An exploration of young adult males' perceptions of non-resident fathers

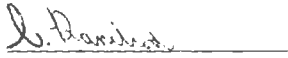## CHITRA RANCHOD

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Declaration

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this thesis is the result of my own work.

Chitra Ranchod

14 March 2008

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Graham Lindegger, for directing me towards this area of research and for his invaluable suggestions, guidance, and advice. He gave generously of his time, providing constructive criticism and comments, for which I am extremely grateful.

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On a personal note, I would like to thank my brother and my friends for their unconditional love, understanding, encouragement, and support.

Abstract

Research on fatherhood has become an area of increasing interest internationally; however, this area remains under-researched in South Africa. Given the increase in father-absent households in South Africa and its severe effects on children, the issue of non-resident fathers requires immediate attention. This study sought to address the paucity of research on this problem by examining the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants in relation to their non-resident fathers. A qualitative methodology was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 young adult males who have or had a non-resident father. The results of the study revealed commonalities and contrasts within and across interviews; the contradictions and conflicts that emerged were also explored. This study highlights the unique roles that non-resident fathers play, which go beyond the financial provider role. Specific factors that either facilitate or impede the father-son relationship and how father involvement shapes children's well-being were explored. The results show the strong emotional need that boys have for their fathers and the desire for a close, intimate and fulfilling relationship between a father and son. It is clear that non-resident fathers can and should play a major role in their sons' lives.

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F.A.T.H.E.R.S.

"F" aithful.
"A" lways there.
"T" rustworthy.
"H" onoring.
"E" ver-loving.
"R" ighteous.
"S" upportive.

Author Unknown

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What can boost children's school performance, stop behaviour problems, increase parent volunteerism and put a smile on a child's face? Answer: A father
(National Center for Fathering, 2000, p. 5).

1.1 Background

In 1975, Michael Lamb, a leading figure in fatherhood studies, in his article title correctly described fathers as "Forgotten Contributors to Child Development". From that time, there have been many research papers and articles published on fathers (Chrisp, 1999; Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Informed by this plethora of research, fathers' unique and irreplaceable contributions to the well-being of their children are becoming increasingly recognized (Horn, 1998a; Lamb, 1997; Popenoe, 1996; Pruett, 2000).

Nowadays, although fathers might no longer be forgotten contributors, they remain absent or missing contributors in the lives of many children (Horn & Sylvester, 2002). The percentage of children growing up without their father present, either in their home or in their lives, is continually increasing (Eastin, 2003; Klinger, n.d.; Matthews, 1997; National Center for Fathering, 2000). According to Richter, "Most households in South Africa function without the physical presence of a father" (as cited in Cilliers, 2003, p. 1). Barbarin and Richter (2001) estimate that approximately 50% of fathers do not have daily contact with their children and do not reside with their children for any substantial length of time. Cilliers (2003), however, argues that despite the prevalence of father-absent households, many families can manage perfectly well even without the father figure present. So, in South Africa, the absence of fathers in itself does not seem to be the origin of the difficulties in which families find themselves. It is the active involvement and contribution of the father in the rearing of children, whether he is physically present in the household or not, that is lacking (Cilliers, 2003).

Mbuyiselo Botha, chairman of the South African Men's forum, states that "The absence of a strong father figure in a child's life spells disaster" (as cited in Cilliers, 2003, p. 2). He claims that fathers play an essential role in society, especially for their sons. The absence of a 'good' father in a household has extensive negative repercussions for children, which, in turn, directly contribute to a variety of social problems facing many countries (Blankenhorn, 1995; Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Team, 1998; Walter, 2000; Weiss, 1999). In attempting to define what a 'good' father is, McKeown (2001) comes to the rather minimalist conclusion that he must be physically present on a regular basis and have a positive as opposed to a negative impact on his child. Popenoe (1996) states that father absence is a major force underlying many of the serious and crucial issues that dominate the news such as crime, premature sexuality, out-of-wedlock teen pregnancies, deteriorating educational achievements, and substance abuse. All of the above issues influence a child's well-being.

Increasing numbers of children are living apart from their biological fathers as a result of a rise in divorce, non-marital childbearing (Bradshaw, Stimson, Skinner & Williams, 1999; Horn, 1997; National Center for Fathering, 2000), polygamous marriages, migratory labour (Hunter, 2004; Mboya & Nesengani, 1999; Rabe, 2004) and imprisonment (Brenner, 1998; Mazza, 2002; Turner & Peck, 2002). These are just a few of the many reasons offered as to why fathers are non-resident. However, it is important to note that absence for these reasons does not preclude fathers from being actively involved in their children's lives.

Just because a father does not live with his children does not or should not imply that he is uninvolved with them (Bradshaw et al., 1999; Fathers Direct, 2001; Klinger, n.d.). According to Jackson (as cited in Julion, 2002), non-resident fathers have the potential to make a positive and powerful impact on their children. Yet, there has been an emerging body of literature on fatherhood that leads one to an uncritical, unproven assumption that non-resident fathers are uninvolved, uncommitted, unavailable, and uninterested in the lives of their children (Munsch, Woodward & Darling, 1995). Furthermore, this non-

empirical literature has been used to fuel media and political discourses that portray non-resident fathers as 'feckless fathers' and 'deadbeat dads' (Bradshaw et al., 1999). Consequently, Julion (2002) points out that the resulting social policies are not reflective of the experience of non-resident fathers and do not support and facilitate the active involvement of non-resident fathers in the lives of their children.

This popular belief regarding the incompetence of non-resident fathers, a belief that, generally, a father 'walks away from marriage' and is not interested in his children's life, is not the image that appears from research (Bradshaw et al., 1999). In fact, it would appear that a great majority of non-resident fathers are maintaining ties and staying in contact with their children. However, the dynamics and consequences of these relationships require clarification (Bradshaw et al., 1999; King, Amato & Booth, 2004). The significance of fathers in a household is immense (Weiss, 1999), and studies report that 7 in 10 non-resident fathers remain in contact with their children (Burghes, Clarke & Cronin, 1997). Even when fathers live apart from their children, their active involvement benefits their children both academically and socially (National Center for Fathering, 2000; Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997). Morrell and Richter (2006) argue that fathers can make a crucial contribution to the well-being of South African society by caring for and loving their children, which will bring about a different generation of South Africans for whom fathers will be remembered for their active involvement and presence in their children's lives as opposed to their absence.

However, in South Africa, it is increasingly difficult to formulate a picture of fatherhood (Morrell, 2003) because of the lack of research available (Morrell, Posel & Devey, 2003). Further research is needed to fully understand the role of non-resident fathers in their children's lives and the way in which their involvement can support and encourage children's health and welfare (Horn & Sylvester, 2002; King et al., 2004; National Center for Fathering, 2000). This research study is intended to shed some light on non-resident fathers by exploring young adult males' perceptions of their non-resident fathers and the nature of their relationship (or non-relationship) with their fathers. The analysis of qualitative interviews is expected to bring a greater insight and understanding of the roles

that non-resident fathers play, the quality of the relationship that is shared between a non-resident father and his son, the factors that facilitate and hinder this relationship, and the mental representation of non-resident fathers.

1.2 Rationale for this study

The broad rationale for this research study is the need to understand the perceptions and experiences that young adult males have and/or had of their non-resident fathers. There is a paucity of research on fatherhood in South Africa (Morrell, 2003; Morrell et al., 2003; Morrell & Richter, 2006). Morrell (2003) states that no information is available regarding the status of South African fathers and the effect of father absence on children. Morrell et al. (2003) point out that existing South African databases "do not reveal the number or profile of fathers" (p. 73). In South Africa, "there is no systematic encouragement of fatherhood and no efforts are being made to promote and encourage positive roles of fathers and their involvement in families" (Morrell, as cited in Barlett & Vann, 2003, p. 91). Furthermore, in this country, millions of children grow up without their fathers, which has long-lasting and drastic effects on their lives. There is an increasing recognition that father absence is a critical problem, as it directly contributes to many other pressing problems (Blankenhorn, 1995; Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Walter, 2000; Weiss, 1999). As Mkhize (2004) points out, "research into why fathers engage or disengage with their children could thus be an important link in promoting the well-being of the child" (p. 3).

Discussions on non-resident fathers have mostly concentrated on the negative and harmful effects of father absence. Consequently, very little information is available about the causes of father absence and about the factors that enable fathers to remain actively involved in their children's lives (Bradshaw et al., 1999) and the challenges that they face in maintaining this involvement. Even less is known about the barriers they have to overcome if they wish to participate in their children's life (Speak, Cameron & Rose, 1997). A significant number of non-resident fathers still maintain a relationship with their children. However, the dynamics and consequences of this relationship are not well understood (Bradshaw et al., 1999; King et al., 2004). With father absence at such a

critical level, society can no longer afford to remain negatively focused. It is time to look at non-resident fathers who are devoted and committed to their children (Bradshaw et al., 1999). As Samuels (2002) states, it is time to 'break the cycle', move beyond a father-absence archetype, and start to investigate the forces that enable fathers to create and sustain a positive, healthy relationship and active involvement in their children's lives. Posel and Devey (2006) stress the need for research, both qualitative and quantitative, to explore further the nature of absence and to examine the implications of the escalating levels of father absence for the well-being of children.

In addition, Hawthorne (2000) states that non-resident fathers deserve to be taken seriously. Essential questions about the role of the non-resident father remain unresolved with little consensus on just where he fits in (Hawthorne, 2000; Kissman, 1997). King and Heard (1999) add that various aspects of these fathers and "their interaction with their children and with the residential mother are still unknown" (p. 385). Increased attention needs to be given to non-resident fathers in order to gain a greater knowledge and understanding regarding their role, contributions, impact, and the influence they have on their children's lives and well-being (Horn & Sylvester, 2002; King et al., 2004). Informed by the above, an attempt was made to interview some of the participants' non-resident fathers to provide additional data; however, due to the geographical distances and lack of contact with participants, this effort proved unsuccessful. Furthermore, it is well argued that fatherhood and masculinity go hand in hand (Hobson & Morgon, 2002; Mkhize, 2004; Pittman, 1993a; Pittman, 1993b). Yet, very little research has been conducted on this crucial relationship (Plantin, Manson & Kearney, 2003).

Despite their prevalence, despite the increasing plethora of literature on fatherhood, not much is known to date about the circumstances and experiences of non-resident fathers (Bradshaw, et al., 1999). This research study is motivated by two different factors: the rapid and drastic increase in the number of non-resident fathers and the deficient knowledge available about their circumstances in this country.

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1.3 The aims of this study

While internationally, research on fatherhood is expanding and has become an area of increasing interest, comparatively little research has been carried out in South Africa (Morrell, 2003; Morrell et al., 2003; Morrell & Richter, 2006). The broad aim of this research study is to investigate how a group of young adult males perceive or perceived their non-resident fathers, the role that their non-resident fathers' fulfil or fulfilled, and their relationship with and representations of their non-resident fathers.

As part of this broad aim, this study attempts to answer the following questions:
- What roles do non-resident fathers play in relation to their children?
- What roles do children expect or wish them to play?
- What impact do non-resident fathers have on their children, and how?
- What kind of relationship is shared between a non-resident father and his son?
- What factors contribute to and obstruct the continuation of the above relationship?
- How do non-resident fathers influence the emerging manhood of their sons?
- How is the non-resident father represented by the son/s?
- What impact does the moderating role of the mother or other influential family members have in facilitating or impeding the above representation?
- Does the nature of the absence have any significant effect on the son's representations and experience of the father?

While it is beyond scope of this particular research study to provide answers to all these questions, it is hoped that the richness of the interview data that were collected will begin to shed some light on non-resident fathers.

1.4 Overview of this study

Chapter 2 presents a critical and comprehensive review of the relevant existing literature. It is divided in three parts: firstly, issues regarding definitions of fatherhood are examined; then, the importance of fathers in general is highlighted, and finally and more specifically, the literature on non-resident fathers is explored. Chapter 3 discusses the pertinent methodological issues of this study. Chapter 4 reports the results of the data

analysis, and Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study as it relates to the existing literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions and terminology

Definitions are not always easy

(Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Team, 1998, p. 3).

2.1.1 Defining fathers and fatherhood

Sullivan (2000) notes that when one explores the definition of what it means to be a father, it is important at the onset to acknowledge the existence of differing and contradictory views. A key challenge which researchers involved in this area are confronted with is to differentiate between fathers and fatherhood (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Seltzer (1998) adds that the definition of fathers and fatherhood is changeable and confusing, and among researchers, understandings of these terms vary. At present, boys and young adult men exist in complicated cultural contexts where experiences of "what it is to be a man and a father are so rich and diverse" (Sullivan, 2000, p. 3).

Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera (1999) note that "A father can be 'biological' and/or 'social'; he can be 'legal' or 'non-legal'" (p. 4). Each of these definitions has crucial implications for both the father and the child. In the western world, the most obvious and common definition is that of the biological father, whereby a man becomes a father when his sperm, combined with the child's mother's egg, biologically contributes to the making of the child (Morrell, 2006; Seltzer, 1998). However, this notion of biological fatherhood raises some difficulties, for example, when one considers different approaches to pregnancy such as in-vitro fertilization and artificial insemination (Morrell, 2006; Sullivan, 2000). Furthermore, in contemporary society, given the increasing diversity of relationships between men and children as well as the declining number of children residing with their biological fathers (Day, Evans & Lamb, 1998), there are many other versions of fathers. Consequently, Sullivan (2000) states that the "concept of 'social

fatherhood' is more meaningful than biological fatherhood" (p. 2). A social father is a man who raises and accepts responsibility for the child 'like a father', but the child may not be his offspring; this definition would apply, for example, to an important community figure or non-marital partner (Morrell, 2006; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). A further distinction is evident between legal fathers such as divorced fathers who are granted by the courts certain rights to visit and make decisions regarding their child's life and non-legal fathers who have no legal status when it comes to their children such as unmarried fathers who have not determined paternity (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999).

In recent literature, the terms fatherhood and fathering are used interchangeably. However, Tanfer and Mott (1997) make a useful distinction between these two terms. Fatherhood is viewed as a status achieved by having a child and when "a man becomes a father he is always a father" (p. 1). Fathering goes further than just the procreative act of having a child and includes all the childrearing roles, tasks, and responsibilities that a father is required to perform. There is a paucity of studies that have examined how men come to define their fatherhood. Sullivan (2000) argues that there a variety of factors which influence and shape the way fatherhood is perceived, the way fathers behave, and the way they are likely to view their role as fathers. These factors include how the fathers themselves were fathered, their ideas of what a father *should* be and *ought* to do, their spouse's perception of fathering duties, the depiction of fathers in the media and entertainment industries, and the influence of public perceptions of their role. These different dimensions of fatherhood basically would include "bread-winning, nurturing, role-modeling, socialization of children, participation in their children's lives, moral and spiritual development and providing a sense of stability" (Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Tea, 1998, p. 3).

In response to the question of how men learn to be fathers, a recent study of 1000 Australian fathers noted that the most common response was through "observing and listening to [one's] own father" (Russell et al., 1999, p. 36). Yet, Daly's (1995) study of 32 fathers revealed that fathers identified the actions or principles that influenced their

own fathering behaviour as coming not from particular father-figures but rather from fathering peers or the advice received by one's mother or wife. In turn, children's expectations of and experience of fathering could possibly also be influenced by these variables.

The above findings suggest that all fathers are not the same. They come in different sizes and colours, with different backgrounds, different thoughts on fathering, different expectations for their children, different influences affecting their notions of fathering, and different ways of establishing and maintaining a relationship with their children. As a result of these diversities, one should not attempt to specify particular roles or expectations that would apply to "all fathers or all children or all families" (Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Tea, 1998, p. 3). Furthermore, Seltzer, McLanahan and Hanson (1998) add that the concept of a father differs drastically within cultures as well as between cultures.

It seems that the concept of fatherhood is expanding (Matthews, 1997; National Center for Fathering, 2000). The National Center for Fathering (2000) states that children can benefit from positive relationships with male family members and other significant members. This notion seems to be consistent with Morrell and Richter's (2006) view when they argue that, all over the world, the word father is used to refer to various people who enact the role and play the part of the father to children, families, and the community. Many children do not know their biological fathers; however, in his absence, the father's role is often performed by a wide variety of 'fathers' such as older brothers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, non-marital partners, mentors, friends, teachers, preachers and health care workers, and, of course, by mothers too (National Center for Fathering, 2000; Smith & Richter, 2004).

2.1.2 The cyclic shift in fatherhood

Over time, the identity of fathers and the understanding and conceptualisation of fatherhood and father involvement have endured fundamental changes in most industrialised countries, including in the southern African context (Lesejane, 2006).

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Lamb (2000) argues that fatherhood has always been a multifaceted concept; however, over time, the central motif has changed "from moral guidance to breadwinning to sex-role modeling, marital support and finally nurturance" (Lamb, 2000, p. 23). Seltzer and Brandreth (1994) state that "fatherhood is in a state of transition" (p. 49). At present, many researchers argue that the role expectations of fathers are in the middle of another cyclic shift, from 'father as breadwinner' to 'father as nurturer' (Daly, 1995; Smit, 2002). Paramount in this move is the belief that fathers should be more nurturant and affectionate towards their children and more actively involved in the daily care of their children (Lamb, 1995; Pleck, 1987). This new culture of fatherhood is termed 'active nurturant fatherhood' by Ritner (1992), and it refers to "the development of new roles for fathers that better reflect the needs of their children in this modern era of the changed roles for the mother. It means restore fathers to the lives of many children who live without them" (Garbarino, 1993, p. 54).

Lamb (1995) distinguishes three elements of the active involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. The first element entails engagement, whereby the father spends time in direct contact with his children. Accessibility is the second element and refers to the time the father spends in close proximity to the child, even when the two are not in physical contact. The final element of father involvement is paternal responsibility, which refers to the extent to which the father can take responsibility for the child's well-being. These above elements of father involvement apply to resident as well as non-resident fathers (Halle, 1999). Most men tend to be involved with their children in terms of the first element of interaction; however, the other elements, while less common, are gradually being incorporated into their paternal conduct (Erickson & Gecas, 1991).

2.1.3 Defining non-resident fathers

In recent decades, one of the outcomes of the drastic changes taking place in the family structure has been a rise in non-resident fatherhood (Bradshaw et al., 1999). The term non-resident father refers to a father who, for whatever reason, does not live in the same household as his child (McKeown, 2001; National Center for Fathering, 2000). Non-resident fathers may emerge as a result of divorce, where a married couple may separate

after a child has been born to the marriage or following the wife's pregnancy, and a cohabiting couple may separate from each other, either after the birth of a child or pregnancy. Non-resident fatherhood could also arise if a woman becomes pregnant and carries the baby to term after having sexual intercourse with a single man, but they never marry (Bradshaw et al., 1999; Horn, 1997; National Center for Fathering, 2000). It could occur with polygamous marriages, where a husband has more than one wife at the same time. It could occur as a result of work obligations such as migratory labour in South Africa (Hunter, 2004; Mboya & Nesengani, 1999, Rabe; 2004). The high crime rate in this country has led to yet another reason for the rise of non-resident fathers: imprisonment. Many inmates are fathers and often absent from their child's life, not maintaining any contact with them (Brenner, 1998; Mazza, 2002; Turner & Peck, 2002).

Non-resident fathers also fit a variety of different profiles. Some non-resident fathers share an amicable relationship with their child's mother while others may encounter difficulties in this relationship, which makes it harder for the parents to work together to promote the best interests of their child. Some non-resident fathers see their children daily while other non-resident fathers may have court-ordered visitation rights that allow visitation only at certain times. Some non-resident fathers have joint legal custody, which enables them to contribute actively to and make decisions about their child's life. It is important to note that this phenomenon is not restricted to any particular racial, ethnic, cultural, or income group. It can be found anywhere, be it in urban or rural areas. Thus, these diversities regarding non-resident fathers are endless (National Center for Fathering, 2000).

