needs. Fathers' levels of financial stress may be less as they often secure higher paying jobs than mothers and are more likely to have full-time employment (Lerman, 2010). Studies note that single fathers generally have less economic stress than their counterparts with partners (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010); however, Olsen et al. (2013) does note that fathers do experience financial restraints that impact the activities they are able to with their children.

Although mothers struggle to meet some of their financial responsibilities, they are more inclined to use government programs to help meet these income demands



(Jackson et al., 2010). Fathers who struggle with employment issues may not seek government support because of the negative stereotypes associated with this help. Wight et al. (2010) add that ethnicity can impact the use of government programs and indicate that children in lower income areas use these programs more frequently. While parental stressors can vary depending on the situation that the parent is experiencing; financial restraints are the key stressor identified in the available research (Olsen, et al., 2013; Threlfal et al., 2013). Mothers and fathers both have concerns when meeting financial obligations, which can cause parents to experience high levels of stress when they cannot meet these demands. Olsen et al. (2013) indicates that some fathers are not able to engage in safe activities with their children because of financial restraints. Threlfal et al. (2013) also note that fathers who have financial struggles may experience feelings of failure because they are not able to meet the perceived expectations of financial provider.

### **Evolution of Single Fatherhood**

In order to understand the experiences of single fathers, one must understand the evolution of single fatherhood. As previously noted, males are not always identified in single parents studies, but researchers note the increase in the number of children living with their fathers as a cause for studies that focus on this population (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Ceglowski et al., 2010). Parenting in two family homes can be stressful because of the lack of social support and community resources (Ponnet et al., 2013), thus it may be assumable that being a single father is just as stressful. Although we can assume this, scientific research is necessary to support this notion, which Ostberg and Hagekill (2013) talk about in their study. They note that supportive services and the relationships fathers have with other adults are helpful in assisting these fathers in the

parenting process. As that research notes support is useful in helping single fathers raise their children, it is not surprising that the lack of support can negatively influence the parenting process.

Single fathers are important to the rearing of their children (Fagan & Kaufman, 2014), but they do face many challenges when raising their children independently. Single fathers can face additional stressors when they have to work to disprove society's stereotypes that they will run away from their responsibilities solely on the basis that they are males (Threlfal et al., 2013). With the extensive amount of research highlighting the role of single mothers, it is understandable why society questions the ability and role of single fathers in their children's upbringings. Fathers taking on the part of the sole provider are beginning to change society's perceptions that they are incapable of caring for their children (Flood, 2012). They are also proving that their presence in their children's lives is important and meaningful (Jackson et al., 2013). Currently, research highlights how fathers can help reduce risky behavior in adolescents (Ulvester, Breivik, & Thuen, 2010), improve behavioral concerns in children of all ages (Choi & Pyun, 2014), and contribute to healthy psychological development within children (Wilson & Prior, 2010). Bjarnason et al. (2012) add that children's economic status is highly dependent on their father's financial involvement, which is often part of child support. Research supports the notion that the father-child relationship is important because it encompasses emotional support (Jackson et al., 2013), financial support (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010), and physical support to the child (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). Flood (2012) adds that fathers contribute to their children's social well-being. Identifying the positive

aspects of a father's involvement in their children's lives can help minimize some of the negative stereotypes fathers face.

Although current research addresses the positive impact fathers have in their children's lives, past studies identify why the rise in studies on fatherhood is necessary. Lewis (1976) attributes the increase in interest of single fathers to the women's and men's liberation movements, the sexual equality movement, and changes to divorce laws. Women's and men's liberation movements focused on the rights of individuals based on their genders. These movements, along with the sexual equality movement, helped raise awareness of each of these groups' needs and potential to achieve goals regardless of their sex. They may have shown that an individual's gender should not dictate what they could accomplish, and helped some people realize that gender does not dictate parenting abilities (Flood, 2012). Flood (2012) adds that fathers' rights groups are also helping fathers achieve equality within a system that favors mothers. Since there is an awareness that fathers are important in their children's lives and can care for them independently, family laws and policy makers in the United States are acknowledging and developing ways to protect and enhance fathers' involvement with their children.

### **Role of the Single Father**

Men, like women, who become first time parents have to adapt to the changes of having to care for another human being. Some fathers accept the role of fatherhood as an unconditional part of their life (Lemay et al., 2010), becoming involved in caring for their children. Flood (2012) notes fathers' rights groups advocate for fathers to have the opportunity to obtain custody of the children. These fathers show that they are willing and able to care for their children by taking custody of their children. Lemay et al.

(2010), adds that fathers who accept responsibility for their children are supporting their commitment to the child and demonstrating their desire to be active members in the child's upbringing. Those fathers who are more involved in their children's lives look at their acceptance of their children as them being a good father (Threlfal et al. 2013). Along with accepting responsibility, fathers can develop patterns or mannerisms for dealing with their children, which can be a result of their accepting their "maternal" capacities (Biblarz & Stacey 2010). Olsen et al. (2013) add that men who become fathers may shift their masculine practices to more nurturing and pleasurable behaviors. Lemay et al. (2010) adds that some fathers determine how they will parent through their own ideas and views about fathering. Males who have a positive relationship with their own fathers tend to expect their parenting style to be similar to their own father and note that they will also provide financial and emotional support to their children (Lemay et al., 2010). Fathers having a positive thought process about parenting may be a contributing factor to their accepting the single parent role, which may then lead to positive father-child relationships. The father-child relationship is a package that includes behavioral (Jackson et al., 2013), emotional (Flood, 2012), financial (Lawson 2012), and physical components (Ceglowski et al., 2010) that the father provides to the child. Wade et al. (2011) add that single fathers also complete housework (Bronter-Tinkew et al., 2010), provide childcare (Parker & Wang, 2013), and engage in positive activities and behaviors with their children (Fagan & Kaufman, 2014).

Another interesting aspect of the father-child relationship is some of the contributing factors on why fathers engage in their children's lives. Employment and education were two common factors associated with a father's involvement with their

children (Rienks, Wadsworth, Markman, Einhorn, & Etter, 2014). Parker and Wang (2013) found that 46% of the fathers in their study felt they did not spend enough time with their children because of their work schedules. Research also notes that employed fathers and those who have a higher education tend to be more involved with their children (Lawson, 2012). Other factors influencing the father-child relationship include: age (Lemay et al., 2010), ethnicity (Rochlen et al., 2010), and social support (Wade et al., 2011).

The relationship fathers have with other individuals can also affect how they interact and deal with their children (Umberson et al., 2010). For instance, research has identified social (Wade et al., 2011) and family (Umberson et al., 2010) support as a key help for fathers, because these supports may provide emotional support to the father. This emotional support can be important in helping minimize the levels of stress single father's experience, which McCubbin and Figley (2014) note this is a concern for fathers with minimal support. Jackson et al. (2010) note that this social or emotional support can help minimize stress levels. However, fathers who want to raise their children on their own do not necessarily feel the need to rely on family members for support. Some fathers experience a decrease in social activities and lose some their social support because they make the decision to change their past behavior (Lemay et al., 2010). As part of the adjustment to being a single father, some men minimize their contact with friends, limit social activities, and spend more time with their children (Lemay et al., 2010). While it is important for fathers to spend time with their children, social support can also help single parents care for their children, and decreasing the amount of time some fathers spend with their friends can cause additional stress to the family. Support is

effective in helping single parents deal with stress (Wade et al., 2011); therefore, developing techniques and programs that promote the use of social service agencies can provide support to single fathers.

Literature also helps to understand why fathers take on primary responsibility of raising their children. The three key reasons fathers seek responsibility for their children include divorce (Thomson, & McLanahan, 2012), removal from the mother by a social service agency due to abuse or neglect (Goldscheider, Scott, Lilja, & Bronte-Tinkew, 2013), and the child wanting to live with their father (Haugen, 2010). In these situations, the father faces the responsibility of caring for the child because of external circumstances that lead the father to have to make a decision about becoming a single father. The decision to take on the sole-provider role may not be an easy one, and the father has to consider the outcome of taking on this role. Accepting this responsibility, fathers have to deal with feelings of uncertainty about being a good single parent (Cook, 2014), examine their ability to provide for the child (Lemay et al., 2010), explore concerns with being isolated because of single parenthood (Rochlen et al., 2010), adjust from their individual lifestyle (Lemay et al., 2010), and deal with concerns about communicating with their child (Hofferth et al., 2012).

### **Single Father Stressors**

Research findings detail the struggles single parents experience when they are raising their children alone, indicating that single parents are responsible for meeting all of the child's needs alone, causing increased stress (Wight et al., 2010). The single parent is responsible for increasing role demands, including childcare (Ceglowski et al., 2010), household chores (Wade et al., 2011), and financial provision (Bronte-Tinkew et

al., 2010). While single fathers are similar to single mothers in that they experience struggles that can affect their ability to care for their children, their experiences may be different because of a change in role demands and expectations. These role demands may cause role strain, which occurs when fathers have to complete all caring and household tasks with no help from the mother. Ceglowski et al. (2010) found that, in their research, fathers with full custody reported higher levels of role strain because of the need to balance employment, child caring independently, and family issues. Fathers also express concerns about child development (Wilson & Prior, 2010), dealing with their children's emotions (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), and housework (Wade et al., 2011), which is a change in their role demand. While role strain can be negative, research also details positive feedback from single fathers when assessing this stress. Troilo and Coleman (2012) note that fathers believe they should physically be involved in their children's lives to foster a positive father-child relationship. Olsen et al. (2013) add that while fathers identify financial restraints as a stressor, they note that keeping their children safe despite their financial struggles makes them feel like a good provider.

Hardships are a commonly identified stressor within studies noting that fathers identify hardships as a factor contributing to why they question their effectiveness as a parent (Dufur et al., 2010). This lack of confidence can arise because of the fathers' difficulties communicating with their children (Ulvestad et al., 2010), societies' input that they are incapable of caring for their children (Rochlen et al., 2010), and economic pressures (Flood, 2012). Single fathers are perceived more negatively than married, divorced, and step fathers (Thompson & McLanahan, 2012). Although hardships affect mothers and fathers, these hardships are different between these parents. One recognized

difference is the economic disparities, with fathers making more money than mothers (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010).

Parents with higher education levels tend to maintain a higher socioeconomic status and financial stability (Lerman, 2010). Fathers who are unable to seek or maintain employment feel inadequate (Avellar et al., 2011) and tend to live in poverty (Lerman, 2010). Studies also show links between a father's education level and ability to secure higher paying occupations (Lerman, 2010). Fathers who have fulltime employment report other complexities with being unable to care for their children in the way they want. Fathers note that working can adversely affect the amount of time they can spend with their children (Waldfogel et al., 2010). The struggle of dealing with juggling the role of nurturer and breadwinner can cause higher levels of stress and negatively affect parenting abilities (Umberson et al., 2010; Wade et al., 2011).

Research also documents that single mothers are able to complete both roles with minimal negative feedback; however, fathers have the additional pressure of dealing with societal expectations that they are not nurturing like mothers (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). Males who take on the role of the single parent can feel that they have to act more nurturing in order to be accepted by society (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). This need to be nurturing can cause conflicting feelings about their ability to be loving fathers. In order for fathers to feel comfortable and able to parent their children, they need to be accepted as fathers and not feel they need to be mothers. Males bring different parenting styles to child rearing (Ceglowski et al., 2010), requiring society to understand that fathers do not possess the same characteristics as mothers.



Another hardship some fathers face involves their housing and issues with their living conditions. The US Census Bureau (2012) identifies that more than 2,500 children residing in the United States live in poverty. Research suggests that single parents have higher rates of living in poverty with 20-24% of children in New York living in poverty (Borjas, 2011). Lerman (2010) adds that single fathers tend to live in poverty more than married fathers and children residing with their fathers more than their counterparts (Dufur et al., 2010). Bjarnason, et al. (2012) add that children living in less economically comfortable situations have less life satisfaction, making it a concern with single fathers housing and economical struggles impacting their children. Raising children includes meeting their needs for childcare, food, health care, and housing (Wight et al., 2010); however, with single fathers having higher rates of poverty it becomes harder to meet these needs. Threlfal et al. (2013) note fathers and children residing in low-income neighborhoods have less access to quality resources, which can increase the father's level of concern for their child. Given the concerns with single fathers housing and economical struggles, the question then becomes, does lower-income living affect parenting when fathers do not want to participate in or use help? Another concern detailed by the literature is the differences between fathers from low-income areas and their counterparts in higher income areas. Fathers who live in these low-income communities are at risk for experiencing poverty, (Wight et al., 2010) and experiencing economical and external pressures that affect their parenting abilities. These areas also consist of housing concerns (Dufur et al., 2010) and the availability of supportive social services. Research notes that the less social support a parent has the higher risk of

negative stressors the parent can experience, including an increase in psychological problems (Rochlen et al., 2010).