As with the terms father and fatherhood, there seems to be some blurring of meaning and inconsistencies with the terms father absence, fatherlessness, and non-resident fathers, which are often used interchangeably. Moyo (2004) notes that the following terms define absent fathers: visiting, lone, fathers apart, and non-resident fathers. Although in the literature non-resident fathers are sometimes referred to as 'absent fathers', this term is in many cases "an inappropriate and pejorative description of their parenting" (Henman & Mitchell, 2001, p. 496). Although some non-resident fathers have little or no contact with

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their children, most have some contact and play an active role in their children's life (Henman & Mitchell, 2001). Father absence, in this review, refers to the ongoing absence of the father from the household. It is important to note that father absence can be physical and/or emotional; the term physical refers to the physical absence of the father in the child's life, and emotional refers to the father's not being emotionally available to the child. A father can be physically present yet emotionally unavailable to a child or physically absent but emotionally available (Morrell, 2006). Fatherlessness, as discussed in this review, includes fathers who do not actively participate in their child's life when they are living apart from their children.

In response to the issue of the meaning of fatherhood, two emerging themes are evident: the shifting role of fathers over time and the emergence of two seemingly contradictory trends in fathering, namely the new-age father as carer versus the uninvolved absent father (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). With regards to the future of fatherhood, the only message that emerges from current fatherhood research is that there are no simple and clear answers and very little consensus. It is important to recognize that there are a variety of ways that men actually 'father'. Morrell et al. (2003) add that many definitions of fathers and fatherhood exist, and it is important to acknowledge these different understandings. To conclude, Sullivan (2000) states that "as roles and relationships are continually being negotiated and renegotiated, individual men need to explore their own understandings of what it is to be a father today, and this is not an easy task" (p. 4).

2.2 Fathers

2.2.1 Parental roles

An important question that has not been resolved is whether men's contribution in families has a unique aspect to it. Are gender differences in parenting a matter a culture, choice and preference or of innate skill and inherited propensity? Is there a mother template to which fathers must measure up to? Or, is there a parent template that both parents must achieve if effective parenting is to occur?

(Day, as cited in Richter, 2006, p. 53).

2.2.1.1 The unique role of fathers

Sullivan (2000) notes that the crucial role that fathers play in their children's lives has become more and more evident in the literature. Popenoe (1996) believes that fathers bring something unique to the family, and Horn (1998a) adds that fathers make irreplaceable contributions to the life of a child. Fathers are unique as they provide something different from mothers and irreplaceable because when children grow up apart from their fathers, they are disadvantaged in several ways; they suffer "emotionally, intellectually, socially and behaviourally" (Eastin, 2003, p. i). What most of the research on fatherhood reveals is that children nurtured and raised by both parents perform considerably better on every measure of child well-being compared to those raised by one parent (Horn & Sylvester, 2002). Given the drastic increases in father-absent households and the lack of father involvement, it is crucial to understand and endorse the irreplaceable and unique contributions a father makes to his children's well-being. Researchers have begun exploring how and why male and female parenting strategies differ and the impact these differences have for children (Roberts & Moseley, 1996).

To shed light on these considerations of different parenting strategies, Horn (1997) notes that one must acknowledge the crucial fact that men and women are different. This statement in itself represents a highly contentious issue. Gender is socially constructed, and the distinctions between men and women are socially defined (Conner, 2000; Johnston, n.d.). One is required to "do gender", namely "to exhibit or enact those attributes or actions that are defined as masculine or feminine in a particular cultural context" (Johnston, n.d., p. 1). Conner (2000) states that the physical differences between men and women are clearly apparent; however, the psychological differences are less obvious and can be hard to describe. These differences can significantly affect how one establishes and maintains relationships including, amongst others, those of marriage and parenting (Conner, 2000). By recognizing these differences, one can appreciate how father involvement is of a different nature from mother involvement, which in turn translates into different parenting styles (Halle, 1999; Horn, 1997). Pruett (2000) states that fathers matter simply because "fathers do not mother" (p. 17). He adds that fathers have a particular style of communication and interaction, which provides children with a

diverse, richer experience of a variety of relational interactions, as compared to children raised by a single parent. These distinct differences also contribute to healthier child development.

Weiss (1999) states that the emotional need that a child has for his or her father is crucial. When a child is being raised solely by one parent, following a divorce for example, the child "does not have the benefits of a secure emotional haven, headed by both parents" (p. 2). He carefully points out that while mothers are key to the emotional development of a child, fathers are as important. Many studies have shown that fathers are important; they perform a fundamentally different role than mothers, and they tend to have a different approach to the world. For example, fathers like to wrestle with their children, engage in more physical interaction, and encourage competition while mothers are gentle and encourage fair play (Palmetto Family Council, 2000). Kogan (1998) points out that this difference does not imply that one should separate men and women into specialized roles; rather, both parents bring something unique and complementary to the parenting equation. A recent study conducted by Videon (2005) explored the unique influence of fathers on adolescents' psychological well-being. The study findings reveal that the father-adolescent relationship has an independent impact on adolescents' psychological well-being beyond the mother-adolescent relationship. "These findings underscore fathers' unique direct contribution to their children's psychological well-being" (Videon, 2005, p. 55).

It thus appears that mothers and fathers both contribute significantly to the job of parenting. When considering the well-being of children, one must concern oneself with the vital, but distinct, contributions mothers and fathers make to the process: "When we disregard the gender distinctions of parental influence as unimportant or unnecessary, we seriously limit the proper development of children. Kids need the active participation of a mother and a father" (Palmetto Family Council, 2000, p. 2).

Yet, these views raise some critical issues. If, as argued above, both parents are necessary for healthy child development, and fathers play a unique role, how does one explain the

finding that there are many successful, well-adjusted children who have grown-up in single parent homes? Furthermore, many of the compelling ways fathers are said to make a difference appear to be rigid social stereotypical notions of fathers as opposed to mothers. Mothers are probably just as capable as fathers are of adopting this parenting style. This consideration leads to the important question of whether fathers are capable of mothering and vice versa. Darnell (1997) notes that good parenting has more to do with the quality of parenting and less to do with the number of parents in the home. Richter (2006) has also argued that "Despite generally positive correlations between father involvement and child outcomes, it remains unclear whether these are father-specific effects or effects arising from socio-economic influences and/or multiple as opposed to single parenting" (p. 60). Samuels (2001) asserts that much attention has been given to the power of the father and his rule-setting role and less to the importance of paternal warmth. He thus makes the point that fathering (like mothering) is "not as natural, biological, innate, ahistorical, universal and 'give' as we used to think" (p. 120); rather, he writes, "the father is a culturally constructed feature" (p. 120). There is a range of fathering roles available, and it is inaccurate to view certain patterns as inevitable (Lindegger, 2006).

2.2.1.2 Do fathers mother?

Founded on the work of Freud and Bowlby, amongst others, early ideas about child development supported the notion that motherhood is natural and instinctual and that the relationship shared between the mother and child is the central element for the psychological well-being of the child (as cited in Ruddick, 1989). This belief in turn led to the general assumption that women were better parents than men. Ruddick (1989), defines a mother as: "… a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of his or her working life; I mean his or her" (p. 40). In other words, while mothering is done mostly by women, men are capable of performing this role and can also be mothers (Crittenden, 2001; Ruddick, 1989). Doucet (2005) notes that mothering is synonymous with the responsibility and rearing of children. Thus, the core of the 'fathers can mother' argument is that if men take on the responsibility for children, then they are mothering. However, Samuels (2001) raises the

question of whether all responsibility equals mothering. He seems to believe that the nurturing function is mothering and the function of connecting with the external world is fathering.

As the traditional gender roles loosen, fathers are emerging as just as essential and capable nurturers as mothers, and men are able to provide effective parenting for their children (Lamb, 1997; Toufexis, 1999). Toufexis (1999) notes that a recent study of single parent households demonstrated that there were no differences in youngsters raised by their fathers compared to those reared by their mothers. Ruddick (1989) adds that "there is no reason to believe that one sex rather than the other is more capable of doing maternal work" (p. 41). The key findings of research published by Fathers Direct (2001) indicated that the sex of the parent had a much less significant effect on child development than the parent's broader qualities such as warmth and kindness. Richter (2006) adds that from decades of research on parenting, at least in western cultures, 'authoritative' parenting (the appropriate combination of warmth and control) is associated with a variety of positive outcomes for the child, and "there is little research that indicates gender differences in the effects of this kind of parenting in children" (p. 60).

A more extreme position is adopted by Silverstein and Auerbach (as cited in Wilson, 1999) who argue that parenting roles are exchangeable, and neither mothers nor fathers are needed for healthy child development. They investigated the identities of actively involved fathers and concluded that children need at least one "responsible, caretaking adult who has a positive emotional connection to them and with whom they have a consistent relationship" (p. 1). Consequently, they advocate a policy that supports and encourages men in their fathering role without discriminating against women and same-sex couples.

Doucet (2005) raises the vital question of why there are gender differences in parenting. He provides possible responses to this question. One is the notion of moral identities, the stereotypical ideas that women are responsible for raising a child while men are the

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'breadwinners'. Another is connected to what growing up as a male involves; male friendship patterns and the narratives of masculinity. Doucet (2005) argues that these are not conducive to men seeing themselves as primary care-givers. Furthermore fathers incorrectly assume that women have the upper hand in parenting.

However, there are difficulties with the 'men do mother' argument. Doucet (2005) highlights the question of where the mother is in this lens. A participant in his study said the following: "Because I'm the mother. I carried, bore, delivered and nursed them. I'm perfectly comfortable with saying - he's their primary caregiver … but don't say that he's their mother. I'm their mother" (p. 40). Doucet thus argues that what is needed is productive and constructive partnerships between women and men. He states that parenting affects and is experienced differently by women and men. Gender equality does not equal sameness; men can be adversely affected by parenting approaches which concentrate primarily on maternal experiences, and women and men often have different priorities and views. He concludes that the "pioneering work for this generation of fathers is finding ways to be fathers as primary caregivers" (p. 42).

Zisblatt (2003) adds that the responsibilities of child-rearing are no longer defined by gender but rather by availability and proximity. For example, with regards to disciplining children, mothers can seldom threaten the child with the old 'wait till your dad gets home'. Now, a fairer approach is adopted, whereby the 'who saw it first' rule applies. Frey (as cited in Richter, 2006) concludes that "the contribution males can and should make to their children's development is precisely the same contribution that females make to their children's development, which is daily ongoing care and nurturing of human life" (p. 56). Thus it is not necessary to have these unique roles for fathering.

2.2.2 The positive impact of the father

Fathers' involvement and investment is one of the greatest yet most under-utilised sources of support available to children in our world today
(Engle, Beardshaw & Loftin, 2006, p. 293).

For most children, the involvement of a father in their lives can have a profound influence on their development and well-being (Engle et al., 2006; Matthews, 1997), positively influencing their educational outcomes, health, and physical, emotional, and cognitive development (Lamb & Lewis, 2003). There are a variety of ways in which fathers can provide for and engage with their children. Many authors stress that fathers' contributions go beyond just caring for their children (Richter, 2006). Fathers can also provide "human capital (e.g. skills, knowledge and traits that foster achievement in society), financial capital (e.g. money, income and experiences purchased with income) and social capital (e.g. family and community relations that benefit children's cognitive and social development)" (Marsiglio & Day, 1997, p. 2).

Richter (2006) notes that it is clear that men in the role of fathers can have both direct and indirect effects on children's development. In general, men have higher rates of employment and higher earnings compared to women and thus bring in more income into the home if they are employed. Financial support and fulfillment of the provider role by males have the effect of buffering children's plunge into poverty and thus improving their life chances, "irrespective of ethnicity or class" (Johnson, 1996, p. 10). Furthermore, as a result of their status, men may be able to access more resources for children in the community (Marsiglio & Day, 1997). Richter (2006) points out that it is thus hard to distinguish "between effects on children due to socio-economic status and effects due to family structure" (p. 55). Nevertheless, research has shown that the father's income tends to be related to improvement in a child's status and that children in female-headed households are poorer (Engle & Breaux, 1998).

Furthermore, fathers can indirectly affect children's development through their effect on maternal behaviour (Clarke-Stewart, 1978). "The interdependence between the maternal and paternal behaviour makes it difficult to isolate effects that are directly or solely attributable to fathers" (Richter, 2006, p. 59). Nonetheless, there is a considerable literature that indicates the positive impact of the father. Father involvement is related with higher-level of cognitive skills in a child's early years, increased sociability, less stress, better adjustment, improved intellectual functioning, better school achievement

and an enhanced emotional development (Amato, 1998; Engle et al., 2006; Johnson, 1996; National Center for Fathering, 2000). In addition, father involvement reduces the risk for a variety of negative social and emotional problems which are highlighted in the next section.

A father's absence from a child's home and life would be a concern, even in the absence of HIV/AIDS, however in the context of the epidemic, the father's involvement is important because of the ever-increasing need for care and support of sick adults and children. When the mother is sick, the involvement of the father could be a key supporting factor for the children. This father involvement has the potential to decrease the burden and to assist in removing the destructive effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on children (Desmond & Desmond, 2006).

Fathers are an important resource for children financially, but they are also a crucial resource in other ways such as through the time and skills they bring into the home, through the effect they have on the mother by providing support and through their social networks such as friends. "A child whose father does not take on the responsibilities of fatherhood for reasons in or out of his control suffers a resource deficit that is often irreplaceable" (Engle et al., 2006, p. 302).

2.2.3 The impact of father absence

'Fatherlessness' has attracted increasing attention over the past several years as a matter of urgent social concern ...The media has also intensified its focus on fatherlessness linking it with negative statistics for adolescent males reporting that unemployment, suicide or bad health, long term psychological problems, disproportionate contribution to crime statistics among young men are the results of a lack of ongoing contact with their fathers

(Chrisp, 1999, p. 89).

While research does not confirm the existence of a direct cause-effect relationship between the experience of growing up in a father-absent household and the social,

educational and emotional effects of father absence, Stokes (2003) notes that "the research does support the hypothesis that father absence can contribute to maladjustment on the part of the child and these problems may continue into adulthood" (pp. 5-6). Numerous studies demonstrate that for children who grow up apart from their fathers, the costs are high (Matthews, 1997). As mentioned above, most of the research on fatherhood reveals that children raised in father-absent households have considerably worse outcomes, on average, on almost every measure of child well-being, as compared to those raised in intact, two-parent homes (Horn & Sylvester, 2002).

Most international studies report that far too many non-resident fathers disengage and withdraw from the lives of their children (Horn, 1997). Some of the profound effects that father-absence has on children include child abuse, poverty, low levels of academic achievement, drug and alcohol use, health, emotional and behavioural problems, and suicide (Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Klinger, n.d.; Lamb, 2002; Matthews, 1997). Further ramifications for children who grow up without involved fathers are the increased likelihood of leaving school, joining gangs, becoming sexually active, and engaging in criminal behaviour (Korem, as cited in National Center for Fathering, 2000; Matthews, 1997). Several international studies suggest that when fathers are absent from the home, criminal activity increases, and "each year spent without the father in a home increases the odds of future incarceration by 5%" (Harper & McLanahan, as cited in Eastin, 2003, p. 2).

Weiss (1999) notes that although many single parents rear perfectly healthy children, this is not the ideal situation for the children. He adds that, commonly, single mothers encounter difficulties in providing for their family, and their children have very little parental guidance. After school, these children are "often either placed in some form of day-care or left to themselves and feel alone and abandoned" (p. 3). Weiss (1999) points out that this is a hazardous situation for the child and increases the likelihood of the profound effects mentioned above. After reviewing father-absent research, Ronald and Angel (as cited in Weiss, 1999) concluded that "children in single parent families suffer more psychiatric illness and are at a developmental disadvantage ... children in father

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absent families are more vulnerable to peer pressure and are more easily led to commit delinquent acts than children with a father present" (p. 3).

As adults, these children are likely to have lower incomes and lower levels of psychological well-being, they are more likely to be idle (out of school and out of work), and they are more likely to experience marital difficulties in adulthood (Amato, 2000). However, as Sullivan (2000) points out, although it is tempting to jump to causal relationships, it is vital to note the importance of other mediating or moderating variables, which may impact on the father-child relationship such as the mother's representation of the father and the son's response to or coping strategy regarding the father's absence, discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Father absence, be it physical and/or emotional, is a significant problem as it directly contributes to many social ills facing many countries (Blankenhorn, 1995; Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Team, 1998; Walter, 2000; Weiss, 1999). Horn, head of the National Fatherhood Initiative, notes that "When fathers are absent, communities fall apart … fathers help socialize children, and children help socialize men. Men who are connected to children are less violent and less aggressive" (as cited in Kogan, 1998, p. 2). Many children grow up in father-absent households, and in some quarters, this situation is viewed as contributing to childhood vulnerability, including vulnerability to HIV infection (Campbell, 2003). The effect of HIV/AIDS on fathers and their children has been under-researched, "but it requires little imagination to think of the consequences of increasing poverty, more widows, more fatherless children and more orphans" (Wilson, 2006, p. 35).

However, fatherlessness is not the sole cause of all of the social problems facing this country (Horn, 1997; Matthews, 1997). Horn (1997) accurately states that, undoubtedly, fatherlessness makes each of the problems worse. He suggests that in order to reverse the statistics, one must first work out a way to bring more fathers back into the lives of their children. In addition, the pathways by which fatherlessness leads to negative effects need to be examined. Klinger (n.d.) states that it is apparent that father absence has severe

repercussions and permeates one's social fabric. He concurs th⸱
fathers – to their children, we can begin to turn the tide in fav
families" (p. 2).

2.2.4 Fathers, sons and masculinity

A man named Ron stood over his ancient and rusted lawn mower. Fourteen years oj weekly mowings and continual repairs had finally culminated in this: the mower wouldn't start. Not a sputter, not a spark. And now Ron was drenched with sweat. He grabbed the pull cord for one more yank, and SNAP! – it broke. That did it! He stepped back and gave the mower a good, hard kick. Then, as he stood there stewing in frustration, he heard the sound of his own two-year-old son, who was now pushing his own little plastic mower through the tall grass. Sure enough, the boy reared back and kicked that little mower, just like his (National Center for Fathering, 2000, p. 11).

Journalist and criminologist Don Pinnock states that fathers are significant, and the "love unit most damaged by the Industrial revolution has been the father son bond" (as cited in Cilliers, 2003, p. 2). Pittman (1993a) states that nowadays, many fathers have become largely irrelevant and unimportant in their son's lives. He claims that everyone appears to be wallowing with uncertainty regarding what to do with men or with their "problematic and disoriented masculinity" (p. 52).

Fathers play a particular role in helping boys' transition from boyhood to manhood into ⸱⸱ the adult world (Horn, 1997; Pittman, 1993b). Fathers teach boys about growing up as a man and male interests, activities, and social behaviour (Chen, 2004). Pittman (1993b) reviewed a diverse range of present and past cultures and indicated that one is given a sign in some way, usually through a ceremony, that one has now entered into the company of men, that one has left boyhood behind, and one is now 'man enough'. This process is either done by one's own father or through the community of fathers in a particular culture. Morrell (2006) concurs that rites of passage are often emphasised in the transition from boyhood to manhood as well as the social acceptance by adult men. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Chrisp (1999) on a group of mothers raising their

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sons, the mothers themselves stress the "need for initiation of the sons into the male culture" (p. 90).

Boys who do not undergo this ritual seek affirmation of their manhood in other, usually inappropriate, ways. Horn (1997) notes that these boys can be found making statements such as "If I can beat you up, that makes me a man" or "The more women that I go to bed with is proof of the more man I am" (p. 7). He adds that it is therefore not surprising that a serious problem is encountered with the presence of gangs in communities which have a prevalence of fathers who are largely absent, uninvolved, uncommitted, and uninterested in the lives of their sons. Horn (1997) stresses that this fact does not imply that a child will not grow up perfectly healthily without a father; however, he points out, it is more difficult and less likely. Father involvement tends to have a modulating effect on boys' aggressive predispositions by providing a model of culturally appropriate male behaviour (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Consequently, boys who grow up with active, involved fathers are less likely to engage in violent behaviour; they are more likely to have their masculinity affirmed and to learn from their fathers how to direct their masculinity and strength in constructive ways (Palmetto Family Council, 2000).