### **Role of Social Support in Parenting**

The role of social support is to help the parent with childcare and to provide financial and psychological support (Rochlen et al., 2010). Social support also includes someone to confide in and someone to provide support during a time of crisis (Patulny, 2012). This support is a valuable part of parenting because it may allow the father to worry about other stressors that affect parenting and serve as a protective factor for others (Wade et al., 2011). Hofferth et al. (2010) add that African American fathers are more responsible than their counterparts, and while African Americans use more social service support there is an inaccurate negative perception of social service providers that can negatively influence fathers requesting such help. Research surrounding social support and single parents, especially for single fathers, notes that social support is necessary during the transition from non-caretaker to caretaker. Fathers shying away from the use of social service agencies is concerning because the purpose of these programs is to help families. It is also concerning for fathers living in poverty given the disparities between racial and ethnic groups (Hofferth et al., 2010).

Although researchers recognize the value of social support in the lives of fathers and their children, Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong (2009) note that few programs providing support to fathers have explored a random design or observation piece to capture the advantages these services can provide in assisting fathers. This lack of information is concerning, especially because studies have found that fathers do have supportive service needs (Wade et al., 2011). Rienks et al. (2011) note that supportive

services, such as programs and workshops focusing on parenting skills, can improve father-child relationships and can help minimize the effects of stress that single fathers experience because of the gap in social support. Research leaves questions about the importance these services provide single fathers and how single fathers view these services.

The current study will examine the stressors each of the members identifies and explore the social supports that these fathers feel are helpful to them while they are caring for their children. The goal of the current study is to identify the specific stressors fathers in New York City feel while being single parents; this information will in turn help identify services and supports to assist single fathers parenting their children.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The literature review details key stressors single parents experience with a common theme being the stress associated with having to meet all the child's needs working alone. This theme is connected to the financial restraints single parents identify as stressors. Single parents also identify other stressors that impact how they parent their children. Although there are common themes among single parents, a majority of the research participants are single mothers, which leaves questions about the themes single fathers' experience. The literature details the hardships single fathers experience while raising their children. The most pressing identified issue is the lack of confidence fathers have when faced with raising their children as single parents. Based on the available research, single fathers tend to internalize societal views of them, which then affect their feelings about single fatherhood. While this stressor has been identified, there is a lack in the literature regarding the perspective of the fathers on why they feel this way. The

present study will use excerpts from single father interviews to help understand how and why males feel this way. The current research will also use the father's personal feelings to provide insight into these experiences and will address the gap by providing information from the fathers on what they feel would benefit themselves and other single fathers.

Chapter 3 begins with an explanation of qualitative methods and how this will guide the research study. Grounded Theory is the primary approach for the study and will allow for the development of a new theory on the experiences of single fathers, with a focus on stressors impacting the parenting process. Participants for the study are chosen from the New York City area and will include only single fathers who will undergo a semi-structured interview. The interview will allow the research to be collected and be the basis for the study.

## Chapter 3

### **Introduction**

The two earlier chapters detail the experiences of single parents, with a focus on single fathers parenting their children independently. During the literature review, the key identified stressors were financial struggles (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010), deficits in supportive services (Jackson et al., 2013), and internal factors surrounding fathers questioning their ability to parent alone (Dufur et al., 2010). Although there is research on single fathers, there remains a deficit in the available research focusing on their experiences and needs. Many of the studies also use a quantitative approach, which is not the methodology focus of this study. The purpose for the qualitative approach is to obtain a sense of the stressors single fathers identify by using their experiences to explain the phenomenon.

In this chapter a majority of the information focuses on the methodology of the study, with the initial part of the chapter detailing the reason for the study and the method, which is a qualitative study on the stressors single fathers experience while raising their children in the inner city of New York. A key part of this chapter is the section on issues of trustworthiness, because this area details what precautions occur during the study to minimize deficits. It includes what steps I took to reduce biases and trauma to the participants during their voluntary participation in the research. Another key area in this chapter is detailing the participant population, which is effective in allowing other researchers to duplicate and expand on the current study. For example, in this study participants have to meet the inclusion criteria of being a single father (currently or previously), being over 18, and residing in one of the five boroughs of New

York City. The role of the interviewer focused on the responsibility of the researcher and the participant. The American Psychological Association (APA) sets the standard for psychological research, which has been applied to the current study, including taking precautions to prevent harm to the participants.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

A qualitative method will be used to explore the stressors single fathers experience when raising their children in New York City. Over the past two decades there has been a rise in single fathers raising their children alone (Rochlen et al., 2010), which has created a need for research on this population and their experiences. While there are some current studies examining the role of single fathers, most of these studies lack the examination of personal experiences from the fathers themselves. The use of qualitative research helps researchers understand humans and their social functioning (Toloie-Eshaghy et al., 2011). Qualitative methods also allow researchers to analyze information from participants, through a person-centered viewpoint (Moriarty, 2011 ). This approach also allows for detailed information about the participants' feelings in relationship to the problem, and allows for analysis of personal experiences (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). Quantitative studies can provide an abundance of comparative information. For instance, quantitative studies show the rates of single fathers who earn higher incomes than single mothers (Hofferth et al., 2010) while qualitative studies seek to understand how fathers make more than mothers. Quantitative methods are also useful when the researcher is attempting to compare variables; however, it is difficult to understand the participants' perspectives when using these approaches because the information does not incorporate the individuals' descriptions within the area of study.

For this study, the qualitative method will enable the researcher to understand the view of the fathers and provide information taken directly from the participants.

In the proposed study, the qualitative method will allow the reader to understand the overall experiences of single fathers through their own words. This design method is more effective for this study, because the accounts provided by the participants will provide insight into what stressors directly affect them through their viewpoints. The interview aspect of qualitative research will provide the reader with information on how fathers feel about being single parents, what stressors they identify, and what services they feel would be useful to other single fathers. The use of fathers' own stories, in their own words, will provide examples of these experiences from people who have lived them.

Grounded Theory is a research tradition that develops a theory that explains human experiences (Hall et al., 2013). Traditionally, Grounded Theory allows the researcher to build a theory from the bottom up (Bendassolli, 2013) and formulate a theory based on the proposed study's findings. Grounded Theory's main purpose is to identify a phenomenon by identifying key concepts (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). Glaser and Strauss were the first to introduce Grounded Theory to researchers. Through their theory, they believed the gap between practice and theory could be filled (Hall et al., 2013). In relation to this study, Grounded Theory will allow the development of a theory that identifies the stressors single fathers experience in inner city environments. The design will test the common belief that single fathers are less likely to ask for support because of concerns that society will view them as unable to care for their children, as noted by Rochelen et al. (2010).

Grounded Theory will also allow for interpretation and development of theories that incorporate service needs fathers identify as useful when caring for their children. This theory can then help community agencies service single fathers effectively, by appealing to their needs. Although other qualitative methods such as ethnography and phenomenology are available, they employ a different approach that does not meet the criteria of this study. Ethnography studies often focus on participant observations and involve the researcher being an active part of the culture under study (Moriarty, 2011). For this study, the observation of the participants in their natural environments is not planned. Phenomenology is similar to Grounded Theory, as they both collect data from the participant; however, Grounded Theorists compare and analyze the data to form a theory (Bendassolli, 2013). The main reason for selecting Grounded Theory is to make interpretations that explain single parenting through the fathers' experiences and provide information to community agencies that service this group.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher will meet with and interviewing each of the participants to secure information to be used in the study. While the focus is to obtain information from the participants, the researcher will also take field notes to supplement the recorded accounts. After all of the interviews are completed, the next step is to complete the transcribing process, which includes going over the field notes and reviewing the recordings, sorting the main concepts, and developing patterns. During the transcribing process, the researcher will highlight key ideas or thoughts for inclusion into the accounts section. The use of a random selection process for participants will help reduce biases, as there is no direct connection between the participants and the researcher; therefore, there is no



favoritism or preference of one participant's experiences over those of another participant. The researcher works with a city organization that deals with families that can include single fathers. While the researcher does not have direct contact with the families, there is a chance the fathers can have some involvement with researchers agency or one of the researchers employer's sister companies. The researcher will not have any direct contact with these fathers prior to the research study; there is no chance of any power or control over the participant. Disclosure of the researcher's employer is not relevant to the study and will not be disclosed to the participants. Also, participation in the study is voluntary, and each participant is signing an agreement that details his ability or option to withdraw from the study at any time.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

The purpose of this research is to obtain a better understanding of the stressors single fathers in New York City experience when raising their children. Expectations of single fathers to be sole financial providers are evident throughout history (Rienks et al., 2011). While their ability to function as sole caretakers has been questioned in the literature, their perspective on the stressors they experienced has not been investigated.

For the purpose of this study, a single father is a male over the age of 18 who is caring for at least one of his biological children. The male can be a widower, divorcee, separated, or a never-married father. He must have a child under the age of 10, who lives with him all of the time, and he must maintain primary responsibility for the child. Part of the primary responsibility includes meeting all of the child's basic needs. For the purpose of this study, only fathers who have raised children between the ages of 3-8 will

be included in the study. The rationale for this inclusion criterion is that children within this age range require their caretakers to meet all of their needs and need specific stimulation to help their development. These children are part of the early childhood population, which is where they begin to learn techniques and attachment skills that will help them develop (Spieker, Oxford, Kelly, Nelson, & Fleming, 2012). For instance, Milteer, Ginsburg, Mulligan, Ameenuddin, Brown, Christakis, et al. (2012) note that social, emotional, cognitive, and well-being of children begins during early childhood. Cyr, Euser, Bakermans-Kranenburg, and Van Ijzendoorn (2010) add that child attachment and bonding also begins during early childhood and that primary attachment occurs during the first year (Spieker et al, 2012). Fanti and Enrich (2010) note that parent's interaction with younger children can also impact how they internalize and externalize problems and increase the changes of children developing behavior issues as they grow older.

The research population will be single fathers of various ages from the New York City area (including the boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, the Bronx, and Queens). For purposes of this study, a single father is a man, 18 years or older at the time of his child's birth, who is caring for his minor child without the help of a co-parent (Lemay et al., 2010). In addition, all participants must have had physical custody of their children, without any other adults residing in the household. All members will be males; however, ethnicity and socioeconomic status do not influence participation. Those that meet the requirements will then move on to the interview phase of the research.

Sample sizes for qualitative studies are often smaller than in quantitative studies; however, consideration of specific factors should occur when determining how many

participants to include. The main focus is to use enough participants to achieve a goal of receiving new information or themes (Mason, 2010). Fugard and Potts (2015) note that the sample size for qualitative research depends on the phenomenon under study, as the rarity of the population can impact sample size. Mason (2010) notes that qualitative studies typically use saturation as the principle for determining sample size, and when a study aims to research a smaller section of a larger discipline, saturation might occur more quickly. Creswell (2012) recommends 20-30 participants for studies involving a Grounded Theory approach. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) note that researchers should estimate and justify their sample size by using similar studies as a basis. Coles (2009) completed a qualitative study involving 20 single African American fathers, Trolio and Coleman (2012) used 20 single father in their qualitative study, and Olsen et al. (2013) interviewed a total of 15 fathers in their study. Given that all three of the previously noted studies surround Grounded Theory, the current sample will seek to include 15-20 participants.

Selection of research participants will occur through a Convenience Sample by word of mouth at community centers, parenting centers, children service centers, daycare centers, churches, and from co-workers. The Convenience Sample is commonly used because of accessibility, ease, or speed (Anderson, 2010), but this is being incorporated into this study because the researcher has affiliations with organizations who work with single fathers. The purpose of using this type of sampling is because of the rarity of single fathers in the sample area. Fathers will not be hand-picked, but rather the community programs that work with this population. While a Convenience Sample is not always suitable for this type of study, a Convenience Sample and a theory-based sample

are occurring simultaneously. Theory-based or theoretical sampling includes selecting pertinent information from the participants on the basis that this information will provide important theoretical constructs (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, this sampling method will include the incorporation of single fathers to help build a theory on single fathers' stressors, based on their life experiences. As part of my study, the researcher is seeking to develop a theory, and this approach is useful in developing theoretical concepts used in theory building (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In an effort to recruit participants, community resources are being asked to post and distribute flyers that will indicate the need for single male parents to take part in a research study. The flyer will provide a mini-synopsis of what the potential participants will be doing should they volunteer for the study. Contact information will be on the flyers, so that potential participants can contact me to set up appointments to meet for the screening process. The potential participants will go through an initial assessment (survey), and if selected, they will then move onto the interview phase of the research. Each participant will receive an Informed Consent form from the researcher that will include the purpose of the study, expected duration, procedures, their right to decline participation and withdraw at any time, prospective research benefits, limits of confidentiality, and contact information for questions about the research and a participants' rights form (APA, 2010).