Fathers are particularly significant for their sons as their sons will eventually grow up to be fathers themselves. The father's love and belief in his son helps build the son's self-confidence: "Boys in particular need male role models, a father helps them define what it means to be a man and it is men who teach boys how to be fathers" (*Newsweek*, as cited in Weiss, 1999, p. 3). Risch (2001) also concluded that a son's relationship with his father is essential, as a father remains his son's most significant male role model, shaping his attitudes toward intimate relationships.

Although the primary focus of this research study is on the father-son dyad, it is important to note, as Samuels (1985) did, that less attention has been paid to what happens within the father-daughter relationship, the father's attitude towards his daughter, and what he inspires or extinguishes. Samuel (1985) insisted that this particular relationship is of the greatest significance. Fathers provide their daughters with an

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outlook on the world of men so they are able to gain a healthy familiarity and knowledge of this world. Girls who grow up with involved fathers have an increased likelihood of establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with boys in adolescence as well as men in adulthood (Palmetto Family Council, 2000).

A large body of literature has concentrated on the negative results associated with uninvolved and ineffective fathering behaviours. There is evidence for the widespread assumption that men who have dysfunctional and emotionally distant relationships with their fathers are destined to be unsuccessful in their efforts at raising and fathering in their own sons (Gerson, 1993). Furthermore, Dawson and Richter (2004) note that many incarcerated young males had absent, neglectful, or abusive fathers themselves, which in turn contributes to their own disengagement from their own children, which creates a never-ending cycle. Impaired or lack of contact with fathers appears to have its most dramatic consequences on male children (Bee, 1974; Johnson, 1996; Mott, 1994). There is a host of negative and socially dysfunctional outcomes, but the areas of particular concern include masculine identity development (Mitchell & Wilson, 1967) and school success and social prowess (Cazenave, 1979). Studies reveal that these effects can be short term, long term, or recurring in the lives of males (Amato & Keith, 1991a, 1991b; Hetherington & Camara, 1988).

Morman and Floyd (2002) believe that one reason why all father-son relationships become increasingly difficult to establish and sustain as the sons become teenagers and young adults, "results from the demands both feel to meet the expectancies of the masculine gender role" (p. 397). The traditional masculine gender role is often characterised by a restrictive expression of affection and emotions, a need for power, control, and success, and a competitive outlook on life (O'Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1987). What one should also bear in mind is that the father-son relationship is not only a relationship between two family members but also a union between two men. Consequently, there is a paradox: on the one hand, the development of a mature sense of masculinity depends on the son's relationship with the father; on the other hand, the father-son relationship is sometimes complicated when it becomes a relationship between two males in

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competition according to the norms of masculinity. For example, numerous studies have revealed that male-male relationships are generally less warm and less close than female-female or opposite-sex relationships (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Williams, 1985). In light of such studies, the lack of emotional connection in the father-son relationship may be due to the demands of the masculine gender role for limited emotional expression between men (Morman & Floyd, 2002).

Kindlon and Thompson (1999) have noted that when an adolescent son begins to question and defy his father's position or authority in the household, a frequent reaction from a father is to fight his son's challenge and respond with masculine, defensive responses of competition and criticism. Morman and Floyd (2002) argue that most male adolescents and young adults want personal control over their lives and to be their own men; however, this wish conflicts with the real situation most of these young men are in, as they rely on their fathers physically and financially. As a result, many young men find themselves in competition with their fathers for dominance, power, and control, which often leads to destructive effects for the father-son relationship. Hence, it is evident that "although the father-son relationship is potentially the most socially significant same-sex relationship many men experience in the life course, it is generally troubled with conflict, competition and aggression, which is in part due to the socio-cultural prescription for masculine behaviour" (Morman & Floyd, 2002, p. 401).

There is a clear link between fathers and masculinity, as fathers are men, and men have a gender identity that one calls masculinity (Morrell, 2006). Men's influence, position in the family, and breadwinning role are at the heart of traditional, gender-stereotyped masculinity politics (Hobson & Morgon, 2002). Mkhize (2004) argues that fatherhood is interrelated with the social construction and reconstruction of masculinities and men's practices, roles, and activities. He adds that "we should never lose sight of the fact that fathers derive their position and power from cultural prescriptions of manhood" (p. 5). Pittman (1993a) states that fulfilling the role of a father is the life's fullest expression of masculinity. Jennings and Maisel (2004) point out that if one takes a look at the increased incarceration rates of men today, the shocking rates of sexual assault, rape, domestic

violence, and abuse, and the rise in the number of absent fathers, it is apparent that something is deeply disturbing "the fabric of masculinity and fatherhood" (p. 21). In their study on male identity and family relationships, all the respondents indicate that their fathers are the starting point where their sense of masculinity originates. Yet, a particular lack of research on the relationship between masculinity and fatherhood is noted (Plantin et al., 2003). Thus, this study aims to explore the kind of relationship shared between a non-resident father and his son, the factors that contribute to and obstruct the continuation of the above relationship, and how the non-resident father influences the man a son turns out to be.

As Pittman (1993a) states, what takes place in the father-son relationship and what does not happen in this relationship is undoubtedly the most crucial predictor of whether the son will grow up to be a man capable of giving life to others or whether he will go through life with feelings of shame, worthlessness, and restrictive intimacy in relationships with men, women, and children. At the second national summit on Fatherhood of the National Fatherhood Initiative, held in June 1998, it was concluded that there is no substitute for the male father figure and that the promoting of good masculinity depends on the active involvement of the father (Gavanas, 2002).

2.2.5 Barriers preventing men from being involved fathers

The evidence from our experience seems to suggest that some fathers genuinely wish to be involved with their children, they want their children to know them, to spend time with them ... However our evidence also suggests that there are major obstacles in the way of some fathers in having a relationship with their children ...

(Dromey & Treoir, as cited in McKeown, 2001, p. 26).

There is a growing awareness of the influences and challenges that fathers encounter which hinder their active involvement in their children's lives. Palm (1993) outlines four key barriers preventing fathers from being involved. The principal challenge is the lack of time to devote to parenting. The demands of work seem to reduce most men's time to be involved parents. Men experience difficulty in balancing their families and work (Weiss,

1999), and they may be torn between their need to participate in their child's life and their career obligations (Hosking, 2006). Consequently, the conflicting demands of work and family have become a source of stress in the lives of many men, as they have long been for women. A second commonly overlooked barrier encountered by men is their lack of preparation for involved parenting (Palm, 1993; Weiss, 1999). Matthews (1997) notes that fathers commonly state that they were never "socialized to parent" (p. 3). Generally, girls are given many more opportunities to learn about the raising of a child and child development, and they also have more chances to rehearse parenting skills such as babysitting (Palm & Palkovitz, 1988). Without sufficient access to training in parenting skills, fathers are forced to rely on learning by trial and error (Palm, as cited in Palm, 1993). Furthermore, many men who grow up without good role models of involved fathers have to "overcome their socialized image of fathers" (Hawkins & Roberts, as cited in Palm, 1993, p. 146). Insufficient preparation for fathering, together with an inadequate knowledge base, makes this a difficult obstacle to overcome (Palm, 1993).

The low value placed upon involved parenting is the third barrier: the value of spending time with children on a daily basis has decreased over time. It is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade men "to leave the status and economic necessity of work to spend more time with their children" (Heath, as cited in Palm, 1993, p. 146). Adding to the men's lack of commitment to giving more time to their family is the competitiveness between male and female workers for 'good jobs'. This competition is resulting in most of the daily care been done by childcare providers. As the value and benefits of involved parenting is diminishing, it is difficult to encourage and promote involved parenting for fathers (Palm, 1993). A final barrier to involved fatherhood is the "probable negative effect of additional male involvement on the marital relationship" (Palm, 1993, p. 146). Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston and McHale (as cited in Palm, 1993) suggest that greater father involvement leads to more conflict with the spouse and decline in marital contentment. In his analysis of family power dynamics, Backett (1987) noted that mothers may limit father participation in order to sustain some balance of gender power within the marital relationship and to maintain a greater sense of control over the family domain.

An additional barrier noted by Weiss (1999) is the social perceptions of the father: the major barriers are still socio-cultural in terms of how fathers see themselves. It is often proclaimed that even without their fathers, children do grow up perfectly healthy and sometimes perform even better in life. However, Weiss (1999) notes that this is not true and that "both good fathers and good mothers, a male and a female figure, are needed in a child's life, especially for emotional stability" (p. 7). Fathers are faced with the challenge of rising above and overlooking many social messages that subtly reinforce their incompetence and ineffectiveness as parents (Johnson, 1996). Stereotypical behaviours of masculinity and gender stereotypes of fathers as unimportant, uncaring, and incompetent are reflected in the practices of health institutions and education programmes that focus solely on mothers "even when fathers are present and active in their children's lives and are making decisions affecting children's futures" (Engle et al., 2006, p. 302). This focus on mothers can be seen in the fact that paternity leave for the birth of children has developed only very recently.

Johnson (as cited in Weiss, 1999) concludes that in an era where manhood is regarded by some as a social illness, fathers have a particular responsibility to their sons. "The ability to be protective and nurturing while retaining the strength that makes us an object of admiration rather than fear is the biggest challenge for fathers today". (p. 7)

2.3 Non-resident fathers

2.3.1 Ambiguity surrounding the role of non-resident fathers

Several authors ... have noted that the nature of the father's role following separation from his children and the expectations for how he fills that role, are ambiguous (Munsch et al., 1995, p. 52).

Although millions of children grow up in father-absent homes, ambivalence and confusion exist regarding what identifies a 'suitable' non-resident father (Hawthorne, 2000; Kissman, 1997). This lack of clarity tends to hinder the development of a strong paternal identity and weakens the non-resident father's identity, thus reducing his

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commitment to that identity and further threatening the father's involvement with his children (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Marsiglio, 1993). No clear guidelines and well-established norms are available to explain how non-resident fathers are to behave (Umberson & Williams, 1993), leaving them to work out their role in the family system on their own (King, 1994). Amato (1998) adds that non-resident fathers have to construct a new kind of fatherhood for which there is no equivalent in the intact family, that is, in a two-biological-parent family. Consequently, many non-resident fathers believe that they have little or no opportunity to influence their children in any considerable way (Hawthorne, 2000).

According to the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Worker's Union (SACCAWU, 1991) many fathers have encountered a continued struggle for parental rights. There has been an increased amount of attention on establishing legal paternity and making sure that child support payments are being made. Horn (1997), however, points out that this preoccupation runs the risk of seeing fathers only as people who should pay and stay away. Fathers are merely seen as 'cash machines' for their children. He states, "unfortunately, what this denies is the reality of what really good fathering is all about" (Horn, 1997, p. 9). In South Africa, laws that enforce the fathers' financial obligations to children have existed for many years, but "it is only recently that a new direction in policy, one that attempts to build a relationship between father and child has been advocated" (Morrell, 2006, p. 22).

Furthermore, the role of the non-resident fathers is discounted by numerous older research findings suggesting that their contribution either does not benefit their children's well-being or is negatively correlated with their adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Furstenberg, Morgan & Allison, 1987; Hess & Camara, 1979). These findings are contrary to the evidence of recent studies, which have found a positive association between non-resident fathers' involvement and children's well-being and development (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Lamb, 1997). It is important to note that difficulties exist in measuring the effect of father involvement on children's well-being, which leads researchers to question the validity of the measures used and the conclusions reached

(Hawthorne, 2000). For example, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) suggest that the fault may lie in the measure of fathers' involvement, which commonly is the frequency of contact between the non-resident father and his children. The frequency of contact is only one element, which, on its own, is not an accurate indicator of the quality of the relationship shared between the non-resident father and his children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Munsch et al, 1995). Additional research is thus essential in order to gain a greater insight and understanding of the contributions of non-resident fathers to their children (National Center for Fathering, 2000).

In intact families, fathers often rely on mothers to connect with children (Hawthorne, 2000). However, most non-resident fathers, now find themselves in a completely new circumstance as they can no longer rely on the children's mothers to facilitate the growth and continuation of the father-child relationship (Umberson & Williams, 1993). Unless they have a 'good' relationship with the children's mother, non-resident fathers realise that they have little or no opportunity to influence their children. In addition, in many father-absent households, the mother represents the non-resident father negatively, thus making it even more difficult for him to connect with his children. Furthermore, some fathers have to deal with mothers who are uncommitted to or, even worse, totally against their continued participation in their children's lives. In this sometimes unfriendly environment, non-resident fathers have to confront the challenge of re-defining and re-working their fatherhood (Arditti, 1992). The feelings of insignificance and sometimes incompetence that non-resident fathers experience are also likely to result in a deterioration of their commitment to their paternal identity (Pasley & Minton, 1997). Consequently, if they are unable to work out their new paternal role, they are at a heightened risk of disengaging from their children (Seltzer, 1991). This challenge is made much more complex because of the lack of clarity surrounding the important elements of fathering itself (Hawthorne, 2000; Seltzer, 1998).

McKeown (2001) notes that fatherhood has conventionally been constructed around marriage. This view is consistent with the argument that mothering and fathering are relational, and thus the procedure by which roles are negotiated assumes immense

importance (Tiedje & Darling-Fisher, 1996). However, non-resident fathers are rarely in a position to negotiate their new parental role in the family with the children's mothers. Ambivalence and role confusion are further evident in some of the general attitudes towards these fathers. Hawthorne (2000) notes that some resident mothers can become quite difficult and anticipate a standard of parental ability of non-resident fathers that did not exist prior to the separation while other resident mothers claim that now, non-resident fathers want to become even more involved in their children's lives than they ever were when staying in the same household. In addition, non-resident fathers are sometimes labelled as "Disneyland dads" which implies that they spend substantial amounts of money on their children in order to try to 'buy' their children's love, as though in competition with resident mothers (Wilbur & Wilbur, as cited in Hawthorne, 2000, p. 7). However, non-resident fathers commonly fear that if the children do not enjoy their time together and have fun, they will no longer want to spend any time with them. Often, these non-resident fathers feel that they are damned if they do and damned if they do not want to be actively participate in their children's lives (Wilbur & Wilbur, as cited in Hawthorne, 2000).

This review suggest that considerable confusion and ambiguity exist regarding the role of the non-resident father and how best to enact this role. As Munsch et al. (1995) state, "a more complete understanding of the important role that a non-resident father can play in the life of his child" (p. 53) is needed. They add that such an understanding could provide additional motivation for a father to sustain contact and to remain actively involved and, in the long term, could possibly be vital for the well-being of both the child and the father. Thus, one of the aims of this research study is to examine the crucial role that non-resident fathers play at present as well as what roles children expect them to play.

2.3.2 The impact of non-resident fathers on their children

They [non-resident fathers] are not simply an expression of the loss of patriarchal privileges but are very often the cries of men who struggle with what it means to be a non-resident father and who want to contribute as best they can to their children's lives (Hawthorne, 2000, p. 19).

The National Center for Fathering (2000) states that research verifies the important role non-resident fathers play and that children perform better with the non-resident father's active participation in their life. Braver, Griffin, Cookston, Sandler and Williams (2005) note that, after reviewing the literature, it appears that divorced fathers have a considerable influence on their child's adjustment.

Korem (as cited in National Center for Fathering, 2000, p. 6) states that the absence of active father involvement is associated with the increased likelihood of children's leaving school, joining gangs, becoming sexually active, and engaging in criminal behaviour. These findings are true for fathers who do not reside in the same household as their child. Amato and Gilbreth's (1999) meta-analysis which examined 63 different research studies regarding the influence of non-resident fathers upon their children, demonstrated that an emotionally close relationship with a supportive and authoritative father is associated with children's well-being. In addition, regular child support payments substantially improved the children's economic well-being, their health, performance at school, and general well-being. Graham and Beller (2002) add that non-resident fathers who have frequent contact with their children tend to contribute more resources to their upbringing than less involved fathers, in terms of food, clothing and other materials for the children and through the contribution of child support paid to mothers.

Parents who are separated but who have an amicable relationship and support each other have children whose well-being is better, who demonstrate low levels of stress and fewer behavioural problems, and who are more socially competent (Amato, 1998). Engle and Breaux (1998) add that an essential contribution that men can make to children's well-being is by increasing fathers' involvement, which consists of the three crucial components defined earlier: engagement, availability to children, and taking responsibility for children (Lamb, 1995). They add that father involvement can be established with fairly little father time investment.
Non-resident fathers can make an influential difference in the development and socialisation of a child. The non-resident father's consistent involvement promotes

"independence, assertiveness and a self-concept that involves acceptance of one's intellectual, physical, social and gendered self" (Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Tea, 1998, p. 4). In addition, fathers play a large role in "nurturing their children and can foster creativity, moral standards and social competence" (Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Tea, 1998, p. 4). Even when fathers live apart from their children, their active involvement benefits children both academically and socially (National Center for Fathering, 2000). Children with involved fathers enjoy significant benefits in school performance, cognitive competence, self-esteem, empathy, and pro-social behaviour (Horn & Sylvester, 2002). Hence, as Amato and Gilbreth (1999) point out, the influence of non-resident fathers on their children can be considerable, but it is highly variable.

An important area of children's lives where the involvement of non-resident fathers is crucial is education. Using data from the 1996 National Household Education Survey, Nord et al. (1997) examined the extent to which non-resident fathers are involved in their kindergartners' through to 12th graders' school life and whether their involvement is linked to children's school performance. The results of this study confirm the importance of non-resident father involvement in school: greater involvement by fathers in school activities is associated with fewer behavioural problems, greater sociability and improved school performance by children and adolescents (Nord et al., 1997). However, it was noted that these associations deteriorated after controlling for the resident mothers' level of school involvement. This report highlighted that it was not father contact, as such, but rather the father's active involvement in their children's schools lives that makes a difference in school outcomes (Nord et al., 1997). In addition, the payment of child support from non-resident fathers improves children's educational achievement. However, despite the positive impact father involvement in children's school has, the study indicated that the majority of non-resident fathers are not involved in their children's school (Nord et al., 1997).

In South Africa, migrant labour is a very common reason for the increase of non-resident fathers (Hunter, 2004; Mboya & Nesengani, 1999; Rabe, 2004). Nattrass (as cited in

Mboya & Nesengani, 1999) has indicated that the "average absentee rate among adult working men in rural areas of African homelands exceeds 50%" (p. 763). This widespread absence of fathers has sparked a concern among educators and school psychologists about its possible consequences on the academic achievement of South African children. A study was conducted by Mboya and Nesengani (1999) to determine whether there were any significant differences in school performance between father-present and father-absent (due to migrant labour) adolescents. The findings of the study revealed that, after controlling for gender and school environment, father-present students were found to score significantly higher than father-absent students in biology, English (second language) and mathematics. In addition, father absence due to work conditions had detrimental effects on the scholastic performance of young people. So, overall, there is strong evidence to suggest that non-resident fathers' involvement in school activities makes a significant difference in their children's school performance.

The National Center for Fathering (2000) notes that further research is needed to gain a more complete understanding of the roles that non-resident fathers play and the contributions they make to their children's lives. In addition to investigating the father's roles and contributions to their children's lives, the present study aims to examine certain questions which still remain unanswered such as what facilitates and impedes the involvement of the father with his child? What is it about a father's involvement that has this effect and leads to these outcomes? Although many South African men are absent from the lives of their children, one should not make the mistake of undermining the actual potential contribution, importance, and influence of non-resident fathers. By making this fatal error, these fathers will be marginalised even further (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999).

2.3.3 The relationship between a non-resident father and his child

You can't have a father without a child; you can't have a child without a father

(Anderson, as cited in McKeown, 2001, p. 4).

Whether or not a non-resident father sustains a relationship with his children and how he does so rests on the interaction of a variety of complex factors. Due to this complexity, inconsistencies and ambiguities are evident in the literature on factors that affect the relationship between father involvement and child adjustment. Empirical findings suggest that there is a wide range of interrelated factors that determine father involvement and the link to child adjustment. Such factors include father participation in raising the child during the marriage, the quality of the father's relationship with each child during the marriage, the relationship between the parents during the marriage as well as after the separation, the residential arrangements for the child during the separation, the length of time the father spends with his child after the separation, the remarriage of one or both parents, the age, gender, personality, and birth order of the child, the amount of child support paid, and geographic distance (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; King & Heard, 1999). Other factors that affect a father's involvement in his child's life include contextual factors, in particular socio-economic status which influences the father's ability to provide child support (Tamis-Lemonda & Cabrera, 1999), the father's family of origin, including high levels of participation in his upbringing by a man's own father (Cowan & Cowan. 1987), the mother's attitudes and views regarding the father's involvement as well as the man's satisfaction with the paternal role (DeLucci, 1995; Lamb & Lewis, 2003).

All of the above factors may, alone and collectively, influence the long-term father-child relationship (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003; King & Heard, 1999).

2.3.3.1 The frequency of contact

When the father lives apart from his children, usually very little contact is maintained, and contact generally decreases over time (Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; King, 1994; Seltzer, 1991). However, Fox (1985) notes that contact is critical if non-resident fathers want to maintain a relationship with their children. In addition, the amount of contact by the non-resident father is likely to result in different types of relationships; for example, one can compare fathers who visit their children every week to those who seldom visit (Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988). Factors positively correlated with father contact include high

parental socio-economic status, older children, children born within the marriage, joint custody, and a positive co-parental relationship (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982; Seltzer, 1991; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988).

In addition, studies reveal that associations exist between different types of father involvement. For example, fathers who rarely visit or have no personal contact seldom make up for it in other ways such as communicating by phone while fathers who maintain regular visits communicate most often in alternative ways as well (Furstenberg, 1988). These results negate the belief that fathers who are unable to provide one source of involvement compensate by providing another. Rather, according to Teachman (1991), these findings suggest that there is a group of fathers who are especially concerned and highly dedicated to their children and who have multiple forms of contact with their children simultaneously.

The most commonly researched relationship involves the frequency of contact between the non-resident father and his children and its effect on the children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; National Center for Fathering, 2000). Amato (1993) notes that if fathers provide more than just financial resources to their children, then one would expect the frequency of contact also to be correlated with children's well-being. Numerous studies, mainly American, have examined this idea. Some studies find a positive association between frequent contact and the well-being of the child (Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi & Lightel, 1986; Kline, Tschann, Johnston & Wallerstein, 1989). In addition, these studies refer to a variety of child outcomes such as "academic achievement, behaviour problems, psychological adjustment, self-esteem and social competence" (Amato, 1993, p. 32). In contrast, some studies failed to find any beneficial outcomes of father involvement following separation (Furstenberg et al., Ochiltree & Edgar, as cited in Amato, 1993). Some studies even relate frequent visitation with greater problems for children (Baydar, 1989). Generally, these studies do not seem to differ from the former in quality or in the kinds of outcomes studied (Amato, 1993).

This review reveals divergent and often contradictory results regarding the relationship between the frequency of contact and the effect on the child. Amato (1993) argues that an explanation for this inconsistency could be the different methodological procedures utilized in the studies, such as the sampling method (convenience or random) and the source of data collection (parent or child). He adds another explanation for the variation in results, namely that the impact of contact with non-resident fathers is reliant on many other factors such as the level of conflict between parents. These factors may moderate the impact of visits, and studies that do not take them into consideration could produce spurious results. Furthermore, Munsch et al. (1995) state that the simple measure of frequency of contact is not an adequate indicator "for qualitative measures of the father-child relationship" (p. 41). Some of the inconsistency may also be attributed to reliance upon measures of frequency of contact which are insensitive to differences in the quality of the interactions that occur during the time spent together and other elements of involvement that follow with contact that are beneficial to children's lives.

2.3.3.2 The quality of the relationship

What may be more significant for the well-being of the child is the quality of the interaction and the strength of the emotional ties between father and child, than the amount of father-child contact (National Center for Fathering, 2000). According to King, Harris and Heard (2004), "research indicates that the type of involvement does matter" (p. 69). Yet, the quality of father-child relationship is not as frequently researched or as well understood as is the amount of father-child contact (Halle, 1999). In general, father contact alone is modestly related to the children's well-being and beneficial outcomes for children; however, it is the more intensive kinds of involvement and characteristics of the relationship that are associated with children's well-being and that make a difference to the children's outcomes (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999).

A study conducted by Dunn, O'Connor and Bridges (2004) entailed interviews with 162 children about their relationship with their mothers, fathers, and stepfathers. The results demonstrated unequivocally that "more regular and frequent contact by the non-resident father was related to closer, more intense relationships and fewer adjustment problems in

children" (p. 562). This finding suggests that frequency itself is an important predictor variable. However, the researchers also noted that the amount of contact between a child and a father was related to the relationship between the parents, which suggests that there are other variables which mediate or moderate the relationship between the amount of contact and its effects. Furthermore, Horn (1998b) states that "researchers consistently find that children who describe the quality of their father-child relationship as close and warm, in contrast to those who do not, have better psychological and emotional health and do better over the long-term" (p. 1).

A recent study conducted by Ahrons and Tanner (2003) examined adult children's reports of relationship changes with their fathers 20 years after their parents' divorce and their perceptions of their parents' divorce and its long-term impact. Results of the study indicated that most adult children believed that their relationships with their fathers had either improved or stayed constant over time. In addition, they reported that custody arrangements did not directly affect reported changes in the quality of their relationship with their fathers; however, "increased inter-parental conflict, early father remarriage and low father involvement in the early post-divorce years were associated with worsening relationships over time" (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003, p. 340). It's important to note that those who reported deteriorating relationships with their fathers also reported poorer quality relationships with their stepmothers, stepsiblings, and paternal grandparents (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003).

Amato and Gilbreth (1999) conducted a meta-analysis concerning the impact of non-resident fathers on their children and found that children do better when they have regular contact with their non-resident fathers over long periods of time and engage in varied activities. These relationships are characterised by strong emotional attachments and feelings of interdependence. In addition, frequency of contact was not linked to the children's well-being. The authors stress that increasing visitation alone did not result in an improvement in well-being when fathers fail to be authoritative parents (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999). Shaffer (2002) defines authoritative parenting as "a flexible, democratic style of parenting in which warm accepting parents provide guidance and control while

allowing the child some say in deciding how best to meet challenges and obligations" (p. 435). Thus, for a father to be only a 'Disneyland Dad' is not good for children (Wilbur & Wilbur, as cited in Hawthorne, 2000, p. 7), and such activities alone like taking their children to restaurants and movies do not form a sufficient basis for raising healthy children.

Research needs to shift the focus away from mere contact between father and child present in most studies to investigating the various ways that non-resident fathers are involved in their children's lives and the effects of these forms of involvement (King et al., 2004). This study plans to examine the impact non-resident fathers have on their children and to provide a more complete understanding of the relationship shared between a non-resident father and his child. In sum, Amato (1998) states that fathers who live apart from their children need to increase not only the amount of time but also the quality of the time spent with their children so that their children can obtain the full benefit of the social capital available to them. Non-resident fathers are commonly heard saying, 'I'll just leave and let them start a new life' or 'They're better off without me'. Craig (2000) concludes that the Amato and Gilbreth (1999) study cumulates "30 years of research that shows that these statements are not in the best interest of children" (p. 2) and what is paramount, rather, is the way fathers relate to children.

2.3.4 The absent father and the son's reactions

The most prominent concern in research on fathers in the recent period has been the phenomenon of the absent father (Morrell, 2006, p. 18).

An interesting piece of research was conducted by the Ikamva Labantu's Men's Kindness Programme on male identity and family relationships. Young men in the townships provided a greater understanding of their ideas of manhood through testimonies on fatherhood. There were four distinct father-figure models that emerged from this study and which shaped the sort of man that sons are at present, namely: "the present father, the abusive father, the warm, strong and engaged father and the absent father" (Jennings & Maisel, 2004, p. 21).

The archetype of the absent father is very pervasive in today's society. Balcom (1998) states that the cause for and nature of father absence is significant in determining the impact it has and will have on the son as he grows into a man. In contemporary society, 'normal fathering' entails a certain degree of abandonment whereby fathers are usually absent from family life, they do not have emotional relationships with their sons, and they are less likely than mothers to view themselves as part of their children's future (Johnston, 1995; Luepnitz, 1988). However, not all sons suffer from this 'normal' absence (Balcom, 1998). The complex factor that defines the absent father archetype is the ongoing physical and emotional absence of the father from the household and his son's life.

According to Balcom (1998), sons who are abandoned by their fathers usually have one of two variants of intense feelings related to their fathers. The first is emotional reactivity, characterised by the statement "I'll never be like him" (p. 283). This intense feeling experienced by the son is directly caused by his father's absence and leads him to deny the significance of his father. The son is confronted with experiences of unresolved grief and uncertainty, and until the son recognizes his unfulfilled needs and desire for his father, he can remain in confusion about himself and his intimate relationships. The second variant of emotional intensity is over-identification with the father. In this form, the abandoned son idealizes, worships, and shows great admiration for his absent father. This feeling may be based on an actual experience with the father or the fantasy of the father that he longs for, in spite of the father's clear lack of contact and commitment to his son (Corneau, as cited in Balcom, 1998). Morrell and Richter (2006) add that "children (adopted, deserted or abandoned) have a strong desire to find their biological fathers" (p. 5).

According to the Family and Marriage Society in South Africa (2005), how children respond to, construct, and cope with father absence such as through a divorce is dependent on their age and their self-concept. However, most children will express certain emotions. The children may be deeply saddened by the loss of their father and

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commonly feel abandoned by the father. They may also feel confused if not properly informed about the father's reason of departure. Children also experience worry and anxiety regarding the mother's ability to cope without the father and "about who will cook and care for dad" (Family and Marriage Society in South Africa [FAMSA], 2005, p. 1). In addition, "They may go through a bargaining phase. 'If I am good, maybe Daddy will come back' and may use magical thinking to re-create what they want" (FAMSA, 2005, p. 1). The absence of a father from the household produces an emotional void, 'father hunger' for both boys and girls.

In a South African study, Smith and Richter (2004) explored how children viewed their fathers and the role that they fulfil. The sample consisted of both boys and girls, aged 11-13, from three schools of different social strata in KwaZulu-Natal. Some of the fathers in this study worked away from home. Results indicated that children "face and are saddened by father absence, inadequacy" (p. 26). Most children also expressed a longing for their father to spend time with them; in other words, they evidenced a desperate yearning for a stable, secure, remaining figure. Idealisation of fathers and the ideal fathers they would like to have, to be, or be with, one day, was evident across social strata. Children viewed their fathers as superhuman, and there was idealization of the 'perfect father' where positive, heroic images of fatherhood were provided, often expressed metaphorically such as "I want my father to be a president" (Smith & Richter, 2004, p. 30). While most of the children painted a picture of a 'good father', this picture was far from the reality of their inadequacies. Children were particularly disturbed by deceit and betrayal, either towards themselves or towards their mothers. "Even when they found fault with their fathers, many such descriptions began with 'I love my father but ...'" (Richter & Smith, 2006, p. 166).

Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) study of 60 families investigated how both children and the parents cope with divorce. Their study also revealed that the age and level of development influenced how the children responded and coped with the event. One of the common themes was the extensive employment of fantasy to cope with the divorce. There was a great deal of denial accompanied by several wish-fulfilling fantasies.

Another striking feature was the desire and longing for the father, and more than half of the children in this study missed their father very much. These children experienced a profound sense of loss and reported feelings of emptiness. Additionally, many children felt abandoned and rejected by the father and expressed their longing in ways similar to the grief for a dead parent. This study revealed that "some children idealised their father following his departure and talked continually about the father as if to invoke his presence by their words" (p. 69). Some children, despite the father's absence, attempted to restore his presence by representing him within the family such as by wearing his clothes. Furthermore, some children, mostly boys, expressed intense anger towards the mother, believing that she caused the divorce or drove the father away. A few children candidly confessed to the thoughts that they had caused the divorce and tended to assume responsibility (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Posel and Devey (2006) highlight the need for research that examines the nature of absence and the consequences of father absence for the well-being of children; both these themes will be explored in this study.

2.3.5 The mental representation of non-resident fathers

When a child has a father who is absent, a mental representation of the father needs to be constructed, either literally or symbolically (Twomey, 1997, p. 4).

Another interesting issue that arises is the representation of fathers. When fathers are in the process of leaving the family, they rarely offer explanations to their children about the reason for their leaving (Balcom, 1998). In families where a father abandons his responsibility, it is usually the mother who provides the vital link in introducing and interpreting the father and absence to the child (Twomey, 1997). The mother's own mental representation of the absent father is also critical in terms of determining how it will influence the extent to which the child expresses curiosity about the absent father, how the child copes with the father's absence, what she thinks her child needs to know about the absent father, and consequently the information the mother conveys to the child about the absent father. The mother conveys information about the absent father in both a literal and symbolic sense (Twomey, 1997).

The information provided by the mother may facilitate or impede the child's ability to construct his or her own mental representation of the father (Twomey, 1997). Atkins (as cited in Krampe, 2003) noted that the mother has the ability to facilitate and promote the emotional presence of the father even in a father-absent household, as it is the information that she provides that makes him present. For example, a child will construct and develop more positive feelings towards the father if the mother represents him as caring, affectionate, and available, "modeled by the mother's own feelings toward him" (p. 141). However, the child will formulate a drastically different representation if the mother were to convey disapproval, disrespect, or fear of the father. Atkins (as cited in Krampe, 2003) concludes that "the child comes to see the father through the mother's eyes" (p. 141). Other significant people, however, such as the child's grandmother, relatives, friends, or the community also convey information about the absent father to the child. Rabe (2004) adds that "Children who do not have the benefit of the presence of a father have to rely on … images as presented by other family members, instead of relying on real fathers" (p. 45).

According to Denis and Ntsimane's (2004) study on South African children's experience of fatherhood in KwaZulu-Natal in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, "when a father is absent, little is known about him" (p. 26). The interviews conducted showed that fathers were absent from the children's and caregivers' discourse. Denis and Ntsimane (2004) point out that this silence does not imply that fathers were forgotten; they were just not talked about, and "often they had no name" (p. 26). Possibly, the mothers of the children did have some memories of the children's father, but they preferred not to say anything about him. However, the researchers also found that those fathers who had participated or played some role in the life of their family left better memories. In addition, if the father had died, the way he was remembered appeared to have an effect on the well-being of his children (Denis & Ntsimane, 2004).

Children experience the absence of their father in different degrees and also cope with the absence in different ways, regardless of the reason for the departure. For many children, questions arise, such as, for example: "Who is my father?", "What does he look like?",

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"How am I going to grow up to be man without a male-role model in my life?" (Stokes, 2003, p. 1). According to Stokes (2003), this absence creates an environment of uncertainty and, for many, a desire that cannot be fulfilled. Following the father's absence, mothers commonly make such off-hand remarks to their children: "If you don't behave, I'll send you to live with your father" (McCoy, 1996, p. 3) or "You're just like your father" when the child has done something wrong (Braver & O'Connell, 1998, p. 2). In addition, mothers frequently put their children in the middle of loyalty conflicts. McCoy (1996) believes that such destructive remarks and behaviours increase fear and anxiety amongst children, hurt them inadvertently and should therefore be avoided. In addition, they add to the child's own internal construction of his absent father.

Linked to the representation of fathers is Mary Main's (as cited in Wylie, 2003) notion of coherent narratives. Main, one of the pioneers of attachment theory, sought parents' recollections of their own childhoods. Main's research demonstrated that the way these parents told their own stories and how they made sense of and understood their past lives, or did not, was the most influential predictor (with an accuracy rate of 85%) of whether their own children would be securely attached to them or not. So, adults who represented a "reflective, coherent and emotionally-rich narrative about their own childhoods" (Wylie, 2003, p. 7) were likely to form a positive, secure relationship with their children, regardless of the level of security they had as children or how inefficient their own parents were.

Interestingly, what seems to be most important is not so much what happened to them as children, but rather how they made sense of what happened and how coherently they told their life story (Wylie, 2003). Hence, a coherent narrative "is a way of integrating experience which allows one to evaluate oneself and others with sensitivity and acceptance" (Parker, 2002, p. 5). It is the parents who understand and can make sense of the significant influences in their childhood who are more likely to have children who are "emotionally healthy and secure" (Parker, 2002, p. 5). As applied to fathers, parents who present a 'coherent' rich account of their fathers will probably share a secure relationship with their sons while those who represent their fathers as either 'all good or all bad',

hence fail to integrate their experiences, do not share this secure relationship with their sons.

Twomey (1997) conducted a study on the implications the mother's representations of the absent father had on her preschool children. The study was based on the ranking of the mother's representation of her child's absent father through information obtained during a semi-structured interview. The independent variable included the mother's mental construction of her child's absent father and the dependent variables included the frequency with which the child asked questions about the absent father and the information the mother conveyed to the child about the absent father. The findings of this study revealed that mothers with more "complex, coherent and integrated mental representations of their children's absent father were more likely to report that the children asked questions about their absent father" (Twomey, 1997, p. 2).

When fathers are not present, images of them are formed (Rabe, 2004). The information provided about the absent father and how the absence is "explained to, perceived and integrated into the child's experience" (Twomey, 1997, p. 2) by the mother or other family members or friends has many potential consequences for how children construct this mental image and represent their father. Thus, how the non-resident father is represented by the son and the mediating or moderating role of the mother or other influential family members have in facilitating or impeding the above representation must be examined.

2.3.6 Barriers preventing non-resident father involvement

... the challenge facing the visiting father is to devise ... an entirely new family household for those occasions when his children come to visit. He must start over...construct an alternative family life for his children--complete with new rules ... new expectations, and new father-child relationships ... he must accomplish this feat in a home in which his children do not live, during arbitrary time fragments ...

(Blankenhorn, 1995, p. 157).

Adding to the challenges stated under section 2.2.5, barriers preventing men from being involved fathers, the barriers encountered by non-resident fathers to be involved parents are even greater (McKeown, 2001). In the majority of divorce cases, the mother is granted full custody of the children, and the father's opportunities to spend time with his children may be controlled by visitation rights, which can be unaccommodating (Weiss, 1999). Nord and Zill (1997) note that, following a divorce, approximately 90% of fathers become non-residential parents. According to Dudley (1996), non-resident fathers frequently complain that 'the system' is not in their favour as they encounter many difficulties and struggle to remain actively involved in their children's lives.

Hawthorne (2000) states that, commonly, it is the mother who makes the decision to separate and takes on the role of the resident parent. During these crucial earlier stages of separation, it is essential for the father to establish regular contact with the children to ensure his continued involvement in their lives. Furthermore, divorced fathers may face unique difficulties in working with a former spouse who may be against their involvement in their child's life. According to Hawthorne (2000), "Fathers usually connect with children through mothers" (p. 1). However, for non-resident fathers, the spouse is no longer available. With the loss of the relationship with the mother, fathers need to learn a new way of relating to children (Hawthorne, 2000). Non-resident fathers might encounter further challenges, as a strained relationship with the mother might lead to conflicts over issues such as visitation (Kruk, 1993) and childrearing (Braver & O'Connell, 1998).

Non-resident fathers are faced with further difficulties with the legal system, which demands that they make child support payments. Hawthorne (2000) notes that this requirement results in "many low-income fathers living in poverty and unable to provide children with an attractive environment in which to spend time with them" (p. 1). The system offers very little encouragement for fathers to apply for residence of their children as they believe that they are highly unlikely to succeed. Furthermore, the legal system also fails to take into account the heavy pre-separation involvement some fathers have

with their children and instead provides them with a contact system that efficiently marginalizes them in their children's lives (Hawthorne, 2000).