### **Instrumentation**

During the study, each participant will complete a semi-structured interview to explore their experiences as a single father. The questions that each participant will answer are specific to the current study and developed by the researcher. The purpose of

using specific questions is to elicit the most useful information for this study. The questions explore the experiences each participant has faced as a single father. Using a semi-structured interview will allow for open-ended questions that will explore the area of study and are less standardized, as the interviewer has to adjust the questions depending on the participants comprehension skills (Merriam, 2014).

Research instruments were explored to determine if they could help guide the research process, but after screening some of the already available instruments, it was determined that none of the currently available tools meet the criteria for addressing the specific needs of this study. One tool that was explored was the Parent Behavior Checklist (PBC), which was developed in 1994 by Robert Fox. This tool measures expectations, discipline, and nurturing; however, the current study is not assessing for all of these areas. It is also specific to children ages 1-4 (Fox, 1994). Another tool that was explored is the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), which is currently available in four editions and a short form. The PSI is designed to evaluate stress in the parent-child relationship by focusing on parent and child characteristics and situational/demographic life stressors (Abidin, 1995). The target age range for children is from 0-12 years of age. This tool aims to identify dysfunctional parenting and to predict potential for parental behavioral problems (Abidin, 1995). The two concerns with this tool are firstly the age range, because participants for this study may have children over 12 year of age, and secondly the PSI's focus on the relationship between the parent and child, which is not the intent of this study.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection will occur through recruitment to obtain potential participants from the community under study. Once the participants are available, they will undergo a two-step process, the first step will be the screening process, which will involve perspective participants filling out a brief screening tool that will determine if the participant meets the criteria. The screening tool will include basic questions that will allow the researcher to determine if the participant meets the inclusion criteria. This tool will incorporate specific questions about the potential participant's role as a parent, which will then aid in determining the potential participant's ability to take part in the study. The screening tool will also provide the start of the rapport-building process. During this process, potential participants will also be able to ask questions about the research. The process of completing the screening tool will take place in the community - at a local coffee shop, library, community center, or other viable office space.

The next step will be the semi-structured interview, which will also take place within the community. For the interview process, participants will have the option to meet the researcher at any of the above referenced locations at a time that is convenient for the participant. This will heighten the chances of the participant being available for the interview. A semi-structured interview is being used because it allows for a structure that will keep the participant's focus on the topic and allow for the use of open-ended questions (Anderson, 2010). During the interview, the participant will answer questions to obtain information pertinent to the study. The purpose is to obtain concrete and specific details of single fathers' experiences while raising their children. All of the questions are open-ended, which will allow the participants to incorporate the information they deem relevant to their experiences. Each of the questions will meet

specific criteria used to obtain the information that will address the researcher's purpose for the study. Questions 1 through 4 focuses on the causes of becoming a single father, daily routines, and expectations the father has about this process. These questions will provide insight into the factors contributing to these males becoming single fathers and accepting the role of single parent. Questions 5 through 6 are about those family and friends who are or were available to assist these fathers, and will provide insight into what kind of assistance these resources provide. Questions 7 through 10 focus specifically on any stressors the participants experienced during their time as a single parent, and how they feel external influences contribute to those stressors. The final question addresses what services, if any; the participants feel could have helped them improve their parenting experience. To help address the research study, questions seven through eleven are the most pertinent.

Recruiting participants for this study is important in completing a successful study, but this can be difficult to complete for several reasons, including a lack of available participants. Securing participants to partake in the study will involve an aggressive recruitment process because of the limited availability of single fathers in the New York City area. Flyers will be distributed to several community agencies within the five boroughs to increase the potential of securing the necessary number of participants. The recruitment locations involve most of the major locations, including precincts, libraries, schools, and other community resources. Newington and Metcalfe (2014) note that individuals participate in studies if they believe in the purpose and need for the study, so adding additional details can increase volunteer size. Given that individuals are more inclined to participate when they support the study, the flyer will include a synopsis of

the research and procedures. In the event there are not enough participants, a reminder will be sent to the community agencies to post the flyer and hand them out to potential participants as it has been noted that reminders help increase participation (Newington & Metcalfe, 2014).

As part of the research process, each interview is tape-recorded for accuracy and to assist in the documenting of the accounts. The tape recordings will also allow for the interviews to be replayed, ensuring all key points are identified and this will in turn be used to determine the patterns. Although the interviews are recorded, notes will also be taken during the interview process, which will allow for detailing mannerisms and other observations the participant may be displaying during the data collection process. Documenting notes also allows me to document important points, highlight key information, and identify patterns during the interview process. The participant's accounts will also be incorporated in an exploratory format. These notes will also be locked in a safe to prevent anyone else from accessing the data.

At the conclusion of the study, each participant will have the opportunity to debrief and discuss their experiences of participating in the study. During this process, if the participant displays or reports any concerning behaviors associated with the study, he will be given a referral to see a therapist who can help him work through the issue. Participants will also have the opportunity to again ask any questions he may have at that time. Any follow-up interviews will take place on a needs basis, and will be used to clarify already obtained information. In an effort to minimize any confusion or problems, the participant is going to be advised of the possibility of a follow up interview, if



necessary. Given the need to review all the data, there will be a three to six week time frame for any necessary follow-ups to occur.

### **Data Analysis**

The first part of the data analysis is to transcribe the recorded interviews verbatim. After the transcribing, the data is organized through the use of NVivo Software. The next process will be the data analysis of the information, which will occur through content analysis. This analysis involves breaking down the information into categories or distinct concepts (Olsen et al., 2013). Content analysis also includes important pieces of information being coded and compared. The next part of this process involves reviewing each interview to identify what the collected data are saying about the overall experience of being a single father. This will also help in performing the second step.

The next step involves identifying and highlighting specific key concepts that contribute to the phenomenon. The proposed study is seeking to obtain statements that will aid in understanding the experiences men face when they are a single parent. Toloie-Eshlaghy et al. (2011) note that the extraction of pertinent ideas is important in increasing the quality of the reported data; therefore, selecting and incorporating excerpts from the participants will provide richness to the study.

Step three involves labeling the key concepts into categories that will identify each of the participants' feelings surrounding their experiences as single parents. Part of this process also involves interpreting and reframing each participant's statements, to reflect these experiences in an understandable language. In addition, the reframing allows for the inclusion of key concepts, but helps to eliminate data that are not pertinent to explaining and supporting the significance of the study. Nvivo software is being used

for the sorting and organizing process. This software is also helpful in coding the interviews, which will help cut down on the time needed to sort through each interview for key patterns. Once the data has been identified and labeled it can be incorporated into the study and used to support the findings. The accounts also allow the reader to understand each of the participant's experiences through his own eyes. After all of the concepts are included, the researcher moves on to the process of developing a theory based on the findings. Again the participants' accounts will help support the developed theory and provide documented accounts as to why the generation of this theory is pertinent.

As part of the data interpretation, the Grounded Theory approach is going to be used to guide the findings and allow for other researchers to build on the current research. The purpose of Grounded Theory is to formulate and develop a new theory instead of using an already developed theory to describe the data. This perspective will guide my data interpretation. It is also important to note that data collection and analysis will occur simultaneously, as Grounded Theory requires this, so that the researcher has the opportunity to "increase the quality" of proper issues within the study (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011).

In addition, using quotes taken directly from the participants will also help ensure that inclusion of each participant's accounts occurs, and will provide support for the findings. The inclusion of these accounts will provide insight into the problem these fathers experience through their eyes, and express their life experiences. Existing research will also help guide my research and influence the background information for research.

The inclusion of the participant's accounts will provide a clear understanding of the supportive services single fathers could benefit from while they are raising their children. By including specific experts, a better understanding of their experiences is being provided, because the reader will be able to see how the father's account may coincide with the concepts and formulated theory. This understanding can also help design programs geared towards assisting these single fathers. The implementation of father-focused programs can empower fathers to step forward and raise their children, without the fear of being unable to meet the child's basic needs for food, clothing, medical care, supervision, and shelter.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

In any study questions about trustworthiness arise; however, it is the responsibility of the researcher to minimize the apprehension of others. Qualitative research has not always been met with positive feedback, as quantitative research has long been the preferred research design. However, there is a growing consensus that both methods are important in the research field. Anderson (2010) notes that qualitative research is often judged as biased, small scale, and lacking; therefore, researchers using this method should be especially careful to prove trustworthiness. Qualitative research also has to undergo tests of reliability and validity to prove why this method is effective in research. Anderson (2010) provides a reference to identifying key aspects of qualitative research that shows why this method is equivalent to quantitative studies. Although validity and reliability are the two areas of trustworthiness in research, these areas are not addressed in the same naturalistic manner as quantitative research (Rubin & Babbie, 2013).

In the proceeding sections, the researcher will provide information to support the credibility and validity of this research study. The purpose of proving reliability and validity is to prove the point of the study, by using the data and information to do this. In qualitative research, credibility and validity refer to the study's objectivity and believability of the collected data.

Validity is the ability to replicate the current study, which is also important in determining the validity of qualitative research (Creswall, 2012). Providing details of the research will occur, so that other researchers can duplicate the study. The details will include a description on how the collection of the data occurred, documenting the tools in the research, and including the analysis process. Validity also includes the honesty and genuineness of the collected data (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). Credibility is the internal validity of the study and addresses areas of triangulation, saturation, reflectivity, and prolonged contact.

### **Credibility**

Establishment of credibility can occur by providing a true picture of the phenomena, which the researcher has to establish by detailing the participant's accounts, to show honesty and integrity. Participants for this study were randomly selected from different community agencies within the New York City area; therefore, it is an assumption that participants will provide accurate information, as they volunteered to be a part of the study. Throughout the study, participants have the option to withdraw for any reason without any consequences. Participants also have the option to discontinue their participation if they do not want to continue with the study, which can also increase

honesty, because there is no pressure to remain in the study. This was put into place so that participants would not feel obligated to continue participation.

Member checks provide the participant an opportunity to approve certain aspects of the researcher's interpretations. Member checks can allow the participant the opportunity to provide feedback about the study and information obtained (Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checks also allow the participant to check for accuracy of the data and provide the researcher with clarity into what the subject is describing to the interviewer (Harper & Cole, 2012). In the study, the researcher will complete a second interview with all participants to obtain clarity and to go over some of the collected data. Another way to reduce errors is to continuously complete member checks, which the researcher will incorporate during the initial and follow-up interviews.

### **Transferability**

Transferability, also known as external validity, is established through providing a rich description of the study so it can be applied to other situations and studies. To achieve transferability, a description of each step of the study occurs in the methodology section, providing details surrounding the study, which sets the framework for the findings. Transferability adds to the verification of trustworthiness, because the assumption is that the phenomenon is presented in an accurate manner. In qualitative research, transferability can be reached through the transparency and openness of the research (Sinkovics, & Alfoldi, 2012). I will establish transferability by providing sufficient details on single fathers from this study that are comparable to information already known from present studies.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is necessary in all research studies as it is used to ensure that the data represents the phenomenon (Sirriyeh, Lawton, Gardner, & Armitage, 2012).

Dependability is established by showing that the researcher minimized mistakes during the collecting, interpreting, and reporting parts of the study. In an effort to reduce errors with reporting data, all interviews are recorded for accuracy of statements and notes are taken during the interview process. The use of Nvivo software will also help with sorting the information and helping identify key themes within the study.

Triangulation is also part of established dependability and involves validating self-reports of participants in research studies, which is done through the use of different sources or participants. For this study, triangulation occurs through the interviewing of the participants to obtain a sense of their individual experiences and then comparing each participant's account to assess for similarities. The sample size will help determine how many participants will take part in the research.

### **Conformability**

Conformability in qualitative studies is established when research findings can be corroborated by other individuals. Using the experiences of the participants and detailing their accounts using direct quotes will help establish conformability. The researcher will also check and re-check the obtained data to minimize the chances of bias or distortion. Summarizing each participant's experiences and seeking patterns within the accounts will also show how these participants have experienced similar situations. Conformability is also established when the collected data supports the findings and reported results (Halaweh, 2012).

### **Intra Reliability**

Internal reliability is another area that helps to prove the honesty of qualitative research. Identifying the similarities will help determine the theory surrounding this phenomenon. Saturation is also a guiding factor in determining sample size within qualitative methods (Mason, 2010). The current study focuses on single fathers within the New York City area, which may cause saturation to be reached more quickly than a study using New York State participants, as the population is smaller in New York City than in New York State. Assessing for saturation in this study will occur during the analysis stage, through the review of the participant's accounts, to determine when there are no new concepts or experiences surfacing.

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

The American Psychological Association (APA) has a set of guidelines and principles that each psychologist and prospective psychologist is supposed to follow when conducting research. Psychologists use these ethical codes to determine professional behavior, and by knowing these codes psychologists are able to take precautions to prevent harm, injustices, and violations to research participants (APA, 2010). Working with human participants requires the researcher to take reasonable precautions to prevent harm to the participants. These precautions include explaining the research study to the participant and providing information about the research procedures, allowing the participant to debrief, and providing external services, as necessary. The participants for this study are adult male fathers who are voluntarily agreeing to participate in the research.

One potential ethical concern when working with humans is the concept of informed consent. According to the APA, when conducting a study, the researcher has

an obligation to obtain an informed consent from the participant (APA, 2010). While the participant may sign the informed consent form, the researcher has to ensure that the participant understands the purpose of the research, implications, limits of confidentiality, disclosures, and intended uses of the information. In order to ensure that my participants understand all of these areas, the researcher will use language that is understandable and easy to read, and will also allow the participants to ask any questions they have, both prior and during the research process.

Confidentiality is another ethical concern that can occur when conducting research. While the participants will sign consents agreeing to participate in the research, there are still measures needed to ensure that the collected data is not accessible to others. In an effort to protect client confidentiality, a safe is going to be used to hold all of the collected data, which will be stored in my home. The safe combination or key will only be in my possession, and no one else will have access to the data. All of the audiotapes, transcripts, and files associated with the study will remain securely locked in this safe. All identifying information will be excluded during the validation of the results, so that participants will not be identified. Taking measures to protect the participant's personal information also includes interviews taking place at private locations, as suggested by Bersoff (2008).

Researchers also have to be cautious of the potential harm the researcher poses to the participants. The APA notes reasonable steps to avoid harming the research participants are necessary when conducting research (APA, 2010). In an effort to reduce the risks of harm to the client, the participant can stop participating at any time during the research. The researcher will also ask two or three licensed psychologists within the area



to keep a few time slots available, should any of the participants need someone to talk to during or after the research. Each participant will be given the information for the psychologist at the onset of the research; in this way they would not have to feel uncomfortable with asking for information after the research process starts.

The IRB assesses legal and ethical issues surrounding how the research is conducted, ensuring the research uses integrity when conducting and reporting the findings of research; it also ensures that the research abides by the confidentiality and participant protection agreements. This includes reviewing the informed consents being signed by the participants and the participant disclosure process used in the study. For this study, the plan is to use human subjects from local areas such as churches, preventive agencies, and the Administration for Children Services' father population. While the participants may not be a part of the agency, they may have some connection to the agency where the recruitment is taking place.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of the research and details the procedures that occur during the research process. One of the main points of this chapter is the section on the data collection, because it addresses how the data will be collected through a semi-structured interview with questions that focus on the experiences of single fathers. Within the data collection section there is a breakdown of how each interview is categorized to help develop patterns surrounding this population. Another important aspect of this chapter is the issue of trustworthiness because the reliability and validity of the current study is discussed and is important in supporting the study as an accurate representation of single father's stressors, as identified by them through their own

experiences. This chapter also details the criteria for each participant, so other researchers can duplicate the current study. The chapter ends with an explanation of how the APA guidelines protect the participants, and how, the researcher has taken the necessary steps to minimize issues with confidentiality, participant harm, and protection from the inappropriate disclosure of any collected data.

The following chapter will address the actual study and the findings from the collected data. In the next chapter, the researcher will document some of the accounts of the participants and document the stressors that they identify. Chapter 4 will also address a significant amount of the methodology using the data that the fathers provide. While there are services in New York City for single parents, many of them are female focused; therefore, using the information from the research findings to interpret the needs of single fathers can help improve the quality of life for this population.

## Chapter 4

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to fill in the gaps surrounding the stressors single fathers' experience and provide additional insight into the phenomenon. Participants for this study were chosen to address a void in the current research as there has been no research specific to single fathers living in New York City. This study captured a population that has not consistently partaken in previous qualitative studies. Interviewees included single fathers who have cared for their children ranging from the age of 3-8 and have been residing with them on a primary basis. Participants also lived in the NYC area while they were parenting single handily.

The qualitative approach was utilized to fill in the gap surrounding the knowledge of the stressors single fathers, experience. A qualitative method enabled interviewees to give an account of their experiences. Allowing participants to express their reality provides researchers with a rich account of what single fathers endure when they are single parents. To obtain reports from these fathers, they participated in a semi-structured interview, which included 12 open-ended questions. Each question was designed to draw out information that would capture the lived experiences of single fathers in New York City.

Single parents have been examined from various perspectives (Exum & Ferary, 2012; & Threlfal et al., 2013) with a primary focus on comparative studies between mothers and fathers (Coles, 2015). These studies usually identify the father as the absent father or parent who has limited contact with their child. There is an identified need for studies focusing on fathers due to the difference in how mothers and father deal with

being a single parent (Turchi, 2015). Exploring the gap in single father studies allowed for the current study to add to the available data and provide insight into this phenomenon.

Chapter 4 opens with a description of the population used for this study. A synopsis of the settings used to interview each of the participants occurs at the onset of the chapter. Information about the data collection will take place in this section, followed by a description of the process of analyzing the information. Issues of trustworthiness are also discussed and will assist the reader in identifying areas of validity, reliability, confidentiality, and the ethical protection procedures taken to protect each of the participants. Chapter 4 concludes with a section addressing the results from the collected data. Within the results, tables will be provided to outline key areas of the study. Documenting direct quotes from the participants is documented in the results area to support the research findings.

### **Setting**

New York City encompasses five boroughs consisting of different community districts in each borough; therefore, the setting for this study takes place in various locations throughout the city. Interviews were completed face-to-face with each participant. As noted in Chapter 3, all members chose where they wanted to be interviewed so they would be more comfortable with sharing their experiences. Those that wanted coffee shops and libraries were more prone to distractions from other people talking, but to minimize distractions interviews took place during hours where there were minimal people at either location. Initially, all meetings were to take place in public areas, but 2 participants requested their interviews occur in their home. Permitting the in-

home interviews allowed participants to be comfortable with the data collection process and their experiences to be included in the research. These two participants' minimized distractions by ensuring the rooms where interviews took place were free of phones and interference from other household members.

To recruit participants for the current study flyers were hand delivered, emailed, or faxed to various organizations within the five boroughs depending on their request. Determining what institutions to use was based on the probability that these facilities would have access to the desired population. Each agency was asked to hang flyers in areas that were accessible to potential participants. Perspective fathers contacted me via phone or email to express their interest in the study. As part of the recruitment process, each of the fathers was advised participation was voluntary and that there was no compensation for participation. Informing each participant they could withdraw from the study at any time occurred before the interviews. Walden University Institutional Review Board's guidelines steered the procedures for selecting members and the facilitation of this study.

### **Demographics**

Participants in the study were single fathers over the age of 18 when they were responsible for their respective children. Each of the fathers fell into categories, never married, widowed, separated or divorced. At the time of the study, the participants confirmed they have cared for their child(ren) for a minimum of 3 months at any point in time before their participation in the study. All included participants confirmed caring for their child between the ages of 3-8; some fathers were caring for their child before the age of 3 but continued to care for the child through the desired inclusion timeframe.

Fifteen individuals were selected and agreed to partake in the research; however, one person subsequently withdrew from the study.

All the demographic information includes details from the 14 participants who opted to remain in the study. Seven of the 14 interviewees were currently raising their children while 5 of the father's had adult children at the time of the interviews. Those with adult children participated in the study as data focused on the time each child was 3-8 years of age. Regarding the 14 members, 1 was under the age of 20 when he first became a parent, 8 were in-between 20-29 years of age, and 5 of the participants were 30-39 when they became a single father. There were 3 Caucasian, 1 Hispanic, and 10 Black interviewees. Concerning the 3 Caucasian participants, 1 did indicate that he is Jewish, and 2 reported Italian decent; 4 of the Black participants reported a West Indian decent, and the Hispanic member noted a Puerto Rican decent.

After analyzing the data, a total of 23 children had come into their father's care. Eight of the parents raised 1 child on their own, 4 reared 2 children, 1 cared for 3 children, and 1 raised 4 children. The children ranged from 1 through 10 years of age when they first came into the care of their fathers. Although 5 children were younger than 3 years, each participant reported caring for the children during the targeted developmental age. Two of the children were also over the targeted age range, but both fathers had another child that did fall within the inclusion specifications. Regarding the 23 children, 14 were males and 9 were female children. Seven of the fathers raised only sons, 4 had only girls, and 3 raised both male and female children. An interesting demographical finding was none of the participants were raised solely by their father; however, 7 participants came from single mother homes.

Another area of the demographic background for interviewees included the borough they were residing in while parenting, income, and education level. There were 6 fathers from Queens, 1 from Manhattan, 8 from Brooklyn, and no participants from the Bronx or Staten Island. Each father noted having some form of income, although stable employment was not consistent for some of the fathers. Two participants reported an income less than 10,000 dollars yearly, 3 made with the 10,000-19,000 range, 1 father stated his income was in the 20,000 range, 5 noted an income of 30-39,000, 1 was in the 40-49,000 brackets, 1 disclosed making 50-59,000, and 1 participant self-disclosed an income between 70-79,000. One father disclosed currently being on social security, 1 reported currently receiving public assistance benefits, and 2 parents revealed being on public assistance before their current employment. Participant's educational level also varied. Two fathers disclosed not finishing high school, 5 parents reported having a high school diploma or trade school certificate, and 7 fathers' communicated they attended college. Out of the 7 who attended college, 1 attained an associate's degree, 2 earned a bachelor's degree, and 1 obtained a master's degree.

There was one participant who noted he did experience any stressors during the time he was parenting. According to this participant, he is agnostic and believes all things happen for a reason. The subject added he does not allow things to stress him because he does not feel he has control over these situations. Although this interviewee denied any stressor, his interview was important to the study as he has insight into other areas of the study. This participant did provide information surrounding expectations, impacts of living in New York City on parenting, and service needs for single fathers.

### **Data Collection**

Data collections occurred through the researcher contacting the different community organizations identified in chapter 3. Each agency received copies of the flyer being used to recruit the potential participants (see Appendix F). The flyers were distributed through mail, hand delivering, sending a fax, or sending flyers through email to the designated representative from each of the agencies. The agency designee then hung the flyers in a common area. Upon receiving calls from the prospective participants, meetings were set up with each father to complete the screening tool (see Appendix D).

During the initial meeting with each prospective interviewee, they received a copy of the Letter to Potential Participant (see Appendix B), which briefly explains the study and process of collecting data for the study. After the prospective participant had agreed to participate, he received a copy of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C) including detailed information about the prospective study. The information in the consent form emphasized participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and all identifying information would be kept confidential. The fathers then had a choice of (a) not moving forward with the screening or returning the signed consent form or (b) returning the completed consent form and participating in the selection process. The second choice solidified the participant was willing to be part of the research.

The first phase of the research involved participants responding to questions from the screening protocol (see Appendix D). The survey was created to obtain precise demographic information from the participants to find out if they met the inclusion criteria. The protocol contained 11 questions that explored different demographical attributes. The process of completing the screening tool took place over a 2 week period.



All screened participants met the specific selection criteria which included: (a) single father over 18 years old, (b) resided within the New York City area while parenting, (c) raised a child between the ages of 3-8, and (d) agreed to participate voluntarily. Of the 15 participants, 14 (93%) completed the screening protocol. On average the screenings were conducted in 30 minutes and an additional 5 minutes was used to complete the informed consent. All participants' responses were number coded to ensure all data remained confidential.

The next step included completing the interviews with the participants. Interviews consisted of 11 open-ended, semi-structured questions designed to elicit information about single fathers. Each interview was done face-to-face with the participant and took place over an extended period to accommodate the member's schedule and availability. Participants were contacted by phone or email to schedule an interview appointment depending on their preferred method of communication. The interviews took place from November 2015 to February 2016. Each of the participants selected where their meeting would be held, which allowed them to feel more comfortable during the interview and screening period.