Wallerstein and Corbin (1986) note that that being a parent within the non-residential environment is complicated, with very few guidelines prescribed. The contact system enforced significantly limits the time the father spends with the child, which hinders continuity and consequently restricts the setting of rules, limits, and disciplining of the child. Fabricius and Hall (2000) add that the visiting arrangements made by the legal system, which typically favour the mother and oppose the more liberal visitation desires of both fathers and their children, is one of the key reasons why fathers do not spend more time with their children. Hawthorne (2000) states that "non-resident fathers constantly encounter social institutions which are unwilling or unable to acknowledge that most children living in a single-parent household in fact belong to a two-parent family" (p. 1). Furthermore, the lack of public policies, such as the exclusion of men from health care preparation for childbirth and childcare, may create deterrents for fathers' involvement in the care of their children (Daly, 1995; Parke & Brott, 1999).

Khunou's (2006) research, concentrating on the links between fathers, mothers, their involvement in the maintenance system and how this involvement affects their experience of fatherhood and motherhood, highlighted some key barriers confronting South African fathers. The fathers in this study articulated intense frustration regarding the obstacles placed in their way by their ex-partners and by legal processes. All of the fathers interviewed tried to gain increased access to their children and, in some cases, this attempt involved litigation, which they viewed as a distressing and painful process that caused further tension in their relationships with their ex-partners. "What was common with the experience of litigation more generally, is the assumption that fathers are irresponsible and uncaring unless they prove the opposite" (Khonou, 2006, p. 270). During access and custody cases, making allegations of sexual abuse and violence are considered a legitimate, politically-inspired move. Such disputes have a damaging effect on the relationship between children and their fathers. The fathers in this study did not see their responsibilities as ending with paying maintenance; they wanted to be actively

involved in the rearing and the daily life of their children. Access arrangements were identified as an important barrier for the fathers in this study, and they were not satisfied to have their roles reduced to birthday playmates for their children.

Fathers are important for children, families, and society as a whole, and men generally want to be more involved parents, but evidently, many obstacles lie in their path towards involved parenting (Parke & Brott, 1999). This study aims to examine the barriers and obstacles encountered in maintaining a father-son relationship as its findings could help facilitate and promote non-resident fathers' involvement in their children's life.

2.3.7 How to make non-resident fathers involved in their children's lives

A key theme … is that no one should be left out of the family picture. An inclusive society requires an inclusive family. Mothers, fathers and children, including the extended family, are all part of the family picture which, for all the difficulties of family life, is part of the reality to which everyone belongs (McKeown, 2001, p. 2).

Blakenhorn (1995) notes that in order to resolve the problems faced by many countries the most pressing, underlying cause of fatherlessness needs to be addressed. Thus, he argues, the need to concentrate on bringing back and reuniting the fathers into all families rather than pushing them away. If fatherlessness is the most serious underlying cause to the many problems, then, according to Horn (1997), it seems that father presence, more specifically, the presence of a "loving, committed and responsible father is the answer" (p. 8). Horn provides three solutions that are currently being considered to achieve this fatherly presence. The first of these solutions is to recognize the significance of fathers, to work with the reality of father absence, and to concentrate on establishing legal paternity and ensuring that child support payments are being made. Horn (1997) however, evaluates this solution as very weak for a range of reasons; one of the most compelling reasons is that fathers are merely seen as 'cash machines' for their children.

The second solution suggested by Horn (1997) is cohabitation. However, statistics suggest that this solution is an equally weak resolution, and Horn (1997) adds that

cohabiting couples are much more likely to separate than married couples, even when the cohabiting couple have a child. The third solution, reluctantly recommended by Horn (1997) is marriage. However, a man need not be married to the mother of his children to be a committed and involved father. This attitude is evident in many separated and unmarried fathers who maintain positive, meaningful relationships with their children (Horn & Sylvester, 2002). However, being married increases the likelihood of involved fatherhood.

The National Center for Fathering (2000) concurs with Horn (1997) that paternity establishment provides opportunities to strengthen and reinforce the father-child relationship. Also, the organisation suggests that shared parenting allows many non-resident fathers to actively participate in and contribute to their children's lives. Furthermore, schools and fatherhood programmes can help non-resident fathers share their children's lives and can help promote father involvement by encouraging and facilitating the three crucial elements of father involvement mentioned earlier by Lamb (1995), namely: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility.

Evans and Perkins (2004) discuss several constructive ways to make more non-resident fathers involved in the care of their children, some of which will now be highlighted. Non-resident fathers can make a schedule to visit their children. To sustain regular contact, the non-resident father must arrange phone calls and visits at regular times, be consistent, and not deviate from the schedule. The non-resident father can show that he is interested in his children's school and other activities by following up with them on their schoolwork. This involvement lets the children know that their non-resident father cares about their education and wants to play an active role in all spheres of their life. One of the most significant things a non-resident father can do for his children is the timely payment of child support. By doing so, the non-resident father is showing his children that he is committed, cares about, and wants to provide for them. In addition, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that "regular payment of child support was positively associated with measures of children's well-being" (p. 557). One of the most common causes of conflict between a divorced couple is financial support for the children; non-resident

fathers will eradicate this type of conflict by making these payments (Evans & Perkins, 2004).

Another way to keep non-resident fathers involved is to coordinate and arrange parenting strategies with the child's mother. Since children are spending time in two different homes, they will be exposed to different parenting styles and child-rearing approaches. The child is often left in a state of confusion which increases the child's risk of developing a behavioural or emotional problem. A healthy, open line of communication with the child's mother regarding issues related to their child, such as parenting styles, must be kept (Evans & Perkins, 2004). Evans and Perkins (2004) add that the essential ingredients for being a successful, involved non-resident father are patience and tolerance, understanding and being considerate, and keeping an eye on the things that are most important to the non-resident father. Consequently, fathers who do not reside in the same home as their children can still play an important role in their children's lives.

Tello (as cited in the National Center for Fathering, 2000) states that in order to make fathers actively involved, one must alter the perception that fathers do not want to be involved and create opportunities which facilitate their involvement. To accomplish the objective of delivering more fathers to children, it is essential that promoting and encouraging responsible fatherhood remain primary on the public agenda. Horn and Sylvester (2002) claim that the most crucial task of the fatherhood movement is to reinvigorate the idea of a committed, responsive, involved, and responsible fatherhood in order to reconnect and reunite fathers, their families and their children.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature and entailed conducting individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with young adult males who have or had non-resident fathers in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of non-resident fathers. A qualitative methodology was seen to be most appropriate for this study in order to explore and capture the depth and richness of the experience of having a non-resident father. According to Blumer (as cited in Patton, 1990), a qualitative enquiry is the only real way of understanding how people perceive, make sense of, and interpret the world. A grounded theory approach was adopted in analysing the data; this approach involves "the progressive identification and integration of *categories of meaning* from the data" (Willig, 2001, p. 33). The inductive nature of the grounded theory approach presumes an open, flexible approach (Charmaz, 1995).

3.2 Qualitative research methodology

The fundamental principle of qualitative research is that meaning is embedded in a specific perspective or context (Gay & Airasian, as cited in Chappell, 1999). However, different people will have different interpretations and contexts; hence, a qualitative researcher acknowledges that each person is an individual with a different view on the world and different opinions. Many different meanings exist in the world, none of which is necessarily more valid than any other. Reason and Rowan (1981) note that the qualitative paradigm allows the exploration of the multiple realities of the researcher, the participant, and the socio-cultural context.

In qualitative research, the focus is on exploring a small number of participants' experiences and perceptions of the world rather than testing a predetermined hypothesis on a large sample (Smith, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that "Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2).

Qualitative researchers stress "the value-laden nature of inquiry" and aim to explore how the social world is constructed and given meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). In addition, qualitative research can provide insights into the emic or insider knowledge by concentrating on the particulars of specific cases (Chappell, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Examining social phenomena in "depth, openness and detail" allows the researcher to arrive at a deeper understanding (Durrheim, 1999, p. 42). Hence, qualitative research is inductive and committed to describing multiple realities and to developing a deeper understanding of any phenomenon.

Peck and Secker (1999) note three crucial implications of a qualitative research perspective. Firstly, they point out that the aim of the research is not to understand the social world in terms of numerical data and objective facts. Instead, its purpose is to investigate how participants describe, understand, make sense of, or interpret the phenomenon one is interested in. Secondly, the theories one develops as researcher are also unavoidably one's own interpretations of participants' understandings and not merely a reflection of them. Finally, for readers to evaluate qualitative research, it is essential to provide a 'thick description' of the data, with substantial extracts, to make the processes of the analysis explicit.

3.3 Sample

An essential issue in any study is the selection of research participants as it is the data which the participants provide that form the basis from which the findings emerge. Patton (1990) notes that it is in the "information-richness of the cases selected in a qualitative inquiry that validity, meaningfulness, and insights are generated" (p. 185).

This study employed a non-random, purposive sample, which means that the results of the study cannot be generalised (Kerlinger, 1986). A purposive approach was adopted, as a deliberate effort was made to select participants from particular sectors, and the selection of these participants was dependent on the study purpose (Patton, 1990). The attributes of interest in the selection of participants included age (18-24) and gender

(males). Additionally, participants were selected who reflected diverse forms of father absence such as through death, divorce, or non-marital childbearing.

There are no set norms regarding what size purposive samples should be. A technique called sample to redundancy was employed whereby one's sample size is not specified a priori, and the selection of cases continues until the point of saturation. Saturation was seen in the findings that similar themes were evident, no new information was emerging, and the researcher was satisfied that all possible sources of variation had been investigated (Durrheim, 1999). The sample consisted of young adult males, aged between 18 and 24. The sample was made up partly of students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and partly of participants who had or have non-resident fathers in the Pietermaritzburg region. Table 1 provides a summary of participants' characteristics (See page 55).

The participants volunteered to participate in this project by responding to advertisements posted around the University of KwaZulu-Natal (See Appendix A). In addition, an article on the subject of the study was written by a journalist in the local newspaper, where she advertised this project in order to recruit more participants (See Appendix B). The use of an advertisement to recruit volunteers had both advantages and disadvantages. It seemed likely that the volunteers who would respond would be interested and engaged with issues of fatherhood. In addition, the advertisement highlighted specific criteria for participation, thus filtering out 'inappropriate' applicants. However, a disadvantage of this method is that the participants might have been financially motivated as the advert stated that they would be given R25,00 for taking the time to participate. However, as Durrheim (1999) states, people are often motivated to participate in important research, but incentives show participants that their participation is appreciated. Nevertheless, even with the incentive offered, the response rates were very low.

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Characteristics

Interview Number	Age	Racial Group	Reason the father is non-resident
1	24	Black	The participant's father left to work away from home, the participant's father then re-married. The participant sees his father only during the holidays.
2	19	Black	The participant's father left before the participant was born to work away from home.
3	23	Black	The participant's father left when the participant was about 3 years old to get married to someone else.
4	20	Black	The participant's father used to work away from home and the participant saw his father on weekends only. Then, the father was shot in political violence in 1994.
5	24	Black	The participant's father left before the participant was born to work away from home, but the participant met his father twice.
6	19	Black	The participant's father left when he was 6 to stay with another woman whom he had a child with. The participant used to still visit his father, and then his father died (the participant was in prison).
7	18	Indian	The participant's father works away from home and sees the participant once every month.
8	20	Black	The participant's parents are divorced and the participant used to see his father when he was young during holidays only. At present, he does not see his father.
9	20	White	The participant's parents divorced when he was 5. The participant's father then returned when the participant was 16. At present, the participant sees his father every second weekend.
10	20	White	The participant's parents divorced before the participant was born, and the participant, at present, sees his father every second weekend.

3.4 Data collection procedure

The interviews took place in the researcher's office at the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). This setting provided a convenient and confidential space free from the potential for disruptions and noise. Potential participants were initially contacted telephonically, once the applications for participation in the study had closed. The potential participants were asked if they were still keen to participate in the study, and a suitable date and time was arranged.

Informed by Landay (2001), an open-ended narrative-type interview was conducted with the participants. Interviewees were informed of the nature, purpose, and motivation for this study and gave informed consent before being interviewed. It is now widely acknowledged that telling a story is one of the vital ways "individuals construct and express meaning" (Landay, 2001, p. 28). Narrative interviews are very open and relatively unstructured when compared with questionnaires or structured interviews. Structured interviews are characterised by a structured series of questions which the participant answers; in contrast, in a narrative interview, the interviewer creates and leaves space for the 'other' to tell his or her story in response to some broad, open question. The narrative interview offers an opportunity for the participant to provide a comprehensive account of a particular experience (Hosking, 2004; Murray, 2003): "Part of the interviewer's purpose is to get out of the way, so to speak, of what the other person wants to say and to encourage a conversation of equals" (Hosking, 2004, p. 2).

Following an initial open-ended invitation to participants to reflect on their experience of their fathers, and informed by Murray (2003), the interviewer reflected upon what the participants were saying and introduced additional probes in order to obtain clarification. Participants were encouraged to tell their stories in their own words with as much description and elaboration as they wished, and the interviewer probed and followed up interesting avenues that emerged (Hosking, 2004). Murray (2003) notes that a particular strength of this type of interview is that it gives the research participants much more control in shaping the direction and the agendas that the interview will follow. In this way, the participants share more closely in the course the interview takes, and the participants can introduce issues the interviewer had not previously given thought to. In this relationship, the participants are allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story. In addition this technique "facilitates rapport or empathy, allows greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 57).

For this study, individual, narrative-type, face-to face interviews seemed the most suitable form of interviewing. Although focus groups may have been a beneficial mode

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of data collection, in that they are appropriate for investigating and stimulating the dynamic discussion of topics about which very little is known (Schensul, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998), individual interviews provided a 'secure' and 'confidential' space in which participants could examine their private and personal experiences with their non-resident father and tell their own story. In addition, in focus groups, the responses are not independent, and the participants might feel pressurized to conform to socially accepted responses in a group rather than express themselves as unique individuals (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). With regards to interviews, the chosen method allowed the participants to grapple with issues without potential judgement from their peers, and it enabled more in-depth exploring of issues raised by each individual.

In general, the interviewer aimed to create a comfortable, informal atmosphere wherein the direction of the interview was determined largely by the participant, and the interviewer played a largely facilitative role. The use of an interview schedule helped direct the flow of the conversation and was used to provide cues when the participant had difficulties (See Appendix C). The interview schedule consisted of narrative probes around major issues, which were formulated from the literature pertaining to fatherhood. The participants were asked, if possible, to bring photos of their non-resident fathers to aid in telling their stories and were invited to raise any issues which they considered relevant. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999) note that an essential part of the research is the debriefing of participants. They add that this element recognizes and respects the autonomy and dignity of the participants. Once the interview was over and the tape recorder switched off, the participants were given a few minutes to reflect on the discussion and discuss their experience of the research process. They were given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns that they might have had. This debriefing session was found to be constructive for some participants who expressed that they found the opportunity useful to ventilate and talk about some of their experiences with their fathers.

The interviews created a rich corpus of data articulated in the participants' own words. All participants consented to the interviews being tape-recorded and transcribed. Two keys reasons for the tape-recording of interviews is that one is able to 'capture' the entire conversation and have a detailed record of the interview in the participant's own words. Furthermore, one is able to listen carefully and to follow up or probe interesting avenues without the need to write down everything that was stated by the participant. However, tape recording does have its disadvantages because, initially, the participants were very aware that they were being taped; as the interviews progressed, though, they seemed to relax. Additionally, the clarity of the recording cannot be guaranteed. Smith and Osborn (2003) note that "while the record is fuller, it is not a complete 'objective' account as non-verbal behaviours are not 'captured'" (p. 64). During the interview, brief notes were made, non-verbal behaviours were recorded, and a summary of the main themes was written up following the interview to ensure that all the data gained would not be lost if any problems with the audio-tape was encountered.

3.5 Data analysis

The data for analysis came from the audio-taped and transcribed interviews conducted with 10 adult males between the ages of 18 and 24. Bogden and Biklen (1992) state that data analysis entails a process of systematically exploring, searching, and organizing the data collected in one's study. The data analysis took the form of a staged approach where the interviews were transcribed, then coded, and themes were identified using the grounded theory approach.

With the participant's informed consent, each audio-taped interview was transcribed verbatim, using interview conventions that have been adapted from Silverman (2000) (See Appendix D). The interviews were transcribed directly onto a word processor in order to facilitate the management of data, and this written record of the interview was used for detailed in-depth analysis (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). In such situations, it is crucial to transcribe everything that is said rather than deciding what is pertinent as "the meaning of what is being said in an interview can usually only be interpreted in the context of the sentences which surround it and the conversation as a whole" (Terre

Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 132). After transcribing the entire interview, the verbatim transcript was read while listening to the recording to ensure the reliability of the transcription and to formulate a clear picture of the interview as a whole. Furthermore, as advocated by Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), brief notes on non-linguistic expressions such as laughter and pauses were made on the transcripts.

The qualitative data in this study were analysed using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory methods provide a set of logically consistent analytic procedures for conducting rigorous qualitative research. Paramount with the grounded theory approach is the idea that the researcher derives his or her analytic categories directly from the data rather than from a predetermined hypothesis: "Hence, you create theoretical categories that are directly 'grounded' in your data" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 47). In employing this approach, one begins with individual cases followed by a gradual development of more abstract conceptual categories. These are then used "to synthesise, to explain, to understand one's data and to identify the patterned relationships within it" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 28).

The central idea of the grounded theory approach is to read and re-read the textual data (in this case the interview transcripts) and discover or label important variables (called categories, concepts, dimensions) and their interrelationships (Borgatti, 1999). To perceive these variables and discover theory in the data one requires theoretical sensitivity, that is the ability to 'see' with analytic depth what is there. An efficient way to do this is through the use of questioning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Initially, each verbatim transcript was read in search of answers to a series of questions posed about the transcript, such as "how does the participant represent his non-resident father?" For each reading, the interviews were inductively coded, with induced codes having some bearing on the research questions. Coding is a process in which the researcher assigns labels to specific parts of the text. While the codes were being developed, it proved beneficial to write down memos that discussed the codes (Borgatti, 1999). Responses relating to specific questions were then grouped under a particular item heading. For example, all representations of the non-resident father were taken from each transcript and placed

together. This procedure resulted in a corpus of categorized qualitative data representing a rich variety of ways in how the father was represented in light of his absence.

The next stage of analysis involved a process of merging and linking similar and related codes to each other and exploring how these codes fit together in order to start to make connections and noting themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, the theme of positive representation was made up of codes such as 'great/good/nice man', 'hero', and 'making time', and the theme of negative representation consisted of codes such as 'abusive parent', 'alcoholic', 'broken promises', and 'tell friends he's dead'. Such codes all had strong conceptual links in terms of how the father was represented. This procedure provided the foundation for the selection of core themes.

Subsequent analysis involved tracing the conceptual links between the themes to establish how they related to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process was facilitated by the use of a matrix enabling cross-case comparisons in terms of the core themes identified (See appendix E). Miles and Huberman (1994) note that cross-case comparisons provide a beneficial way of "reconciling an individual case's uniqueness with the need for more general understanding of generic processes that occur across cases" (p. 173). They add that this process helps in the identification and analysis of themes and patterns in the text and it was thus possible it was possible to identify and highlight shared themes and differences both within and across the interviews. This concise visual representation of commonalities and contrasts was then used to facilitate the writing of an 'analytic text', which Miles and Huberman (1994) define as "the act of writing text as you ruminate over the meaning of a display" (p. 101).