All sessions began with a review of the consent form, an explanation indicating participants could withdraw at any time, and a reminder all interviews would be tape recorded. Participants were aware the obtained information would be strictly confidential, and the researcher was transcribing all data. All participants noted they were comfortable with moving forward with the interview process. To maintain consistency and ensure respondents addressed specific topics the interview protocol was used (see Appendix E). Depending on the provided response the participant was asked a

follow-up question to elicit further details. Follow-up questions were used on a needs basis and did not take place for all fathers.

Patton (2014) stated note taking during interviews can help the researcher formulate new questions, make the analysis easier as notes can be labeled for easier sorting, and provide backup for the tape recordings. Muswazi and Nhamo (2013) add note taking can occur during or after the interview or during the observations of the participants. For this study, notes were taken at several intervals during the research, including during the screening and interviews, after each interview, and throughout the data analysis process. While completing the screening tool, it was necessary to take notes as the questions were specific to demographical information. Note taking during the interviews was minimal to prevent missing any of the details from the participants and mostly shorthand was used to minimize interruptions during the interview. Notes helped the tracking of data during the analysis.

Oktay (2012) reported memos are important to the analysis process as it allows the researcher to refine and keep track of ideas that develop when sorting and coding the data. Key terms and phrases were jotted down as key point reminders for the analysis stage. Memos also provided an opportunity to document interviews for direct quotes, identify key points in the study, reflect on observations, and triangulate the data. Observations were noted at the end of the meeting and focused on the participant's reactions to questions. The researcher generated memos throughout the analysis phase to aid in tracking the data.

Tape recording interviews is a common practice in qualitative research, which the researcher integrated into this study. Muswazi and Nhamo (2013) note tape recording

interviews assist with recording the data and minimize legal issues (Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013). After reviewing the tapes, all of the interviews were handwritten and then transcribed onto the computer using Microsoft Word. Also, each interview was transcribed on paper within 48 hours of the initial meeting to minimize loss of pertinent information. The recordings and written documents are in a locked box in the researcher's home, which is password protected and stored in a closet. All transcribed interviews have been put in a folder on the interviewer's personal computer, which is password-protected and all identifying information removed.

### **Data Analysis**

As described in Chapter 3, after gathering all of the information from the screening tool and interview protocol the analysis occurred. All transcribed data is in a file within NVivo 11. The initial step was to create the interview folder under the internals section. Each discussion and all the handwritten notes were input into the memos folder for use during the analysis. Then a folder was created under the intervals section to include the data from the literature review (Chapter 2). Next, was the classifications folder to list all demographic information for each participant. The folder contains 8 subcategories; age, ethnicity, income, education, borough of residence, the number of children, the age of children, and gender of children.

The next step was to take the interviews and separate them into descriptive nodes that addressed conditions leading to single fatherhood, expectations of the participant for themselves and their children, living conditions, identified stressors, and services. These were the main categories of the research; the responses were taken directly from the participant's interviews. After completing the nodes, the researcher dissected the data

into subnodes, so each node has at least one subnode. For example, examination of participant replies about services transpired, and then the subnodes were created based on the responses resulting in 6 categories: parenting support group, outing-activities, childcare, medical care, housing, and counseling. The subnodes were important in determining the themes, represented by the participant responses.

Once the investigator developed the subnodes, a review of the data occurred to identify themes. Through a comparison of the main ideas, the query search, and review of the patterns identification of themes occurred. After reviewing all the participants' replies to the interview questions; the researcher grouped similar responses into the appropriate subnodes folder. The last step included the establishment of important themes for each of the three research questions. The themes emerged through consistent examination of the data.

### **Question 1: Experiences**

**Expectations of Self.** The data analysis began by focusing on the expectations participants had for themselves as a single parent. Each of the participants addressed what they felt was their role or responsibility as the primary caretaker. All of the fathers identified one of the two consistent expectations. As might be predicted, participants expressed meeting their child's needs as the first expectation of themselves. (see Table 1). Providing financially, emotionally, and mentally were part of the child's needs.

Table 1

<i>Fathers Expectation of Self</i>	<i>Theme occurrences</i>
Expectation of Self	
Meeting child's needs	11
Setting a good example for the child	3

*Note.*  $N = 14$

Interviewer: What expectations did you have of yourself as a single parent?

Participant 2: As a parent, I felt like it was my responsibility to be supportive of my children, you know to provide for them and meet their needs.

Participant 3: To provide for my children.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on what the looks like?

Participant 3: Yeah, to make sure they have what they need, go to school, eat, bathe, have nice clothes. Make sure they have what they need.

Participant 4: I have to provide a safe place for my children to live and to give them the attention I didn't get from my father. Providing my children with attention and showing them that I was there for them was the most important thing to me. Just making sure they had everything they need to function in life is my responsibility.

Participant 6: My expectation for myself is to provide for my child. I am responsible for ensuring my daughter has clothes, food, supervision, goes to school, and gets medical care.

Participant 7: I don't have any expectations of himself as a single father, but I know that I just want to do his best to provide for his child.

Interviewer: Can you explain what providing for the child includes?

Participant 7: You know making sure she has food, clothes, a bed, and other things she needs.

Participant 8: My expectation was to be able to meet my son's financial, emotional, and physical needs. I felt that it was my responsibility to make sure he had food, clothes, shelter. It was also my responsibility for being

there for him since his mother wasn't around for a while. I had to also balance work and school with seeing him and spending time with him.

Participant 9: It "sucked" being a single parent as it was a lot of responsibility to care for a child on my own at such a young age. I knew it would be a struggle, but I also knew I had to step up and "do it." It was my responsibility to take care of my son. I had to take him to the doctor, feed him, clothe him, and just provide for him.

Participant 10: I feel like it is my responsibility to provide for my daughter. I have to make sure that my daughter has stability. I make sure my daughter goes to school, eats, sleeps, bathes, studies, learns. Whatever my daughter needs it is my responsibility to do it. So I guess you can say, my expectation for myself is that I care for my daughter to the best of my ability.

Participant 11: My expectation is to provide for my children and ensure that their financial and emotional needs. Participant 11 noted that when he does not meet his set expectations that he will try different things to achieve the expectation that he has set forth for him.

Participant 12: My only expectation is to give his children a better life than I had. I want them to have everything that I had and more. I have my children in private school, take vacations, and have not only want they need but also what they want. I make sure they eat, have clothes, and a roof over their heads.

Participant 13: As a father, I have to provide for my child. I have to work, pay

bills, spend time with my son, make sure he had someone to watch him, take him to school, and still spend quality time with him. I don't know if it was an expectation, but it is a responsibility for me to take care of my son.

**Expectations of Child.** Each father then addressed their expectations for their children. Participants also reported what they do when their child does not meet the expectations they have established. The interviewee's responses were then analyzed to determine predominant expectations. Overall, the participants identified 3 consistent expectations for their children. As might be predicted, most participants noted they expected their child to develop skills to help them succeed in life and be able to take care of themselves. (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Fathers Expectation of Child*

<u>Expectation of Child</u>	<u>Theme occurrences</u>
Succeed in life	8
Get an education	5
Behave/follow rules	1

Note. N = 14

Interviewer: What were the expectations you had for your child?

Participant 2: I expected my kids to be productive citizens, succeed in life, and apply themselves to everything that they do. I taught them to do the best they can and to not give up. My children saw me work hard to provide for them, and I want them to do the same so they will be able to take care of themselves.

Participant 5: I just want my son to do his best. I want him son to meet all the goals that he sets forth for himself.

Participant 6: My expectation is for my daughter to do her best, be successful, and be able to take care of herself when she gets old.

Participant 7: All I expect from my daughter is for her to be a real strong woman so she will be able to provide for herself when she gets older. I don't want her to have to depend on anyone to take care of her if she can take care of herself.

Participant 10: I expect my daughter to be the best she can be. I want her to be self-sufficient and able to meet her needs when she becomes an adult.

Participant 11: My expectation is for my children to be successful when they get older. I want them to have good jobs and be able to support themselves. I have high expectations for my girls because I want what is best for them.

Participant 13: I expect my son to do his best so he can successful. He has to reach all of his goals, get a job, and be able to provide for his children should he have any.

Participant 14: With my son, I expected him to succeed and always to strive to meet his goals.

**Stressors.** Part of the experiences single fathers undergo is dealing with situations that cause them to feel stress. Each participant was asked about stressors in their life to improve the understanding of their experience. Some of the participants did express experiencing more than one stressor. In total 5 stressors were identified, with one participant indicating he has not experienced any stressors. The data revealed that father's felt childcare was the most significant stressor they experienced as a single parent. (see Table 3).



Table 3

*Stressors Single Fathers Experience*

<u>Stressors</u>	<u>Theme occurrences</u>
Childcare	8
Lack of maternal involvement	6
Finances	5
Housing	3
Communication issues	3
No stressors	1

Interviewer: As a single father were there any stressors that you experienced and can you explain what these stressors were?

Participant 2: Having to work and make sure your children have someone responsible caring for them is stressful. Finding childcare was always a concern while raising my sons because it was expensive and when I would find a provider who was cheaper I would be worried about why that provider was cheaper than the average price.

Participant 3: Childcare is a stressor. I am working just to pay for childcare. I have family who can help me sometimes but it isn't consistent, so I have to rely on different family members to assist him with childcare. My kids end up being different people all the time, childcare is too expensive, especially for three children.

Participant 4: As a single father I have experienced different stressors, but childcare has been the most pressing. Childcare is expensive, and then you add in having to work late which would cause me to have to pay the sitter more to watch the children. Plus, you want someone who is reliable

and going to care for your children, so you pay extra to make sure the sitter is good.

Participant 5: Childcare is a struggle; it's hard to find reasonably priced childcare, especially when you have to work mandatory overtime at times.

Participant 7: Childcare can be a stressor when you have to work. Babysitters cost money and most times they are expensive.

Participant 9: Working to pay childcare was stressful. I was working long hours and was stressed because I had to pay a babysitter. I would sometimes rely on my mother or step-father to help with picking my son up so I could save some money on childcare.

Participant 13: As a single father a stressor I have countered is suitable, cheap childcare.

Participant 14: Dealing with being a single parent while maintaining a career was stressful. I worked full-time and had a few advancements in my career, but it was stressful because I had to worry about the care my son was getting while I was working. Childcare was expensive and finding childcare that would accommodate my work schedule was even more costly.

## **Question 2: Impact of living in New York City on parenting**

**New York City living.** The participants discussed how they feel residing in New York City has affected their parenting. The participant's responses fell into 2 categories: positive or negative effect. The majority of the participants, 64%, reported they felt their living situation positively impacted their ability to care for their children. The

participants who experienced an adverse effect predominately reported feeling their neighborhood was unsafe for the children. Data from the demographic information was reviewed to see if there was any pattern based on the borough of residence; however, there were no identified patterns.

Interviewer: Do you feel your living environment contributes to the identified stressors?

Participant 4: My living environment has contributed to my stress because we moved from a home in the suburbs to a two bedroom apartment in the city. My children had to be exposed to the city life, be away from friends, and cost me more money because I had to spend money taking the kids to activities outside of the city.

Interviewer: How do you think your kids being exposed to the city was an impact on your parenting?

Participant 4: My children were sheltered living in the suburbs; they didn't see people on drugs, gangs, fighting, and other elements that you are exposed to when you live in the city. Once they came to the city and started seeing these different things I had to explain them to my children even though I didn't think they were the right age for this conversation. It's also not as safe in the city as it is in the suburbs.

Participant 12: I feel my living environment impacts my parenting because the area is changing for the worse. My children learn adult situations because of the other children in the neighborhood and that this has caused me to have to explain to my children these adult situations. There are also more

drugs in the area, and I am unable to allow my children to play outside for fear they can be hurt because of the neighborhood. I know have to be the "bad guy" by saying no.

Participant 13: I feel like where I live does contribute to the stress I have. I live in housing, and housing is not the best environment to raise children. People are selling drugs and have criminal backgrounds. I talk to my son about these things because I don't want him to get caught up things he doesn't understand.

Interviewer: How do you think having to explain these things to your son has impacted your parenting?

Participant 13: It makes me a better parent because I'm educating my child but it's not a valid reason since he is too young to learn these things. I have had to teach him things other kids his age don't know. I have to watch him closer and keep him on a tighter leash because of where we live.

All 3 of the participants who reported their living environments as unsafe, voiced the same concern about having to teach their individual children about situations beyond their age. The members all felt that this was a negative impact on their parenting because they were talking to their children about content that was not appropriate for their age. The fathers also noted safety concerns with their environment, and how this has caused them to have to supervise their children closer. Participants who reported positive living situations did not express having to provide additional supervision to their children.

### **Question 3: Service needs of single fathers?**

**Services.** Researchers identify stress as part of the parenting process and show links to services and support benefiting parents (McCubbin & Figley, 2014; Milgrom, Schembri, Ericksen, Ross, & Gemmill, 2011). To determine service needs of this population participants were asked what services they felt would be beneficial. Interviewees identified 6 services that would benefit single fathers. Fathers recognized counseling as the primary service need.

Interviewer: Do you think services could help minimize the stressors you have identified?

Participant 2: I think counseling for the children is good since they are dealing with the separation of their parents. I also think counseling for the family is good. If both parents cannot get along, then this can help them learn communication skills and it can also give the parents and children a better understanding of why the children do not live in the same house.

Participant 6: Services should include counseling for children living in single father homes would be beneficial in minimizing stress. The counseling should be for both the children and the single parent as it is an adjustment for everyone.

Participant 8: I believe family counseling would be beneficial to other single parents, to give them a chance to talk about their experiences. I also believe family counseling is good; I think it could have strengthened the relationship between my son's mother and me. I believe it could have improved our co-parenting skills.

Participant 10: Counseling would be a valuable service for families with a single parent, especially for the parent who is not involved full-time. For me, I think my children's mother would benefit from counseling so she can be a better parent.

Participant 11: Counseling is good for fathers and their children. My children and I are currently involved in family therapy, which has been useful to the children and me. Family therapy would be beneficial to other father's because it can help other single father's deal with the stressors they are and will face as a single father.

Participant 12: I do think that their mother would benefit from counseling so that she can be a better parent.

Participant 14: Counseling would also be beneficial for children of single parents cause children can internalize issues with not having both parents. Being in counseling would help children express what they are going through living without their mother's.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

As noted in Chapter 3, the researcher established credibility for this study around the methods used to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. The ethical codes set by the APA ensure professional behavior and adequate precautions occur when conducting research (APA, 2010). The researcher took all necessary precautions to prevent harm to the study participants by observing non-verbal cues and verbal responses. Individual researchers also have an obligation to maintain intellectual honesty and have a personal responsibility to ensure one's actions meet ethical practice standards (Jordan, 2014). To

address this standard, the researcher used quotes from subjects and had no previous relationship with participants. Trustworthiness includes establishing credibility and validity of the study, which is necessary for demonstrating the value of the research.

### **Credibility**

Member checks provided a test for credibility in this study. To complete member checks, the researcher continually developed narrative inquiries by restating responses to the participants for clarity and accuracy. Participants were encouraged to correct any misrepresentations and to add to the paraphrasing as needed. Also, taking notes and recording the interviews allowed for an additional aide when. Each participant's interview was tape-recorded and played back several times during the transcribing, to ensure correct documentation. The tape-recorded interviews were also used to support the hand-written notes from the interview process.

Participants for this study were randomly selected from the five boroughs of New York City to create a diverse population. Demographical information showed the fathers ranged in age, ethnicity, education level, financial background, and living environments. The method of locating participants also added to the diversity of the recruitment as different community and city agencies were used to locate subjects. Some of the bodies used were hospitals, schools, and social service providers, which allowed for the study to reach more fathers as the agencies serve different populations depending on the individual's needs. Interviewees also volunteered to participate in the study and were aware their participation could be discontinued at any time during the research. Participants voluntarily remaining in the study increased the likelihood they were being forthcoming and honest about their experiences.

**Transferability**

Transferability occurred through providing a detailed description of the study in Chapter 3 and providing additional information surrounding the steps taken to obtain and analysis the data in Chapter 4. The interview transcripts provide a description of the accounts from the participants and detail the interviewee's experiences. Quotes from parts of the participant's narration are within the body of the study. A summary of how the data was input into NVivo and the developed categories is listed allowing other researchers to follow the current research. Providing details about the study and including participant quotes will enhance other researcher's ability to replicate the study and allow for them to compare their findings to the current study.

**Dependability**

Dependability is established by showing the researcher minimized mistakes during the data collection, interpretation, and reporting. To achieve dependability all interviews were recorded and reviewed multiple times during the analyze stage to reduce errors. Interviewee's also participated in a review of the provided data for accuracy. While transcribing the data, recordings helped ensure accuracy of the statements from each participant. After concluding all of the interviews, data was input into the NVivo software within 48 hours, so the interviews were still fresh.

**Conformability**

In establishing conformability, each participant's interview was documented and analyzed to determine patterns. To justify the identified patterns, direct quotes from the participants were used. To minimize biases, each stressor was placed in the stressor node within the NVivo system and those nodes were examined to determine the key identified



stressors. Interviews were transported into the identified nodes. The participant's accounts of each stressor are also being included in the study to support the reported findings.

## **Results**

### **Research Questions**

**What experiences do males have while being a single parent?** The interviewees for this study reported their experiences to being a single father as having to set expectations for themselves as well as their children, provide for their children, and dealing with stress. Their experiences represented both positive and negative feelings about parenting. Participants were consistent in noting they were responsible for providing care to their children regardless of what led to them being a single parent. Of the 14 subjects, 11 indicated they felt meeting their child's needs as the first expectation of themselves. Meeting the child's needs included providing for the child's emotional and financial needs. Many fathers acknowledged a feeling of happiness with caring for their children. Participants also noted feeling good when they are able to meet the child's needs.

Another aspect of the single father experience surrounded their expectations for their children. The interviewees identified 3 common expectations, with the need for their child to succeed in life being most prevalent. Fathers reported developing boundaries and setting rules as part of parenting, noting this establishes a foundation for the children's future. Eight of the subjects indicated their children's success in adulthood is what drives them to ensure their meeting the child's needs. Participants were asked about issues surrounding their children not meeting the set expectation. Overall, the

fathers agreed talking to the child and taking away privileges is useful in teaching and helping their dependents grow.

Along with expectation, stress was identified as an experience of being a single parent. Of the 14 participants, there were a total of 13 references to stress being an experience of single parenting. As reported by the participants, stress included issues with affordable childcare, dealing with another parent's inability to provide adequate care to the shared child, and financial concerns. Participants also noted housing and communication as a stressor. The most prominent stressors reported by the participants was securing reliable and affordable childcare, which did impact employment and in one instance housing.

Although 8 participants identified childcare, there were also 6 subjects who noted having to deal with the stress of their being an absent parent as a stressor because they were required to complete all household tasks. Interviewees added meeting all of their children's needs alone, make decisions, setting rules, maintaining appointments and employment alone added to their stress levels. Their experiences of dealing with stress are a psychological response to their dealing with caring for their children alone. Participants with adult children did acknowledge a feeling of accomplishment with the progress of their dependents in adult. Overall, interviewees reported having exceptional children who follow rules and are growing positively.

**Does living in New York City impact how single fathers parent their children?** Uncovering the impact living in New York City has on single fathers begun with sorting the themes into positive and negative influences. A majority of the participants reported living in New York City had a positive impact on their parenting.

Nine of the participants (64%) noted their living situation positively impacted their ability to care for the children. Three fathers reported purchasing their home in areas they felt were safe for their kids. One father added he bought a home in another borough so his children could attend a better, safer school. Five subjects indicated living in an apartment owned by a family friend, which allowed them to feel more comfortable because their children were around family members. Participants further noted having family members close by allows them to access positive support systems.

Fathers who indicated their experience of living in New York City had had an adverse impact on their parenting disclosed issues with the safety of their neighborhood. Five of the 6 participants also noted gang and other illegal activity threatening the safety of their children. Fathers agreed unsafe environments caused a fear in them that has led them to not allow their children to play in the neighborhood. Six subjects also expressed concern with their children being made aware of content beyond their age because of other kids in the neighborhood who have more "street" knowledge. Participants did report a need to explain things to their children because of this exposure. They also addressed concerns with how other parents in the area parent their children, which influences how those children behave. Interviewees disclosed a need to be overprotective and more vigilant because of the exposure and unsafe conditions.

**Are there services that can help single fathers improve their parenting?** The last part of the interview focused on service that the participants feel would be beneficial in addressing the identified stressors. All 14 subjects noted there is at least one service that could help single fathers and their children. Interviewees noted services would provide additional support to the family. Some of the fathers pointed out that there is more one

service that would benefit themselves or other single fathers. The subjects identified 6 services; childcare (5), counseling (7), housing (3), medical insurance (1), free or low-cost activities (1), and parenting support groups for fathers (3).

The key identified service is counseling as 35% of the participants noted that either individual or family counseling would be beneficial to single fathers. The participants who identified counseling as a service need noted it would allow children to deal with the separation of their parents, it can improve co-parenting, help fathers learn to communicate with their children and provide dads with a forum to express their feelings about being a single parent. Interviewees noted counseling has different benefits for each member of the family, including the birth mother. It was expressed that counseling can also be useful in minimizing stress.

During the data analysis and coding process, one of the fourteen participants indicated that he had not experienced stressors while he was raising his children. To obtain further information about the subject's view on parenting, he explained his view of parenting and how he was able to raise his kids without experiencing stress. Participant 1 noted that while he was raising four sons on his own, he did experience any stressors. Participant 1 explained that he lives by a go with the flow mantra and feels that things happen for a reason. Participant 1 went on to note that he is agnostic and follows the premise that everyone's path is predetermined so he does not get stressed over things he cannot control. Although Participant 1 did not indicate experiencing any stressors, inclusion of his interview was completed as he provided beneficial information surrounding his expectations of himself and his children and provided insight into the service needs of single fathers.

## Summary

Chapter 4 described demographical information for participants and the setting for interviews. The chapter proceeded with a discussion on the scope of this study, which included the accounts of 14 single fathers who have raised a child between the ages of 3-8. The interviews were dissected and analyzed to determine the stressors each of these participants have experienced. Through the research, childcare was the most common stressor these participants experienced. Other themes also emerged from the data; including what services would be the most beneficial to other single fathers.

This study focused on three research questions used to uncover the lived experiences of single fathers while raising their children in different locations within New York City. Each participant answered 11 questions about various aspects of single parenting. Identified themes of single fathers expectations for themselves and their respective children were meeting their children's emotional and fiscal needs and expectations that participant's children will be able to succeed in life. Seventy-nine percent of the participants noted meeting their children's emotional and financial needs supersede any other parenting expectation. The transcripts further explain the stressors associated with childcare costs.

As part of their experiences as a single parent, interviewees noted that their expectations and their expectations for their children are a part of parenting. An important theme was childcare, with participants consistently indicating that the cost of reliable childcare is a stressor on family functioning, work schedules, and household finances. The rationale for each interviewee's expectations was specific to their experiences, with themes developing due to the similarities of the expectations. A total 8

out of the 15 members linked childcare to a parenting stressor. Reliable, cost-effective childcare was primary concern associated with childcare stress.

In addition to expectations and stressors, participants noted that their living situation had an impact on their parenting. A majority of the fathers pointed out that living in New York City had a positive impact on their parenting, with 5 participants reporting their living situation negatively affecting their parenting. Fathers who had a negative living experience said concerns for the safety of their children residing in the city and were seeking relocation to another state. Participants who denied their living situation impacted their parenting were living in homes owned by themselves or a family member.

The experiences of single fathers in this study reflected a need for services to help fathers parent their children. As related to the established themes, the majority of the participants felt that counseling would be beneficial for single father households. The interviewees believed that counseling could help in different ways including; helping them deal with being a single parent, allow children to voice their feelings about being in a single home, assist with co-parenting issues, and provide the birth mothers with assistance. Childcare was another valuable service identified by the participants. Many of the fathers expressed concerns with having to pay for childcare on a single household income. While the expense of the childcare was a major concern, participants did indicate finding reliable childcare as a secondary issue with childcare. Overall, all of the interviewees agreed there is a need for services catering to single fathers.

Chapter 5 will include a summary of the study, interpretation of the findings, and limitations and implications of the study. While all of the members resided in one of the

five boroughs that make up New York City, there was not a participant from each borough. Although the researcher was not able to recruit a subject from each borough, the subjects do come from different age, ethnicities, education, and financial backgrounds which increased diversity within the study. A discussion about the findings occurs in this chapter, detailing the key themes. The chapter concludes with a summary of what the study has determined and possible future implications for other research.

## Chapter 5

### Introduction

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the lived experiences of single fathers who are not the primary focus of qualitative research. Participants were asked to discuss the experiences they have been through as a single parent. The current research explored the accounts of fathers living in New York City. The research questions included:

1. What experiences do males have while being a single parent?
2. Does living in New York City impact how single fathers parent their children?
3. Are there services that can help single fathers improve their parenting?