Informed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the method of contrasting was also employed, for example to compare and contrast how the non-resident father was represented by the participant when he was young as opposed to when he was older. In addition, in conducting the analysis, an attempt was made to identify the presence of multiple voices or multiple identities of fathers.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are central to and should guide all research. At the onset, participants were informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study and then asked to sign consent forms (See Appendix F). These forms indicated that the participants were willing to participate in the study and that they understood the purpose of the interview as well as how the results would be stored and used. The participants were informed that the interviews would be audio-taped, that the researcher would transcribe the interviews and that the researcher and her research supervisor would have access to these transcriptions. If a participant did not wish the interview to be taped, a separate section on the consent form labelled permission to tape (See appendix F) would not be signed. It was stressed that confidentiality would be maintained and that participants were not obliged to divulge any personal information that they did not wish to. At any point during the interview, the participants had a right to choose not to answer any specific question, and they had a right to withdraw at any time.

In addition, the researcher assured the participants that when the data was captured, identifying details such as names would be deleted and replaced by pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Documents linking pseudonyms to real names were filed in a locked office. Participants were also assured that in any oral or written presentation of the results of this study, their anonymity would be protected. All participants consented both to participating in this study and to being audio-taped during the interview.

The participants were also informed that they would be compensated for their time for participating in the interview. The reimbursement of participants of research projects is an area of contention. There is the risk that the participants may feel coerced or pressured to participate, as the advertisement stated that they would be given R25,00 at the end of the interview. However, as Durrheim (1999) states, incentives also show participants that their participation is appreciated.

It is important for the researcher to carefully evaluate the costs and benefits of the research, and the guiding premise should be the protection of participants from harm

(Cieurzo & Keitel, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants may have given no previous thought to issues that were discussed in the interviews. The participants might have benefited directly as they may have found it useful to discuss some of their dilemmas and share some of their experiences with their non-resident father. In doing so, they may have obtained greater insight into themselves and their relationship with their non-resident fathers, as was indeed expressed by some participants in the debriefing session following the interview. A potential risk that might have been encountered by the participants is that the interview might have provoked anxiety or distress. Fortunately, this feeling was not reported by any of the participants. If such a case were to have occurred, the participant would have been referred to the Student Counselling Centre where registered psychologists were available. In addition, the debriefing of participants took place after each interview, whereby participants had an opportunity to reflect on the conversation.

While there may have been minimal direct benefits to the participants, the research undertaken for this study has broader social benefits by providing further insight and knowledge into the dynamics and complexities involved in this under-researched area. These benefits were explained to the participants, and a brief summary of the results was e-mailed to participants.

3.7 Reflexivity

Merrick (1999) notes that the recognition of the vital role the researcher plays in the creation of knowledge leads qualitative researchers to stress the reflexive features of the research procedure. Research is always carried out from a particular point of view, and the position of the researcher needs to be taken into account. It is of utmost importance that a reflection and critical assessment of the research design and process, together with the personal experience of doing the research, be considered throughout the research process (Merrick, 1999). So, the researcher's impact on the research process must be considered. The researcher was roughly the same age or in some cases a little younger than the participants; she was a female, a student, and of a different cultural background to some of the participants. Although on the surface these characteristics did not appear

to be an issue, it might have had an impact on the participants' willingness to participate and to respond accurately, which in turn would have influenced the kind and depth of the information that we discussed (Breakwell, 2000).

In contrast, these characteristics might have had positive implications in that the young male adults may have found it easier to discuss issues of fatherhood with a female as opposed to a male interviewer from whom they might have felt it necessary to conceal their real feelings and views in order to appear 'manly'. Furthermore, the researcher was a student like some of the participants in this study, which could also have aided in their being more open in their discussion. Breakwell (2000) states that "people engage in more self-disclosure to an interviewer who they think is similar to themselves" (p. 248).

When undertaking any research, it is important to recognize that the researcher (an adult Indian South African woman) is also influenced by their own experiences, attitudes, and viewpoints, which could impact the interaction with the participants, the data collection procedure, and the analysis of and interpretation of the data. Reason and Rowan (1981) state that this influence can be lessened through careful self-reflexivity which includes self-knowledge and the conscious, repeated checking of themes and by engaging with the challenges and critiques from colleagues or supervisors. Throughout this research project, the researcher had to carefully take note of her beliefs and values and the ways in which these might affect the results. Having regular discussions with supervisors and colleagues helped to maintain an awareness of possible biases or prejudices that might have occurred and to highlight the researcher's own beliefs, values, and possible bias.

3.8 Issues regarding reliability, validity and generalisability

Silverman (2000) states that "unless you can show your audience the procedures you used to ensure that your methods were reliable and your conclusions valid, there is little point in aiming to conclude a research dissertation" (p. 175). These issues are crucial in all research endeavours; however, in qualitative research, the means of assessing and determining reliability and validity are re-conceptualised and have a different focus (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 2000).

With qualitative research, the central focus in terms of reliability is on the extent to which the process of coding the content of the data stays constant and stable over time and person (Silverman, 2000). In addition, many authors (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994) note the significance of clear and detailed explication and documentation of methods and procedures in order to improve the reliability of a study and to ensure that the study maybe replicated. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that the use of more than one coder provides a good reliability check. This duplication results in a richer data analysis since the different coders understand the data differently and have different perspectives. In this study, the interview transcripts were read and re-read and, on each reading, coded and re-coded by the researcher. Some of the transcripts were also coded by the researcher's supervisor to check for comparability and consistency. The supervisor and her researcher engaged in critical and constructive debate about initial difficulties and ambiguities in coding until they eventually arrived at a consensus. Another way to strengthen the reliability of field data is to "transcribe as much as possible of what is said and done" including trivial information such as pauses (Silverman, 2000, p. 140). In this study, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the verbatim transcripts were read while listening to the recording to ensure the reliability of the transcription, and transcripts were annotated on non-linguistics expressions.

Validity refers to the extent to which "an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Silverman, 2000, p. 175). The validity of carrying out research within a qualitative methodological design is well documented (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). However, Kvale (1996) points out that unlike what happens in quantitative research, there are no standard rules, standardised methodological conventions, or common procedures for conducting interviews. According to Kvale (1996), it is vital for the methodology to be described in sufficient detail so the reader can determine and assess the relevance of the design for the topic and purpose of investigation. As mentioned, it is equally important to provide a clear and detailed explanation of the procedures used in the study (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These explanations will enable the reader to evaluate the

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trustworthiness of the results. Consequently, a clear and detailed explication of the methods and procedures employed in this study have been provided.

Breakwell (2000) notes that with the interview method of data collection, there are no guarantees that participants are providing accurate responses; they may distrust the researcher, or they may feel too shy to tell the truth. Furthermore even those participants who are co-operative may be unable to recall the details requested. One can overcome these challenges "by constructing a systematic set of questions, at the same time as helping the respondent to remember … will provide evidence or consistency (or not) across responses" (Breakwell, 2000, p. 247). Furthermore Silverman (2000) highlights some ways of critically thinking about the analysis with the goal of increasing the validity of the results. One of these is the constant comparative method which entails "a repeated to and fro between different parts of your data" (Silverman, 2000, p. 180). Consequently, all the data in this study were at some point examined, and commonalities and differences across the data were identified.

Quantitative research is conducted with the aim of generalisability (Silverman, 2000). In qualitative research, the issue of generalisability is approached from a different perspective. Alasuutari (as cited in Silverman, 2000) argues that may be generalisability is not the correct term to adequately describe what one attempts to achieve in qualitative research. He adds that the focus should be on "how the researcher demonstrates that the analysis relates to things beyond the material at hand … extrapolation better captures the typical procedure in qualitative research" (p. 111). In order to ensure transferability, a clear, detailed description of the context, methodology, and data analysis relevant to the particular study is required, which has been documented.

It is important to note that the primary purpose of this study was not generalisability; the central concern was to gain a deeper understanding and exploration of the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, there was no attempt at quantification in the analysis. Hence, this study could form the basis from which further insights are generated which then could be formalised into a testable hypothesis using a quantitative design.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

4.1 Key for identifying sourced quotations

Verbatim quotations from the transcribed interviews are used in this section. Quotations are identified by the reason for the father leaving the household in accordance with the following key:

5 participants' fathers left for work purposes	WK-1, WK-2, WK-3, WK-4, WK-5
2 participants' fathers left to marry/ be with another woman	RM-1, RM-2
3 participants' parents are divorced	DI-1, DI-2, DI-3

Note: Due to length restrictions, only a sample of key quotes illustrating the results is provided. Examples of further quotes are available on request.

4.2 Introduction

The analysis was conducted on the transcribed verbatim interviews and was guided by the research questions. Thus the results of this study are set out accordingly. Key findings that emerged from the participants' narrative accounts in response to the research questions are reported. Commonalities and contrasts within and across interviews are noted. In addition, contradictions and conflicts that emerged in this process together with ways in which the participants managed to negotiate these are explored.

4.3 The multiple roles of the non-resident father

4.3.1 Roles the non-resident father plays and should be playing

Across all interviews, participants noted the important, multiple, and varied roles that a non-resident father played prior to and following the separation. It is apparent from the matrix of cross-case comparisons of transcribed interviews (See appendix E) that a key current role played by the non-resident father after the separation was the advisor role.

Participants reported that the non-resident father provided advice and guidance on relationships and future career plans. Participants added that the non-resident father played an important role in guiding them, providing knowledge, insight, and understanding on life; for example, he advised not to get involved with the wrong set of friends. Despite the father's not residing in the same house as the participants, some participants expressed the need to consult, report to, and seek approval from the father. Some participants noted that their non-resident fathers played the role of motivating and encouraging them, especially academically. For example, both before and after the separation, the non-resident father was noted as playing a vital role in school performance, encouraging the child to perform well academically. These roles played by the father are illustrated in the following quotes:

> "He still plays quite a major role (0.2) like um most of the times when I'm thinking of taking a decision (Res: yes) um I I normally go to him like in June that's when I sit with him and say look (0.1) I'm planning to do this next year ... and he gave me quite very much interesting tips about relationships um (0.1) and how I must conduct and all those things and (0.1) how I must behave if its going to be a successful relationship and so forth" (WK-1)

> "I think that he is still alive (0.1) I still believe that I still go to him and account for every action ... and all my decisions no matter what" (WK-1)

> "He used to say if you passed this grade (0.2) like that's when I was still in primary (0.1) he used to call my mother oh you must tell him if he passes I'm going to buy him this and that like motivated me and stuff" (WK-2)

Prior to separation, the non-resident father played the role of the economic provider in the household. Economic support and fulfilment of the provider role by the non-resident father were viewed as improving the participants' life chances, for example the likelihood of obtaining a university education. Participants stressed the hardships experienced by their families in light of a lack of or decrease in income, with the mother and/or the

participant needing to find employment. Some participants reported that prior to separation, the father played the protector role, whereby he was viewed as being responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the family, protecting them from harm. These roles played by the father prior to the separation are illustrated in the following quotes:

"I lost out on a lot of things in life and (0.1) I would be be living a nice life right now ... I don't have a father (0.1) nobody buys me clothes (0.1) you don't have money (0.2) you don't have food (0.2) I think to myself if maybe I'm having father you know things would be better" (WK-3)

"He [the father] makes sure everything is locked up at night (0.1) make sure everything is safe and secure ..." (WK-5)

Despite noting these vital roles played by the non-resident father before and after the separation, almost all participants expressed disappointment in the roles currently played by their fathers. They longed for their fathers to play a more active role in their life and pointed to the following roles that non-resident fathers should be playing. Participants wanted their fathers to be reliable, caring, and understanding. A participant aptly describes the role that fathers should be playing by comparing a father to 'superman':

"A father should be caring um um:: (0.2) taking time um: patience um:: (0.2) honest brave gees (0.2) I don't know he should basically be like the ideal man like superman ... like superman for instance (Res: mm) the father should always be there (0.1) patient kind caring ..." (DI-3)

A key role fathers were identified as playing was that of the financial provider prior to separation. Many participants thought that if their fathers had continued to provide for them financially at present, following the separation, they would be better off in life.

"I would have just liked him to be a father to me (0.1) to give me the support I need (0.2) the love I need the help I need (0.1) then maybe like looking after my needs until I finish my school (0.1) probably if I want to go to college to look after my needs from there to the end of it" (RM-2)

The notion of a father 'being there' for the child from pregnancy till death emerged as vital issue in some interviews, where the father was viewed as a crucial and permanent feature in a child's life. One participant reported that a father is "a fixture in your life" (DI-2), describing him as a person who has been there and occupies the same role for a long time. The participant highlights that every person has to have a father in his or her life, and the relationship shared with a father is viewed as a permanent attachment.

"To me (0.2) a father is someone who is there for you no matter what um:: his there for you no matter what the circumstances um:: (0.2) you can always talk to him (0.1) he will always listen (0.2) he will guide you and … oh he is a fixture in your life (0.1) you can't not have a father in your life so::: (Res: mm) he has to be a fixture in your life (0.1) he has to be apart of your life (0.1) ja: his a big part of your life" (DI-2)

4.3.2 The surrogate father

Without their biological father in the house all the time, the participants noted that his role had been taken over by available father figures or substitutes, sometimes in the form of other adult men such as uncles or friends' fathers. Some participants reported that the mother was capable and fulfilled both the father and mother roles in their lives. Thus, fathering was not viewed as a unique function of a gendered position, and the gender of the parent was not considered as having an important effect on child development. The mother took over and fulfilled the fathering function, for example taking over the financial provider role.

"Ja my mother was basically my mother and father (0.2) she did basically put down the law from the get go um:: she she's basically been playing two roles at

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the same time (0.2) trying to keep a stable home (0.1) the best home um::
basically keep us in luxury (Res: mm) even if it did mean putting her back um::
like financially but ja like (0.2) she's basically been like both parents" (DI-3)

However, participants spoke with multiple voices regarding the role of the father. Some
participants stated that as much as a mother attempted to play both roles, she could not
replace the father as a mother and a father do bring something different to a child's
development. Thus, for example, while a participant noted above that his mother played
both roles, he later stated that there were certain things that he could talk only to his
father about.

"So there might be a few things I can talk to him [the father] about that I can't talk
to my mother about ..." (DI-3)

Thus, while initially reporting that their mother had fulfilled both roles in their lives,
some participants noted that both parents are important for a child's well-being and that
each parent performs a fundamentally different role.

"I know my mother can give us the support she can but (0.2) she's only got one
hand ((shows one hand)) (0.2) usually there's two hands in the house (Res: yes)
the biggest hand is my father's hand the smaller one is my mother's hand (0.2)
((shows both hands)) and she's like now the mother and father at the same time
... because there's a time you have to cry on the shoulder of your father and
there's time when you have to cry on your mother's shoulder but you can't put
that on one person (0.2) some people say they can do it with it one person"
(RM-2)

The father was viewed as playing a distinct role, and his involvement was viewed as an
important contribution to a child's well-being. Some participants stressed that it is the
father's unique role to discipline a child and to deter the child from negative influences.

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Fathers were viewed as irreplaceable because participants expressed not having their fathers around disadvantaged them in many ways.

> "I saw that no if I had a father to look after me I wouldn't be in jail (0.1) I wouldn't be smoking drugs (0.1) I'll be same as my brother because from that day (0.1) day one he was good (Res: yes) he never smoke cigarettes (0.1) he didn't drink (0.1) he was a soccer player ..." (RM-2)

> "um:: with the father its like you can't really push around (Res: mm) his like the authority in the household um:: (0.2) so you don't really backchat to your father or anything like that (0.2) but as soon as it comes down to your mother you can like sort of push her buttons and like maybe get her to swing her decision or something like that" (DI-3)

Some participants expressed an emotional need and a longing for their father to be involved in their lives. Although participants acknowledged that their mother tried to fulfil both parental roles, they believed that they lacked the benefits of a safe home, headed by both parents. A participant stated that even though his mother tried to fulfil both roles,

> "... there was this empty space (0.1) that I was longing for a daddy and a man" (RM-1)

The unique contributions fathers make to a son's life are discussed under section 4.6.

The father figure was also played by other family members such as uncles, cousins, stepfathers, or older brothers.

> "Big time (0.2) big time um:: I think with them [the uncles] each and every one of them was sending me money each and each and every month and they will pay a visit during special occasions ... but you know they did play support me

financially and emotionally and try to you know make me a better person (0.2) they did make a contribution" (WK-1)

Nevertheless, even though the father figure was taken over by other family members, some participants expressed the need for their own father to fulfil this important role and not a surrogate father. For example, a participant noted that although his brother had taken over the father role, he longed for his own father to fulfil this role. He represented his father as more knowledgeable than his brother, as someone whose authority should not be questioned, and as a key figure in a child's life.

"Like I had my brother to turn to as my father (Res: mm) who played my father's role (0.4) ah: but sometimes I never used to listen to him … I didn't believe that my brother was teaching the right way no I didn't want to be told (0.1) I wanted a father to tell me (0.1) not my brother you see" (RM-2)

In response to the question concerning how the participant would know how to be a father to his own child without having a father actively involved in his life, some participants noted that they watch and learn from television how to be a father to one's child, reporting that often you see that the father plays a major role in teaching his children and also in playing with them. Another participant noted that he learns from the church the kind of activities and roles fathers play, the principles of fatherhood, the kind of man one must be, and how to treat one's children. However, most participants stated that they learnt from other male figures in their lives about how to be a father.

"I think (0.2) I've seen it with my friends because (Res: mm) through my friends and also through my girlfriend as well (0.2) her dad um::: even though he doesn't have a son (0.2) just the activities because he's got 3 daughters and then when I go there like um:: the things we go like riding on the farm on bikes or something (0.2) I see he enjoys it because he obviously he wanted a son so:: (0.3) that's how I think I get the picture of what I'd want for my son that I want to do for him or to give her my daughter as well" (DI-2)

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Although non-resident fathers were reported as playing multiple and varied roles before and after the separation, participants desired more active involvement of the non-resident father in their lives. As evident across most of the interviews, participants felt that as much as the father role was taken over by other family members and friends fathers, there was still something missing from their life, and this emotional need that a child has for a father was stressed. Some participants expressed that both mothers and fathers make crucial contributions to a child's well-being, and both are viewed as important figures, playing vital and distinct roles.

4.4 The impact of the non-resident father

Participants provided varied accounts, both positive and negative, in response to the issue of what impact their father had had on them.

Some participants, whose fathers worked away from the home, noted that their father had had a major influence in their life in terms of influencing their moral development, shaping the person they are today by instilling in them good morals and values. The non-resident father also influenced some participants' socialisation skills and impacted their outlook on life.

> "He's had a major impact on my life (0.1) the upbringing itself (0.1) the morals and the values he has taught me in the path … in all the qualities (0.1) morals and the time we've spent together shaping my character …" (WK-5)

As mentioned previously, fathers were reported as having an important impact on the participants' academic performance, through providing encouragement and motivation. A participant noted that although his father had not been a 'day-to-day dad', not residing in the same household as the participant, and not involved in the day-to-day parenting of the child, it was very important for him to know that his father was there for him and concerned about his results. He expressed the need to make his father proud by achieving good results and did not want to disappoint him. Thus, by encouraging the participant to

perform well and taking interest in his results, the father is viewed as a concerned parent and as someone the participant longs to obtain approval from.

> "I think he has (0.1) made a difference (0.1) a contribution in my high high school life ... as much as he has not been a dad day-to-day (Res: yes) but um checking my June and December results to me it meant a lot because I know that I must pass well because in June I'm going to see him (Res: yes) (0.1) he will be very unhappy (0.1) he won't be happy that I passed (0.1) he'll be happy that I passed well (0.2) quite well so that one I take it as quite a very good contribution to my life" (WK-1)

Despite these positive impacts of the father's, there were some negative impacts raised by the participants. Some participants noted that not having a father figure present has negatively influenced their lives and the decisions they make or have made. As mentioned above, the father was reported as playing a vital role in providing guidance and deterring a child from negative influences. One participant noted that the lack of guidance by the father resulted in his joining the wrong company at school, and this negatively influenced his academic achievement. Some participants noted that because they did not have their father actively involved in their lives, to 'look after' and take care of them, providing guidance, they had made poor decisions and engaged in criminal behaviour.