The analysis was completed using a grounded theory methodology to identify themes within the data. All participants resided throughout the New York City area and had raised a child between the ages of 3-8 while single parenting. The predominant themes identified in the analysis included the ability of interviewees to raise their children as a single parent. Direct themes reflected the research questions that structured this study. These themes included the stressors fathers have experienced as a single parent, the impacts of living in New York City while parenting, and service needs of single fathers. Participants provided insight into their parenting background. These themes were representative of the lived experiences of the subjects and included the following:

1. Meeting the child's needs.
2. The expectation for children to be successful in life.



3. The difficulty with obtaining affordable childcare.
4. The positive impact of living in NYC on parenting.
5. Engaging in some form of counseling.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

#### **Experiences of Single Fathers**

Several themes and subthemes represent the data related to the experiences of single fathers. These included the participants expressing an expectation of having to meet their children's needs. Subjects distinguished providing food, clothing, shelter, and other basic needs of the child. Participants reported a feeling of responsibility for their children regardless of how the child came into their care. For several of the participants having employment allowed them to meet this expectation. The aforementioned is consistent with findings from Trolio and Coleman's (2012) research, which found the father-child relationship, includes meeting their child's financial needs. However, two of the fathers did express frustration with not having stable employment as it negatively impacted their sense of success.

Meyers (2012) noted society views fathers who are unable to provide economic support for their children as "deadbeats" or unable to meet societal standards. In this study, two participants mirrored this sentiment. Subjects who relayed a feeling of accomplishment did note they were employed. Having employment may be a cause of fathers feeling they can provide for their children. Being able to access work may be an area of intervention for single fathers. A secondary theme of father's expectation of meeting their children's needs was their accessibility to social support while they are working. In this study, some of the participants had a form of support while working.

Further research may lead to information related to adequate support systems and employment.

A majority of the participants described their expectations for their children as wanting them to be able to succeed when they become adults. Fathers reported providing their children with a foundation by setting good morals and correcting them when they do not do as expected. The data also shows participants feel their children need them in their life to set a good example for them as they grow into adulthood. Panter-Brick, Burgess, Eggerman, McAllister, Pruett, and Leckman (2014) note that overall father's involvement with their offspring improves their social, educational, behavioral, and psychological outcomes as they develop into adulthood. Based on the study, males do play a positive, productive role in their children's life. Participants in the current study also reported a desire for their children to obtain an education so they would be able to get a good job. Although some fathers focused on future success, while others focused on education all subjects want their children to be able to provide for themselves as adults as the primary expectation for their offspring. Of the 14 participants, 13 reported this as their main hope. There is a need for additional research focusing on single father's expectations and goals for their children as they become adolescents and young adults.

In this study, the researcher identified stress is a major part of parenting. The interviewee determined 6 areas of stress through the examination of the accounts. Most of the participants confirmed experiencing some form of stress with their being 6 key stressors. Fathers in this study indicated child care, the absence of the child's mother, finances, housing, and communication issues as the experienced stressors. Lamb and Sagi (2014) also noted that child care is a critical area of concerns for single fathers.

This research study confirmed childcare as the most prominent stressor among the participants, with 30% of the participants perceiving childcare as a hardship. The subjects noted two issues related to childcare; cost and reliable childcare when working overtime or extended hours. Seven of the eight participants indicated that childcare is too expensive, impacting their finances. Five of the 8 fathers added that working overtime caused them to be charged additional fees as the childcare provider would then have to care for the child longer. Three of the 8 fathers indicated higher childcare costs because they have more than one child.

Although finances were not the primary stressor, 18% did report this as a major concern. Olsen et al. (2013) described the fathers in their study as defining financial restraints impacting their ability to ensure child safety. This research study confirmed that finances are a stressor that single fathers are experiencing; with 5 of the 14 participants, noting funds have caused them stress. Those fathers who indicated experiencing financial stress did note financial restraints have negatively impacted their ability to do activities with their children, obtain housing, and live in a safe environment with their children. Participants highlighted that not having a steady income has caused them not to be able to give their children everything they want. Three of the 5 members also noted not having employment has led to homelessness at some point in time. One of the 3 fathers interviewed was residing in a family shelter on the date of the meeting.

As noted before, researchers have identified the need to balance employment, child care, concerns with child development, dealing with the child's feelings and housework as the underlying role demand stressors. Fathers in the current study identified concerns with the child's emotions, meeting all of the child's caretaking needs

and balancing childcare with employment as stressors associated with the mother's lack of involvement. Although the participants in the current study labeled the stressor as lack of maternal involvement, the underlying issues were consistent. Fathers in this study also noted that being responsible for making all the decisions for their respective children and meeting new people were additional underlying issues surrounding the lack of maternal presence.

### **Impact of New York City on Parenting**

Related to the respondent's background with living in New York City, the researcher found participants had both positive and negative experiences on parenting. A majority of the participants reported a positive sense of life in New York City.

Interviewee's who lived in a family owned home linked having family support with positive parenting abilities. They noted their family support allowed them to work, run errands, and have someone to talk to when issues or questions with parenting would arise. Wade et al. (2011) noted support is helpful in minimizing stress, which is consistent with participants relating support as have a positive impact on parenting. Although support was noted to be useful, participants did acknowledge their support systems were not always or consistently available given their needs.

One subject spoke about relocating back to New York City with his children so he could be near his family. Those participants who lived in apartments away from their family reported feeling they were in a safe neighborhood and had access to parks, schools, and other activities for their children. All of the participants, who reported a positive impact on their parenting, did identify supportive interventions as a part of the positive impact. Further research may lead to information related to how support can

affect parenting in single parenting households. One father who reported a negative feeling with living in New York City denied that it impacted their parenting. This contributor said feeling like it makes him a better parent because he is educating his son and teaching him life lessons that he may not have had to teach his son if they lived in a nicer, safer area.

In the participant's transcripts, an important theme from the subjects who noted New York City had an adverse impact on their parenting reported unsafe conditions. Interviewees added this had led them to be more protective of their children. They highlighted how the safety of their environment adds additional stress to their lives because they are forced to stop their children from playing outside, in the neighborhood parks, or engaging in play dates with classmates. Meyers (2012) highlighted fathers have a need to prevent their children from being in dangerous situations, which subjects in the current study said is a concern for their neighborhood. One hundred percent of these participants reported the conditions in New York are a concern as the conditions as the cost of living is high while incomes are low, and many of these expensive areas are unsafe. Interviewees added they live in high-poverty areas. One father added there was a change in the environment when he moved from a suburb in New Jersey to the city. He noted people in the city pay more for living expenses despite having less security, space, and overall quality of life.

### **Services for Single Fathers**

The majority of the interviewees determined a need for counseling services among this population. Participants noted counseling could help fathers express their needs and frustrations with single parenting. Counseling can provide fathers with an

outlet to work through the demands of being a single parent. Fathers added counseling could address communication issues between them and their children as the counselor can act as a buffer. The identified stressor surrounding communication issues between the father and child is consistent with the service need. Interestingly, researchers have pointed out that single fathers have difficulty dealing with their children's emotions (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), which supports why the current participants feel counseling would benefit father-child relationships. Part of the members distinguished a need for individual counseling so the child can express their feelings with being in a single parent home. A few fathers added the absence of a parent can be a concern for some children; therefore, a counselor could serve as a resource specifically for the child. Included in the findings, are the communication differences between the parents. Some participants were open with a need for co-parenting counseling to increase positive communication between the primary and secondary parents.

Also, members noted a need for affordable childcare for single fathers. Childcare that is reliable and flexible is a part of the service need as some participant's reported having to work overtime and nontraditional hours. Some interviewees added childcare has led to unemployment issues. Subjects with more than one child reported additional concerns with having to obtain childcare for multiple children. The absence of readily available resources was a problem with childcare. While New York City does have options for childcare, such as public assistance or Administration for Children's Services (ACS) voucher, clients have some requirements to meet for eligibility purposes. There was also some concern with ACS vouchers requiring the customer to have contact with an agency that investigates child abuse/neglect. A subtheme of children was financing

as parent noted childcare was expensive in relations to their income. One parent confirmed being homeless because he cannot afford consistent children care for his children. Ahn (2012) found parents who have affordable child care also improved employment status.

### **Limitations of the Study**

To participate in this study, participants must have raised a child between 3-8 years old. To identify appropriateness to participate fathers answered a screening tool, which contained self-reported information. The study results may not generalize to others who have younger or older children. Also, this study aimed to include participants from all five boroughs. During the research, no subjects from the Bronx or Staten Island responded to the study. Although the distribution of flyers occurred within each borough, no potential participants replied from Staten Island or the Bronx. It should be noted outreaches to schools, hospitals, and other community organizations in Queens and Brooklyn were more successful than the other areas, which prevented flyers in more locations within those areas. One factor could for no respondents from Staten Island surrounds the fact there is a lower number of single parents within the borough when compared to the other four boroughs. Staten Island was reported to have 29,409 single parent households, whereas the Bronx had 229,567 single parent families, Brooklyn had 232,429 single parents, Manhattan 99,302 single-parents, and Queens had 152,071 single-parent homes (County Health Ratings, 2015).

In one interview, the participant had his children in the home. The apartment consisted of 5 rooms and was not large in space. The children were in another room, but they were nearby during the interview given the size of the home. This situation could

have influenced the subject's responses. The researcher did a check-in with the interviewee to assess if he was concerned with the children being close, to which he denied. This measure was taken as a precaution to minimize any influences on his responses.

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### **Delimitations of the Study**

Members were inclusive of single fathers who expressed their thoughts and feelings. All of the participants were either currently parenting their children or have raised their children before them becoming adults. The plan was for the study to include 15 subjects but the researcher was unable to control 1 subject withdrawing from the study. It was beyond the investigator's control how many people responded to the research or what borough of residence they resided in. Participant also came from different racial backgrounds, 3 boroughs, various educational levels, and employment backgrounds. The researcher did make a conscience decision to allow each of the participants to decide where they wanted to be screened and interviewed.

### **Recommendations**



The results of this study included the stressors of single fatherhood, the impact of living in New York City on parenting, and service needs of single fathers. In addition, subjects discussed their expectations of themselves and their children. Themes included participants struggling with childcare which led to additional stress. What was highlighted by participants is the need for change related to affordable, reliable childcare. A provider who has a flexible schedule and promotes childcare that meets the needs of single fathers is another request of subjects. As noted by many of the interviewees, having support from family and friends were helpful because it allows them to work and meet the needs of their children.

Also, continued research related to how single fathers in other parts of the country feel about parenthood would provide further insight into this phenomenon. Future research, specific to other single fathers may include a comparative approach to explore differences between fathers in the city compared to rural areas. Subjects in this study did note support from family was beneficial when available, constructing a study that explores how support contributes to this population's functioning is an area for future research. The implications of this phenomenon highlight the need for counseling services, focusing on single fathers and their children. Although counseling services may be available in general, the interviewees recognized a need for the providers to understand the particular dynamics of single fathers.

### **Implications**

There are several implications for positive social change after completing this research study including the improvement of our understanding of the lived experiences of single fathers. The insight includes a comprehension on the background of the

stressors this population experiences while parenting. As identified by the interviewees, a lack of support from problems and situations on their own. While some of the participants expressed they had support from their family, this support was not consistent. Fathers can feel isolation or alone when they do not have others who can provide them with support. There is an importance in creating support systems that allow fathers to express their needs without feeling judged. It is also significant for family and friends to understand the need for them to be consistent in their assistance to the family.

Within the context of this study, there was a discussion about the needs of the participants and services that would benefit them. There may be a need to include service providers who are equipped to deal with the issues single fathers' experience. Service providers must also be able to assist this population with the precise issues them and their children face. Fathers need to have a support system useful in helping with the care of their children. The expectations fathers have for themselves, and their children can add to the stress they experience, causing them to require services that address those areas of concern. Informing providers of the issues faced by single fathers can lead to improved relationships between the parties.

There are also implications for there to be a relationship between fathers and mental health providers as the subjects identified counseling as a service need. Several of the interviewees noted counseling would be beneficial in addressing the needs of the family. Understanding the dynamics within single father homes may improve the provided counseling. It is also important for the mental health provider to individualize service plans for participants. Furthermore, counseling may include helping with co-

parenting that addresses the needs of each family as each subject noted different reasons for obtaining physical custody of their children.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher accomplished the purpose of exploring the gap in the current literature surrounding single fathers. This study provided additional information into the stressor fathers living in New York City experience. Participants in the study identified childcare as the most prominent stressor, which can lead to issues with employment. Subjects also addressed how they feel living in New York City impacts their parenting abilities, and an overwhelming majority noted they did not believe their parenting has been affected by their environment. The last aspect this study explored is the services interviewees feel could be beneficial to other single father. The most commonly identified service is counseling or therapy.

Understanding the needs and experiences of single fathers is useful in providing support to this population. The themes within the subject narratives challenge the stereotypes of fathers solely being breadwinners. There has been a steady increase in the number of single father homes; leading service providers having to tailor assistance programs to this population's needs. Social service and community agencies are dealing with families that only consist of a father and a child, making it necessary for these organizations to be familiar with the needs of this population. This study has set the precedent for other researchers to explore further the specific needs of single fathers who reside in different parts of the world.

The goal of this study was to gain insight on the lived experiences for a particular group of single fathers. The recruitment process included the use of community agencies

assisting with getting the flyers to potential subjects. Each participant engaged in an interview to provide insight into their feelings on this topic. Data analysis occurred including all accounts, which led to the development of themes. The willingness of the subjects to participate in this research allows others to understand this phenomenon through their eyes.

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**Appendix A**  
**Letter to Public Service Agencies**

Date:

Name of Agency

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is Stacey Melhado and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on the stressors single fathers experience while raising their children in New York City. There are a number of studies that explore single fatherhood; however, most of these studies do not include the voice of the father. This research will provide insight into what stressors these fathers experience through their own words.

Your assistance in conducting this much needed research is important. If you are willing, I need for you to assist by hanging flyers in your office, which will allow me to recruit those single fathers who frequent your agency. The participants of this study need to be single fathers and have cared for at least one child on a full time basis for a minimum of three months. The participants are free to choose whether or not they want to participate and can discontinue participation at any time during the study. Information provided by the participants will be kept confidential.



Should you or anyone from your agency have any questions you have pertaining to the study, feel free to contact me via telephone or email. I can be reached at (347) 385-5683 or emailed at [Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu](mailto:Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu).

Sincerely,

Stacey Melhado

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

**Appendix B**  
**Letter to Potential Participant**

Date:

Name of Agency

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is Stacey Melhado and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University I am conducting dissertation research on the stressors single fathers experience while raising their children in New York City. There are a number of studies that explore single fatherhood; however, most of these studies do not include the voice of the father. This research will provide insight into what stressors these fathers experience through their own words.

I understand that your time is precious and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. In order to fully understand your experience we will need to meet a minimum of two separate times. The first meeting will consist of you answering a screening tool, which will take approximately fifteen minutes; the second contact will include an interview that will take approximately 2-4 hours. A second interview may be requested within 3-6 weeks for any additional information. Interviews can be held at a location of your choosing and will be scheduled around your availability. Each interview is designed to get to know you and learn about your experiences of being a single parent. All information gathered during these meetings will be kept confidential. Any

information from the meetings that are included in the research study will use an alias and will not be able to be linked to you.

Should you have any questions pertaining to the study, feel free to contact me via telephone or email. I can be reached at (347) 385-5683 or emailed at [Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu](mailto:Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu). If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a date and time that we can meet to further discuss the study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Stacey Melhado

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

## **Appendix C Consent Form**

### Identifying Stressors Experienced by Single Fathers Who Are Parenting in New York City

You are invited to participate in a research study about the Stressors Experienced by Single Fathers Who Are Parenting in New York City. You were chosen as a potential participant because of your own experiences on this topic. The study is being conducted by Stacey Melhado, Doctoral Candidate at Walden University. Please read the form below and feel free to ask any questions you have.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of the study is to better understand your experience as the primary parent of your child/children.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will take approximately 2 hours, at a location of your choice. A follow up interview may be requested.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in the study is voluntary and at any time during the study you can decline to continue participating without any explanation. Your decision to participate or not, will not impact any current or future affiliations with Walden University or any other entity.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The possible risk of this research surrounds those personal feelings that will be brought up talking about your experiences on being a single father. The benefit of being in this

study is the possible support services for other single fathers that may come from your own experiences.

**Compensation:**

There is no form of compensation for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained during this study and related to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. If you give your permission by signing this document, we plan to disclose information to Walden University for purposes of approving the research project. You are entitled to maintain a copy of the informed consent.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher collecting information for this study is Stacey Melhado. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Heisser-Metoyer. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Stacey Melhado at (347) 385-5683 or email [Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu](mailto:Stacey.Melhado@waldenu.edu) or Dr. Heisser-Metoyer at [Patricia.Heisser-Metoyer@waldenu.edu](mailto:Patricia.Heisser-Metoyer@waldenu.edu).

You will be provided with a copy of this form from the researcher.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers to my satisfaction. I am consenting to participate in the current study.

Print the Participants Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the participant

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of the Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

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

## Appendix D

### Screening Protocol

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

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Number: One

1. How old were you when you became a parent?
2. How old were you when you became a single parent?
3. How old was your child when he/she came into your care?
4. How many children have you cared for a single parent?
5. What borough and area were you residing in when you became a single parent?
6. Were you working? If so where and what was your yearly income?
7. How many people were residing in your home?
8. What level of school did you complete?

9. Have you ever been diagnosed with any development disabilities, if so what and when?
10. Have you ever been diagnosed with any mental health disorders, if so what and when?
11. Were you raised by your mother, father, both, or neither?

## Appendix E

Interview Protocol

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

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Number: Two (A)

### Research Questionnaire

*Set One*

Question #1- What are the circumstances that led up to your role today as a single parent?

Question #2 – What is your daily routine?

Question #3 -What are the expectations you have for yourself as a single parent? How do you deal with the expectations you have for yourself when these are not met?

Question # 4 – What are the expectations you have for your child? How do you deal with the expectations you have for your child when these are not met?

Question #5 - What is the role your child's mother maintains in parenting this shared child?

Question #6 - Do you have any family or friends who help you care for your child? If the participant answers yes, these are the follow up questions: A) Who is available to help you? B) How does each of these individuals assist you with the care of your child? C) How often does each of these individuals assist you with your child?

Questions #7 – As a single father, are there any stressors that you have experienced? If the answer is yes, the follow up question is Can you explain what these stressors are?



Question #8 - How do you deal with each of these stressors?

Question #9 - Do you feel that these identified stressors influence your parenting abilities? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) How do you feel they impact your ability at parent? B) In your opinion, what do you think can help minimize these stressors? And how do you think it can help minimize the stressors you have identified.

Question #10 - Do you feel your living environment contributes to the identified stressors? If so the follow up questions is: How do you feel your environment impacts these stressors?

Question #11 – Do you think there are services that could help minimize the stressors you have identified? If the answer is yes, the follow up question are: A) What services do you think would be beneficial to you and your child? B) How do you think these services can improve your parenting?

## Interview Protocol

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

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Number: Two (B)

### **Research Questionnaire**

#### *Set Two*

Question #1- What are the circumstances that led up to your role as a single parent?

Question #2 – What did your daily routine consist of when you were parenting?

Question #3 - What expectations did you have of yourself as a single parent? How did you deal with the expectations you had for yourself when they were not met?

Question # 4 – What were the expectations you had for your child? How did you deal with the expectations you had for your child when they were not met?

Question #5 - What is the role your child's mother maintained in parenting this shared child?

Question #6 - Did you have any family or friends who helped you care for your child? If the participant answers yes, these are the follow up questions: A) Who was available to help you? B) How did each of these individuals assist you with the care of your child? C) How often did each of these individuals assist you with your child?

Questions #7 – As a single father were there any stressors that you experienced? If the answer is yes, the follow up question is: Can you explain what these stressors were?

Question #8 - How did you deal with each of these stressors?

Question #9 - Do you feel that these identified stressors influenced your parenting abilities? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) How do you feel they impacted your ability at parent? B) In your opinion, what do you think could have helped minimize these stressors? And how do you think it could have helped minimize the stressors you have identified.

Question #10 - Do you feel your living environment contributed to the identified stressors? If so the follow up questions is: How do you feel your environment impacted these stressors?

Question #11 – Interviewer: Do you think services could help minimize the stressors you have identified? If the answer is yes, the follow up questions are: A) What services do you think would have been beneficial to you and your child? B) How do you think these services could have helped improve your parenting?

## Appendix F Demographics

### *Participant 1*

Age at single parenthood	35
Ages of child/Gender	9, 7, 5, 4 / all males
Legal Custody or Agreement	Agreement
Marital Status	Separated
Raised by	Mother
Ethnicity	Haitian Decent
Place of Residence	East Elmhurst, Queens
Income	30,000.00 yearly
Education	Master's Degree

### *Participant 2*

Age at single parenthood	21
Ages of child/Gender	3, 1 / both male
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Never Married
Raised by	Both parents
Ethnicity	African American
Place of Residence	Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
Income	32,000.00 yearly
Education	Bachelor's Degree

### *Participant 3*

Age at single parenthood	23
Ages of child/Gender	5 male, 3 female, 2 male
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Never Married
Raised by	Both parents
Ethnicity	African American
Place of Residence	Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
Income	18,000.00 yearly
Education	Some High School

### *Participant 4*

Age at single parenthood	28
Ages of child/Gender	4 female 3 male
Legal Custody or Agreement	Agreement
Marital Status	Separated
Raised by	Mother

Ethnicity	African American
Place of Residence	Jamaica Queens
Income	53,665.00 yearly
Education	One year college

***Participant 5***

Age at single parenthood	25
Ages of child/Gender	1 / boy
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Married after having custody
Raised by	Mother
Ethnicity	African American
Place of Residence	Brownsville, Brooklyn
Income	45,000.00 yearly
Education	Bachelor's Degree

***Participant 6***

Age at single parenthood	27
Ages of child/Gender	4 / female
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Separated
Raised by	Mother
Ethnicity	Hispanic
Place of Residence	Richmond Hills, Queens
Income	Less than 10,000.00
Education	Some High School

***Participant 7***

Age at single parenthood	33
Ages of child/Gender	8 / female
Legal Custody or Agreement	Agreement
Marital Status	Never Married
Raised by	Mother
Ethnicity	Jamaican
Place of Residence	Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
Income	16,000.00 yearly
Education	One year college

***Participant 8***

Age at single parenthood	24
Ages of child/Gender	3 / male

Legal Custody or Agreement	Agreement
Marital Status	Never Married
Raised by	Both parents
Ethnicity	African American
Place of Residence	Crown Heights, Brooklyn
Income	20,000.00 yearly
Education	High School Diploma

***Participant 9***

Age at single parenthood	19
Ages of child/Gender	2 / male
Legal Custody or Agreement	Agreement
Marital Status	Married after custody obtained
Raised by	Mother
Ethnicity	Italian
Place of Residence	Ridgewood, Queens
Income	31,2000.00 yearly
Education	High School Diploma

***Participant 10***

Age at single parenthood	25
Ages of child/Gender	2 / female
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Never Married
Raised by	Both Parents
Ethnicity	Barbadian Decent
Place of Residence	Fort Greene, Brooklyn
Income	35,000.00 yearly
Education	Trade/Technical School

***Participant 11***

Age at single parenthood	33
Ages of child/Gender	6, 4 / both female
Legal Custody or Agreement	Legal Custody
Marital Status	Divorced
Raised by	Both Parents
Ethnicity	Barbadian Decent
Place of Residence	Jamaica, Queens
Income	73,000.00 yearly
Education	Some College

***Participant 12***  
 Age at single parenthood 34  
 Ages of child/Gender 10 female, 8 male  
 Legal Custody or Agreement Legal Custody  
 Marital Status Divorced  
 Raised by Both Parents  
 Ethnicity Italian  
 Place of Residence Middle Village, Queens  
 Income 8,765.00 yearly  
 Education Trade/Technical School

***Participant 13***  
 Age at single parenthood 26  
 Ages of child/Gender 4 / male  
 Legal Custody or Agreement Legal Custody  
 Marital Status Never Married  
 Raised by Mother  
 Ethnicity African American  
 Place of Residence Manhattan  
 Income 15,000.00 yearly  
 Education Trade/Technical School

***Participant 14***  
 Age at single parenthood 38  
 Ages of child/Gender 6 / Male  
 Legal Custody or Agreement Legal Custody  
 Marital Status Divorced  
 Raised by Both parents  
 Ethnicity Jewish  
 Place of Residence Seagate, Brooklyn  
 Income 32,000.00 yearly  
 Education Associates Degree

**Appendix G**  
Research Study Flyer

**Calling All Single Fathers**

Are you a single father, over the age of 18 who previously or currently has a child 3-10 years old.



Do you care for your child on your own?



Do you want to share your experiences with other fathers?



For more information contact Stacey @  
(347) 385-5683  
All research is for my dissertation Study for Walden University