> "It um:: affected me a lot (0.1) you know academically um:: I was under performing um:: in high school (0.1) you meet lots of people and (0.2) some are good and some are bad and you tend to follow those who are bad because (0.1) you don't have like a father figure whose guiding you" (DI-1)

> "I saw that no if I had a father to look after me I wouldn't be in jail (0.1) I wouldn't be smoking drugs ..." (RM-2)

Participants reported both positive and negative influences their father has had on them. Positively, fathers were viewed as instilling good values and morals and influencing educational outcomes and their outlook on life. The negative impacts and ramifications of not having their fathers present were also reported. Due to the lack of guidance, involvement and nurturance of the father, some participants underperformed academically, made poor decisions, and engaged in criminal activity.

4.5 Being different from the father

A common theme that emerged across most of the interviews was that of participants' being different from their father. Participants constantly expressed that they are very different from their fathers, highlighting these differences. Participants noted that not having a father in one's life all the time (for whatever reason) made them want to be better fathers to their own children and to provide them with the life their fathers failed to provide to them. One participant also made it explicit that all his achievements until the present time were as a result of his own hard work and the encouragement and support of his mother, thus alienating himself from his father.

> "If I ever become a father gives me an idea of what **NOT TO BE** like (0.2) what I don't want to be happen to my kids ... I think he [the father] has definitely shown me what not to do ... because he quitted on me and I see it as he quit on my family I want to be the total opposite of him (0.2) I don't quit on anything" (DI-2)

> "I'm here because of what we have done as a family without him so:: (0.1) I don't try and let him take any credit where it is not due" (DI-2)

Some participants highlighted the differences by noting that they did not want to repeat the same mistakes their fathers had made, for example not being there for their child or engaging in negative behaviour such as excessive drinking of alcohol.

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"… I won't do things that he [the father] did or:: do the mistake that he did but:: I think (0.3) I've learnt something from what he did (0.2) and I I don't think I'm going to do things that he did … I think what he did wrong was like drinking and cheating and (0.3) that I think when I'm like his age I don't think I'm going to do that (0.2) as I said I don't want to want to repeat the mistake that he did" (DI-1)

Another participant reported that their temporal frames are different; whereas he looks towards the future, his father is centred on the present.

"I'm completely different from him (0.1) the way I see the world is completely different ... I think to him it's all for now and for me it's all for tomorrow ((moving hands forward)) … that makes us to be completely different" (WK-1)

Another participant noted that not having a father in his life influenced him not to have children out of wedlock, and he also wished that his children would not go through the same life and hardships he has gone through.

"Ja:: ja:: so much happened (0.1) so much impact so that (0.3) I don't wish to have a kid (0.1) like I'll never have a son (0.1) actually out of the wedlock … that thing really affected me (0.1) make me change my mind (0.1) now I have experienced that I don't want my children to actually get to an experience what I had so ja:: I wouldn't want to have children until I get married" (WK-4)

Despite participants' highlighting the differences between their fathers and themselves, it is important to note the presence of multiple voices about this issue across interviews. For example, one participant, throughout the interview, repeatedly stressed that he was very different from his father, reporting different temporal frames. However, as the interview progressed, this participant revealed that just as his father had him out of wedlock, he had also had a child out of wedlock. The same participant referred to his father at the beginning of the interview as an unimportant person who did not have much effect of his

life. However, later on in the interview, he gradually began to acknowledge the significant contribution his father actually had made in his life.

> "This a person who has been there ever since I was born (0.2) my gran mum = first person I know was my gran mum and my aunties (0.1) my father was just a second person (0.2) most of the time he was away at the construction company so he did not have that much of impact ..." (WK-1)

> "He still made quite a good contribution in terms of advices and motivating me to go ... looking at people quite differently and accepting people (0.2) for who they are (0.2) he made quite an impact to having this character (0.1) and spicing a bit of my character" (WK-1)

> "I I think my father is quite a great man irrespective of all the um experiences that we've gone through and but I think he is quite a great man ..." (WK-1)

Another participant whose father is now remarried also spoke with multiple voices about his father. The participant talked about the good characteristics of the father; that he was a romantic, good person and how the participant longs to be like him, thus representing him positively; at the same time, though, he viewed his father in a negative light and said that he hated him for deserting the family.

> "I think there is this this feeling of hatred (Res: yes) I feel like hating my father sometimes and loving my father at the same time (0.1) I hate him for leaving us (0.1) and at the same time I love him just because he is my daddy (Res: yes) and sometimes I just really wish to see him ... even though he left us but he was a nice person a romantic guy (0.1) a nice guy" (RM-1)

Thus, across most of the interviews, participants pointed to the differences between their fathers and themselves. Participants reported that they would be better fathers to their

own children and wouldn't make the same errors their fathers had made. Nevertheless, it is important to note that participants spoke with multiple voices.

4.6 The importance of fathers for sons

Most participants highlighted the importance of fathers for sons, identifying their father as a key figure in 'their' lives as boys, showing them how to be a man. It was expressed across most interviews that the father plays a powerful role for a son's development, that fathering is an important avenue for a boy's formation of his unique sense of masculinity, and that there are definitely times in life when a boy needs his father. Fathers were identified as being an important male role model, teaching his son about growing up as a man and understanding what it means to be a man as well as teaching him male activities.

The father was identified as playing a distinct role in the changes taking place during puberty in a son's life, helping boys in this transition from boyhood to manhood.

> "I think (0.1) it's when you move from that stage (0.1) the puberty stage (0.1) as a boy there are things that are happening to you that you do not understand (Res: yes) when there is no father and (0.2) you scared to ask your mum and stuff like that ..." (DI-1)

One participant used the example of learning how to shave and how this experience would have been an ideal 'bonding time' for a father and son, strengthening their relationship and an experience one would reminisce about in the future. This participant noted the importance of memories shared between a father and son; this theme is discussed further under section 4.8.

> "Even like shaving (0.2) that's one thing my mum didn't (0.2) my uncle I think (0.1) it always nice I think it would have been nice if my dad had taught us how to shave (0.1) I think it would have been like a bonding time (0.1) I don't know (0.1) I'm sure most people remember the first time they shaved (Res: mm) or boys ...

because I'm sure there's times when we boys need their fathers and (0.3) just memories that boys have with their fathers that I don't have ..." (DI-2)

It was stressed that there are certain things that a boy goes through that he can discuss only with a father. The father was identified as playing an important role in advising the son, providing knowledge and understanding about life, and providing guidance on any problems his son might be experiencing.

"... especially if you are a boy your father is very important because he is the only person you can get advice from (0.2) he's the only person" (RM-2)

"... and I think the other things (0.2) the father role and I mean the father if you going to (0.2) if you started smoking and started doing something (0.3) he is the first one that would have noticed that now you smoking and give you some advice" (DI-1)

Fathers were also noted as engaging in physical interaction such as wrestling with their son, thus making him stronger, tough, and brave, and enabling him to face other boys in school.

"At school (Res: mm) you know when you got a father you develop some (0.2) um:: a a courage to like face the other boys ..." (WK-4)

Some participants noted that not having a father in his life makes it difficult for a boy to learn how to be a man and results in the boy's experiencing problems, engaging in the wrong types of behaviour, resulting in dysfunctional outcomes.

"... those are the people the one who don't have fathers (0.2) those are the people with problems (0.2) they don't have (0.1) they don't know how to be a man (0.1) I feel lucky that I knew him for 9 years" (WK-3)

"Yes I do agree that when there is no father it is hard for a boy to become a man because if (0.2) if my stepfather didn't arrive (Res: yes) I wouldn't be in in university (0.1) I'll maybe be dead or in in jail so:: (0.2) the father is very important (0.3) in the part of a young man (0.2) he is very important" (DI-1)

Thus, fathers are identified as a crucial figure in their sons' life, as the vital link in teaching their sons how to be men, and as important for the masculine development of boys. It is noted that without a father present, a son experiences challenges in becoming a man, which affects his masculine identity development, and as a result, the son often engages in negative behaviours.

4.7 The relationship shared between a non-resident father and his son

When the father lives apart from his children, it is difficult to maintain a relationship. This sentiment was expressed by many of the participants who reported dissatisfaction in their current relationship with their non-resident fathers. Many participants described the current relationship they shared with their non-resident father as either non-existent, as there is no current relationship shared between the father and son, or distant, with very limited communication. These relationships were also described as emotionally distant.

The participants' current relationship with their non-resident fathers can be compared to the relationship between relative strangers. Conversations tend to centre on official or practical matters. Some participants also reported that they do not share an open, intimate relationship with their father.

"I think it's a matter of just meeting to discuss crucial issues about my life (0.1) simple and straightforward (0.1) I I I don't have much that I can discuss with him … but um I don't have that sense of transparency with him (0.2) I just come (0.1) go to him to discuss very crucial issues ... just basic stuff" (WK-1)

Similarly, another participant highlighted the lack of communication in his relationship with his father. He explained that there seems to be a set boundary in his relationship

with his non-resident father, whereby he would have a conversation with his father focusing on just general talk, but he would not cross the boundary and include his father in other aspects of his life such as introducing him to his girlfriend. Thus, there is some distance maintained in the current relationship with the non-resident father.

> "At the moment there is nothing (0.1) … I still greet and ask him how he's doing (0.1) have a bit of a conversation but (0.2) I wouldn't go out to lunch with him (0.1) invite him over and all that jazz (0.1) introduce him to my girlfriend all that …" (DI-2)

Another participant noted that communication is very limited in his current relationship with his father where 'bonding' only occurs through activities such as going fishing. He describes their relationship as "very distant" (DI-3).

Some participants made a comparison between the relationship they shared with their father and that shared with their mother. The relationship shared between them and their mother was described as very close and open. However, a contrary relationship was shared with the fathers. One participant noted that he was never envious of the relationship between his friends and their fathers and that, in fact, his friends were envious of the close relationship he shared with his mother.

> "No (0.1) with my mother yes um:: (0.2) I'm very very close with my mother (0.2) with my father its its like I said its still on the ropes so: … its more closed lets just put it that way (0.2) I got my foot in the door but ja:" (DI-3)

Participants were also cautious in their relationship with their father; some had adopted a 'wait and see' approach to avoid being hurt. For example, a participant said that he would like to see how his brother's relationship with his father turns out before forming a closer relationship with his father.

> "I want to see what happens with my brother and (0.2) maybe it's a bad thing I'm using my brother as a test dummy to see what happens because I don't want to go get myself involved and all hurt up again (0.2) … I just want to see what happens with my brother and if things are still going well I was thinking that maybe at the end of ja: end of this year beginning of next year (0.2) maybe start (0.2) trying to patch things up (0.1) asking questions (0.2) finding out answers and all that because like I think now its also a good time to maybe try to build a bond with your father (Res: yes) like your last years before you start have to being really start being serious" (DI-2)

There were two exceptions to the trend as two participants reported sharing close relationships with their non-resident father. It appears that the reason for and type of father absence is very important in determining the quality of relationship shared between the father and son. A participant whose father used to work away from home and was later shot in political violence noted that he shared a close relationship with his father. Working away from the home to bring income to the family was viewed positively. When visiting the participant over the weekends, the father would take him everywhere; they used to engage in activities such as hunting and discuss the week's happenings.

> "I was very close to my father (0.2) and on weekends (0.1) (Res: yes) he used to visit places (0.1) he he he used to bring me along everywhere (0.1) ja we used to stalk by the bush (0.1) he loved hunting (0.1) ja he used to teach me a lot of things … in the morning (Res: ja) when I know he's coming (Res: mm) and I will be excited and there was (0.3) the road used to be far from home (Res: mm) and we used to fetch him from there (0.1) it was such a good experience (0.1) I can tell him what I did during the week (Res: mm) and everything" (WK-3)

Another participant whose parents are divorced noted that he shared a close relationship with his father, spending time together and doing activities such as playing soccer. However, when his father started engaging in negative behaviour, such as excessive

drinking of alcohol and having many girlfriends, he began to be fearful of his father, which affected the quality of their relationship.

Most participants expressed the need to have an open and close relationship with their father. Participants described their ideal relationship as like a 'best friend' relationship, where communication is open, uncensored, and without secrets. A few participants noted that this ideal relationship could still be formed and maintained even if the father does not reside in the same house as the child. Some participants also expressed a deep desire and longing to be close to their fathers in the future and seemed to be optimistic about their future relationships.

> "Close friend (0.1) (Res: yes) I wanted him to be my best friend I I wanted him to express everything to me (0.1) to be close (0.1) to advise me (Res: yes) to be there whenever I needed someone to be there for me" (RM-1)

> "... he doesn't need to stay in the same house if the parents are divorced or if he's always working (0.3) so long as he makes contact and gives time ... " (DI-2)

> "I'm kind of actually looking forward to the future um:: what it holds for me and my father (0.1) and ultimately me, my father and my brother (0.2) so:: there is a bit of resentment there but slowly and surely I'm actually moving closer and closer so ja (Res: okay) there's hope hhh" (DI-3)

There is thus a big gap between participants' current relationship (closed or non-existent) and their ideal relationships (close and open) with their non-resident fathers. Some participants reported sharing the ideal relationship with their mothers. Participants engaged merely in general talk with their fathers, maintaining distance and approaching the relationship with caution. Nevertheless, participants expressed the need to be reunited with their fathers and to share loving and close relationships.

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4.8 Facilitative and obstructing factors in the father-son relationship

In order to understand how to lessen the gap between participants' current and ideal relationships with their fathers, it was important to uncover what factors were obstructing the formation of a better father-son relationship and how this relationship could be strengthened. Participants reported a wide variety of factors that facilitated their relationship with their fathers.

A crucial issue that came up repeatedly in interviews was the importance of good memories shared with the father as a facilitative factor in a relationship. Memories were viewed as important in relationships as they are moments that one cannot undo. Reminiscing and recalling the good times aid in re-experiencing and re-affirming the positive features of a relationship. These memories help strengthen and re-enforce the relationship, forming a solid foundation for future growth. Fathers have the opportunity to spend quality time with their children, contributing to happy memories that last. These memories enabled participants to hold onto their existing relationships with their fathers, reliving the positive experiences with the father and the physical closeness to the father, and retaining reciprocal positive feelings. In an example mentioned earlier, a participant related the experience of shaving for the first time and the memories that boys have with their father as important (DI-2).

One participant noted that he keeps a photo of himself with his father with him all the time; the photo is viewed as a transitional link with the father. This participant also noted that the photo provides him with hope and optimism regarding his future relationship with his father, highlighting the importance of keeping the father in mind with the photos.

> "This was one ((participant showing photo)) of the days (0.2) those ones where he used to carry me at his shoulders and ja it was quite a great time … this one I I keep it with me everywhere I go because it's the one I love the most (0.2) it reminds me quite a lot of um things … and it's a photo that gives me hope (0.1) that some other day I'm going to be spending time with him once again (0.2) that some other day things will be okay (0.1) things will be fine" (WK-1)

Other factors reported by participants that facilitated the father-son relationship included court orders, whereby the father was required by law to pay maintenance fees or was granted visitation rights, and the sharing of common interests and activities such as sport or fishing which were viewed as vital bonding opportunities for a father and son. In addition, the quality of the father's relationship with both the mother and son prior to the separation tends to impact the quality of the father-son relationship after separation; with closer relationships have a better chance of survival after the separation.

Another important factor was the effort made by the father to initiate and maintain contact. Some participants noted that even if the father does not reside in the same home as the child, he can still have a close relationship with the child as there are various ways of staying in contact. A vital facilitative factor reported was the effort made by the father to initiate and maintain contact, for example by phoning the participant regularly. Participants said that the father can still be involved in raising the child, and the effort and time made by the father are crucial in maintaining the relationship.

> "… by phoning him [the son] like maybe 2 maybe 3 maybe even every night um::
> just keep in constant contact with him with the child (0.1) just to let them know
> that you [the father] there and if there is anyway that you can help them … just be
> there for the child" (DI-3)

> "Ja I think he [the father] doesn't need to stay in the same house if the parents are
> divorced or if he is always working (0.3) so long as he makes contact and gives
> time … I think as long as the father is out of the house but makes time um::
> maybe a weekend (0.1) a month or whatever where the kids just go with him"
> (DI-2)

Some participants reported a lack of effort made by the father to initiate and maintain contact, which resulted in their distancing themselves from their father. Additionally, minor factors such as not paying, for example for university items, obstructed the current relationship.

"Also the time and effort that he did put into (0.2) me and my brother um:: (0.3) kind of withdrew me from sort of alienating (0.1) ja so: its just (0.2) like small factors … it's like if we needed books and like something like he wouldn't pay (Res: mm) he wouldn't (0.1) he just thought of like a textbook as something that we needed for school or for varsity … I don't know why … he just wouldn't pay which would have helped us a lot" (DI-3)

An additional important mediating variable in the father-son relationship was the support or lack of support by other family members in the maintenance of the relationship. For some participants, the encouragement by other family members such as an older brother or the mother contributed to the maintenance of the relationship and was viewed as a facilitative factor.

"She's [the mother] (0.2) actually like pushing for us to do this (0.2) which I'm actually glad um:: just because we've actually missed out on so much time with my father" (DI-3)

An important factor reported as obstructing the relationship with the father was the negative influence of the new stepmother or girlfriend whom the father was seeing. A participant noted that these people represent him as problematic to his father, thus hindering the father-son relationship. He highlighted the negative effect on his relationship with his father and the stepmother's misinterpretation of his behaviour.

"The difficulty has been that um: my my my my step mother (0.1) we never had a good bond (Res: mm) so the way in which she interprets my acts um (0.2) interpreting my actions for my father (0.1) interpreting my behaviour for my father (0.1) gets to a problem at some point (0.2) there were many times where me and my father will get into misunderstanding and when I check it I found out that no it was actually because it was being interpreted wrong (0.1) and the lady who is my step mum is having attitude and all those things" (WK-1)

In addition, how the father is represented by significant others mediated the father-son relationship. The representation of the father is discussed under section. 4.10.

The father's treatment of and attitude towards the mother was also a compounding factor. Treating the mother with respect, as an equal, and being honest with her was identified as a vital facilitative factor for the father-son relationship. For one participant, the father's lack of respect for the mother hindered the father-son relationship. For example, a participant's father would have many girlfriends and then ask the participant not to tell his mother about it. Another participant noted that his father accused his mother of stealing his money and the father failed to provide for the mother and the participant.

> "No he [the father] didn't (0.2) he didn't provide for me (0.1) he didn't bring me up like ja:: he let it be my mother's responsibility ... my mother once told me that after he got me some shoes (Res: yes) it's not like he bought it he gave her the money to buy it for me (Res: okay) so ja:: after that when I was at home my mother came to me and she told me that my father said that she stole the money from him (0.1) that money he said I must take and go ..." (WK-4)

Another factor obstructing the father-son relationship was the father's negative behaviour such as excessive drinking of alcohol. A participant reported sharing a close relationship with his father initially, but as a consequence of the father's negative behaviour, he became scared of him and started to distance himself from his father, hindering their relationship.

> "Firstly he started drinking a lot (0.2) ... I think what he did wrong was like drinking and cheating and (0.3) ... but the main thing he was like drinking a lot ... then I was like afraid of him ... we were not that very much close but before we were close ..." (DI-1)

As is evident from the above interview extracts, there are many factors affecting the road to achieving the ideal father-son relationship, some facilitative and some obstructive.

Participants noted that even though the father doesn't reside in the same home as his child, he can still be actively involved in the child's life. A key factor to the maintenance of the relationship was constant contact and 'being there' for the child. Good memories shared between the father and son were also identified as a vital transitional link with the father. Both of these factors, contact and good memories were seen as facilitative to the formation of a better father-son relationship.

4.9 Coping with father absence: The use of discursive strategies

Many of the participants said that they felt intense pain and hurt at not having their fathers around, and it is evident that there is a painful desire to connect with the father. Two of the participants noted that they need to call someone 'baba' ('father' in isiZulu) (WK-1; RM-1). In order to cope with these feelings, participants often employed discursive strategies. Participants would negotiate and manage these feelings by trying to rationalize the issue through internal dialogue, constructing, justifying, and substantiating their feelings through talk.

One participant, whose father is now involved with another woman, reported that despite his involvement with this other woman, his father still maintains the link with him. He tries to alleviate his feelings of distress and to manage the situation by noting that other fathers who remarry can just 'throw away' the children, and he feels lucky in that sense and is grateful for his father's love and respect.

> "… even if he gets married to another women um but he's been able to say (0.1) to make sure the link the relationship between I and him remains um (0.2) he never threw me out (0.1) some other people they get a child (0.1) they marry other women and they throw away the children that they had previously (Res: yes) so I respect him you know (0.1) for at least making sure that he still honour me as his son" (WK-1)

In an apparent attempt to mitigate some of the negative effects of not having a father in the house, some participants attempted to normalize their situation by reporting that there

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are many other children who do not have fathers; in other words, they are not the only ones. Participants explained that there are other people who are worse off than they are as they do not have both their parents. In that sense, they are grateful to still have their mothers in their lives.

> "I think I was having courage enough to over come that (Res: yes) and understanding that (0.2) its not only ME who does not have a father some people don't have a father (0.1) even they don't they have no parents at all at least for me I have a mother (Res: yes) ja" (WK-4)

> "I also went on a year as an exchange student and I had to stay in a family with a father (Res: mm) and I saw there that it was great to have a father because (0.1) whenever these guys needed help he was there (0.2) he was like the core ja:: and then they had this (0.2) I was a little bit jealous but I was also thankful that I still had my mum (Res: ja) ja::" (DI-2)

A participant whose father is now involved with another woman and has children from that relationship explained that his father gives these children more attention than he receives. He thus experiences a constant psychological struggle because his father appears to care more for his younger siblings, and he attempts to cope by saying to himself that he is fortunate to have the support of his uncles.

> "... um: I mean the guy who comes after me (Res: yes) um um he is now going to standard seven and he still gets even more attention (0.1) and the way he's being treated ... its quite a battle that he can get everything (0.2) it does come in that way (0.1) but I .hh told myself that because I'm lucky (0.1) that my uncles they they share the same sentiments so they do try to make me understand the reality of life ..." (WK-1)

Another participant whose father left to work away from the home very early in his life said that since he never had a father figure in his life, he cannot miss that, and he viewed

the situation rather as the father's loss. He stressed that he did not feel that he had lost out in life because his father was not around, as his mother fulfils both roles adequately. Thus, he rationalizes the situation by noting that it is his father's loss if his father does not want to be involved in his life. He states:

> "Like when she [The mother] told me (0.1) like because I really never had a father from the time I was born (0.2) so I was like okay oh I don't know him (0.1) since I don't know him so it can't hurt me ja ... it's his loss or something I always like think okay he left okay (0.2) it's his loss ja hhh" (WK-2)

Thus, participants try to resolve their internal conflicts and cope with their feelings of distress because of the absence of their fathers by employing a variety of discursive strategies. Most participants do this by stressing how fortunate they are and by comparing themselves to children who are in worse situations than they are in, such as children who have lost both their parents. Participants try to reduce, negotiate, and cope with their feelings of hurt by trying to rationalize the issue (their father's absence) through internal dialogue.

4.10 The representation of the non-resident father

There were multiple and varied representations of the father in light of his absence. Some participants reported that they represented their father positively when they were young but negatively at the present stage of their life and vice versa.

A participant whose father works away from the home and sees his son during the holidays only represented his father as a positive and important figure. The participant mentioned that he always keeps a particular photo of his father with him as it reminds him of the earlier years of his life when his father used to take him to the park, which highlights the importance of keeping the father in mind with the photos. This participant kept highlighting his father's important role and representing him in a positive light. He almost represented his father as victim as well as a hero, stressing that although he made the mistake of marrying another woman, his father is still a man with great courage.

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Despite the negative experiences the participant had with his father, the participant insisted that his father is still a 'great man' for maintaining their relationship.

> "I I think my father is quite a great man irrespective of all the um experiences that we've gone through and but I think he is quite a great man because he is being managed to say (0.1) even if he gets married to another women um but he's been able to say to make sure the link the relationship between I and him remains ... so I respect him you know (0.1) for at least making sure that he still honour me as his son" (WK-1)

Two other participants whose fathers worked away from the home represented their father positively as 'good man', a 'hero', someone who makes up for missed time. These representations are expressed in the following extracts:

> "hh I just think that this man [the father] was a hero (Res: mm) in life and he used to do everything to make his family happy ..." (WK-3)

> "If he [the father] misses the time he always makes it up (0.2) like if we were supposed to go fishing (Res: yes) and if he had something planned for the next weekend (0.1) he will sacrifice his time to go out then" (WK-5)

Another participant reported that he viewed his father in a positive light when he was young while he views him negatively at present. From the information his mother gave him about his father, when he was young, he represented his father in a positive light. He was told his father left to work away from home, and he looked forward to gifts the father had promised to bring. The moderating role of others on the representation will be discussed further in section 4.11.

> "When we talking about my father (0.1) hhh all I can say about my father is like from (0.4) my understanding like (0.1) because my mother used to tell me when I

was young (Res: mm) he's a good man he's kind (Res: yes) she used to say he supported me when I was young ..." (WK-2)

As the participant grew older, he realised that his father was not coming back and started to view him in a negative light as uncaring, unreliable, and as a person who breaks promises.

"I used to be like oh he didn't come (0.2) or maybe maybe like he doesn't care about me (0.2) stuff like that (0.2) he thinks his too good for me (0.2) that used to be like like really hard times (Res: yes) I used to think like he didn't come and all that so it was really bad (0.2) mostly emotional" (WK-2)

At present, this participant represents his father as non-existent and unimportant. This was also noted by other participants who stated that when they were asked about their father, usually by friends at school or the university, they would say that he is dead.

"He is dead (0.1) even though his alive because even me (0.1) just took my father as dead just because he was not there ... and some other people they do ask me about my father (0.2) honestly I just tell them he's dead (0.1) he died a long time ago" (RM-1)

Another participant said that he was not able to form a picture of what his father looked like as he has no previous images or experiences with the person to draw from. He stated that he would not be able to recognize him if he met him.

"... I feel like in the sense of like emptiness of me (0.2) like I don't have a father there's nothing to look at ... actually (0.2) even now like even if we can encounter each other in whatever way I can't recognize him now ... ja but I don't have (0.1) even now (0.2) I don't have a picture of him and I wasn't even expecting how he was" (WK-4)

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In contrast, another participant viewed his father in a negative light when he was younger and views him in a positive light at present. When he was young, the participant experienced his father negatively as an abusive parent because he would not pay maintenance fees. At present, the participant explained, their relationship is improving, and his father now makes an extra effort to come and see him, thus representing his father more positively.

> "I know this (0.2) coming from my mother (0.1) that he was an abusive parent well not really a husband I should say (0.2) ja he just generally was hard on every one around him …" (DI-3)

> "It is improving um:: his taking more interest in my life um:: (0.2) with my relationships with other people like my girlfriend um: occasionally with my mother … but then also with varsity … his taking more time and effort to actually come (0.2) like I said before (0.1) come and see me because he wants to see me …" (DI-3)

At the other end of the spectrum, some participants represented their fathers in a totally negative light, stating for example that he never provided financially for them, never initiated contact, had hidden agendas, and engaged in negative behaviour such as excessive drinking of alcohol. These negative representations are illustrated in the following extracts:

> "He never once helped my mum with like child support (0.1) medical bills (0.1) hospital and schooling and all that so:: he never helped …" (DI-2)

> "Don't think he ever phoned to say hi how you doing (0.2)) its more of a ja how you doing can you help out with something (0.2) there's always a clause to it …" (DI-2)

> "… maybe his getting drunk sometimes because he was a drunkard" (WK-4)

Hence, differing representations of participants' fathers were evident across interviews, ranging from positive to negative to no mental representation at all. Additionally, some participants' representations of the father changed over time.

4.11 The moderating role of others on the representation of the father

Households that lack the physical presence of the father frequently do function with an active father presence conveyed by the representations of and information about the father that family members provide. The representations reported above were in most cases moderated by other family members and friends. The significant others' own mental representations of the father is crucial in influencing the extent to which a child expresses curiosity about the father, the information they provide to the child, and the child's own representation of the father.

Some family members and friends facilitated a positive representation of the father. One participant viewed his father working away from home as positive. The participant states:

> "... most of my neighbours (0.1) they just had the respect of my father and his brothers because most of them were working far away um um ... so everybody (0.1) they respected his decision of moving a bit away ..." (WK-1)

The tension between the real reason the father left the household versus the representations of and information about the father provided by significant others was highlighted. In some cases, the significant others' representations of the father, as well as the information they provided to the participant, attempted to represent the father positively. For example, when the participants were young, a fantasy image of the father was created by the information provided by the significant others; this fantasy represented an attempt at the fulfilment of a desire or ideal situation. Thus, in most cases, the mother often lied to the participant about the reason for the father's absence in order to prevent the participant from being hurt. Hence, the mother invented stories about the father, representing him positively instead of providing the real reason why the father was no longer in the household.

"She used to tell me no he's working overseas and for sure he's going to come back during the holidays" (RM-1)

However, these representations of and information about the father provided by significant others often conflicted with the participants' personal experiences with the father. Participants experienced internal conflict over reasons given for the father leaving versus the participants' own experiences. Participants seemed to struggle with the notion that their father loved and cared for them, as they were told by significant others, and yet he did not keep in contact, and he abandoned them.

"My mum said it's not like he doesn't love you (Res: mm) then I was confused because if he did love me then why didn't he keep in contact ... so:: ja it was made clear that (0.2) when I was able to understand what was the reasoning and that (0.2) I was also a bit confused ja:: because when I was small (0.1) they said he's not leaving because he doesn't love you (0.1) then he never phoned" (DI-2)

"She [the mother] used to say he supported me when I was young ((sarcastic tone)) (Res: yes) but I really don't understand how he could have supported and then forget about me at the same time" (WK-2)

When the participant would then ask when his father would be returning home, the mother would continue with the fantasy of representing the father positively.

"Exactly (0.1) during the holidays she's [the mother] going to take me to my uncle's place so that I can't see if he was there or not (Res: yes) and when I come back I ask her if daddy was around yes he he was around and he said hi (sarcastic tone) that's it" (RM-1)

Other friends also continued with the mother's attempt to represent the father positively. For example a participant's neighbour said,

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> "... your father is coming (0.1) he loves you (0.1) that's like my mother tells me"
> (WK-2)

A negative representation of the father by some participants' family members and friends influenced their own representation of their father. One participant said that while his mother tried to explain his father's absence positively, his aunt would provide the real reason for his absence and she would encourage him to forget about his father.

> "Like in my family (0.2) especially like my aunts (0.1) they are like the people who influenced me into forgetting about my father and they like convinced my mother no my mother (0.2) must tell me the truth like and everything (0.3) my aunt was like okay (0.1) she like told me the real truth (0.2) and my mother would say no don't tell him stuff like that (0.1) you know my aunt would be like (0.2) she's open and she like tell me ..." (WK-2)

Another participant's mother went so far as burning all photos of the father and changing the participant's and his sibling's names, which the father had provided, so as to remove all memories of the father. When the participant asked his mother about his father, she would just change the topic and avoid talking about it. The lack of information provided by the mother and the destruction of any visual representations of the father impeded the child's ability to construct his own adequate mental representation of the father.

> "She changed everything (0.1) she changed our names and even she changed our surname ... and even some other photographs of my father (0.2) she just burnt them all (0.1) all the photographs and I still wish to have even one photograph (0.2) I don't have even one photograph of him" (RM-1)

Some participants expressed confusion, as they appeared to be caught in conflicting representations of different people; that is, different representations of the father were provided by, for example, the participant's mother and sister. Participants struggled to

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make sense of these differing representations of the father. For example, one participant's sister told him that his father was dead while the mother would continue to represent the father positively, and alive.

> "There were some times (0.3) for instance like my sister (0.1) I used to ask her where's daddy? from the time I was 8 9 she used to tell me that your daddy's dead (0.1) then I used to tell her what do you mean his dead because my mum used to tell me that he's working (0.1) mummy is just lying and then (0.2) I'll go to mummy is it true mummy (0.2) she says hell no (0.1) she's just bluffing and then I was kind of confused and I took it as if my father was dead" (RM-1)

Thus, an important theme mentioned across most interviews is that the attempt to provide a positive representation of the father and an explanation for his absence by significant others created some confusion and uncertainty over the real reason the father was no longer present in the household.

It was interesting to note the diverse father representations participants had in response to the father's absence. For example, two participants had had little contact with their fathers, and both their fathers left to work away from the home before they were born. Yet, they each had very different representations of their father. One of the participants had a strong 'don't care' attitude throughout the interview. He said that he didn't care about his father, as his mother fulfilled both roles, and that his father has had no impact on his life. This representation was in part mediated by his aunt's encouraging him to forget about his father. This participant also experienced internal conflict over the reasons given for his father's leaving versus his personal experiences with his father.

> "I just don't care about them (0.2) like most of those photos (0.1) like are kept with my photos when I was still young (0.2) so sometimes when I like look at my photos when I was still young and stuff like that (0.2) I see him okay this is the guy and I turn the page ja" (WK-2)

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In opposition to the strong 'don't care' attitude expressed by this participant, another participant, whose father also worked away from the home, longed to have a relationship with his father some day, thus highlighting the importance of the emotional need a child has for his father. He even said that he is willing to look after his father financially when he has his own family and job although his own father did not provide for him. Despite the father not being there for the participant, the participant is very proud of his father and repeatedly referred to his father's occupation as a soldier. This positive representation was mediated by the extended family.

> "... when I was growing up I usually had this thing of my father was a soldier (0.2) so although I didn't get the chance to see him (0.2) but I know that actually my father is a soldier ... I would love to have him (0.2) I think actually myself I'm actually supposed to have a father (0.1) like there was this guy at res that was telling me he has a father then I say you guys (0.1) you are blessed having a father (0.1) I wish I was you" (WK-4)

One participant who spent some time in prison provided some insight into fathers he met while in prison. He said that the fathers were often not on good terms with their child's mother. The mother would say negative things about the father to the child, which created a negative representation of the father, so the child did not want to visit anymore.

> "Some (0.1) I know (0.1) when the children's father went to jail they weren't in a good mood together (0.2) they were cross with each other and when the child grows up they say you see your father his just a jailbird (0.2) he is always getting locked up and he is a rogue and don't follow your father's steps" (RM-2)

Thus, the significant others' representation of the father had a vital impact on the participants' own representations of the father. The significant other often provided information that attempted to facilitate a positive representation of the father in the mind of the participant. These attempts to represent the father positively were never really effective as they often conflicted with the participants' personal experiences with the

father and the contradictory representations of the father provided by different people. Such representations often led to confusion regarding the reason for the father's absence and resulted in mixed representations of the father. In most cases, the representations of and information about the father provided by significant others either impeded the participants' own representation of their father or facilitated a negative representation of their father. Thus, the differing representations act as important moderating variables either facilitating or impeding the participants' own positive or negative representations of their father.

4.12 The effect of the nature of the fathers' absence on the participants' representations and experience of the father

The nature of the fathers' absence had diverse effects on the participants' representations and experience of their father and on the participants' self-representation. For some participants, whose father worked away from the home, the reason for the absence had a positive effect on the participant's representation of the father (WK-1): the father's working away was viewed as a result of the father's care and as bringing money to the household.

> "If your father is working in Durban or Johannesburg you feel good that my father was working were there's money (Res: yes) and the perception at that time (0.1) is that Durban as a city (0.1) and Johannesburg as a city has money (0.1) so everyone just felt good ..." (WK-1)

As mentioned earlier, some participants expressed confusion over the real reason for the father's leaving the household due to contradictory explanations provided by different people. As a result, participants had different representations of the father while growing up. For example, one participant, whose father worked away from home (WK-2), represented his father in a positive light when he was young while negatively at present. This change in representation was due to many factors, including the significant others' attempt to represent the father positively to the participant. However, as the participant grew older, these positive representations often conflicted with his personal experiences

with the father. Another reason for a participant's change in representation was when the father started to engage in negative behaviour, such as excessive drinking of alcohol and having other girlfriends. Another two participants whose parents are divorced (DI-1; DI-2) were also uncertain over the real reason for the father's absence and noted some unanswered questions they would like answered:

> "I'll ask him why did he marry my mother (0.2) my mum and if he says because it was love (0.2) I'll ask him then what made him leave if he married her out of love and (0.1) also ask him why did he do all these things that he did like drinking and having an affair" (DI-1)

This confusion over the real reason for the father's absence contributed to the negative representation the participants had of their fathers.

For some participants, the nature of absence affected the participants' self-representation. For a participant whose father left before he was born to work away from the home, the reason offered for the absence affected the participant's own representation of himself. He expressed confusion about the nature of his father's absence and said that he blamed himself for the father's absence. He wonders whether his father did not like him, believing the separation is his fault, thus representing himself negatively.

> "I used to be like oh he didn't come (0.2) or maybe maybe like he doesn't care about me (0.2) stuff like that (0.2) he thinks his too good for me (0.2) that used to be like really hard times ..." (WK-2)

> "um what was the real reason (0.2) behind him leaving? why didn't he like want to take care of us? and stuff like that (0.3) and what he's doing now that is more important than us" (WK-2)

Another participant whose father is remarried and lives overseas also wondered whether he was responsible for his father's absence and whether there was something wrong with him, thus representing himself negatively.

> "I don't know I was young at that time (0.2) why did he leave after getting after my mother got me (0.1) not my brother (0.1) not my sister but ME that's why … ja ja just because I think maybe he hated me or something like that or I don't know (0.1) but ja that is the kind of question I want to ask him (0.1) and I want to know the truth" (RM-1)

Thus, the nature of the absence had different effects on the representation of the father. For some, the nature of the absence contributed to the positive representation of the father. However, for most of the participants, there was confusion over the real reason for the father's absence. For some participants, these perceived reasons for the father's leaving influenced the participants' representation of themselves.

4.13 Conclusion

The results of this study provide insight and a deeper understanding into participants' perceptions of and experiences with their non-resident fathers. Both within and across interviews, commonalities and contrasts were reported and emerged on the role that non-resident fathers play and should be playing, the father-son relationship, the representations of the non-resident father as well as on coping with the father's absence.

Varied images and representations of the fathers were voiced by participants, from popular notions of viewing fathers as uncaring and distant from families to fathers' fulfilling traditional roles of provision and protection. Fathers were identified as providers, protectors, moral teachers and guides, nurturers, disciplinarians, and advocates for education. Despite participants' highlighting the multiple and varied roles that a non-resident father and the surrogate father played following the separation, almost all participants expressed dissatisfaction in the current roles played and relationships shared with their fathers, longing for a more involved father and a deeper and closer father-son

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relationship. From the accounts of participants who reported sharing a closer father-son relationship, it appears that the reason for the father's absence is very important in determining the quality of the relationship shared between the father and son. It seems that mothers and fathers are both considered potentially important resources for children, and fathers were identified as serving as sources of emotional support, protection, guidance, and supervision. In addition, the emotional need a child has for his father should not be denied. Participants provided varied accounts, both positive and negative, regarding the influence their non-resident father has had on them. Fathers were identified as important in helping children develop psychosocially and in their academic progress. The significance of father participation in their sons' lives was also mentioned: being a vital male role model, providing advice and direction, and shaping the sons' masculinity.

In uncovering the factors that could facilitate the formation of a better father-son relationship, participants noted that a crucial facilitative factor was the effort made by the father: just 'being there' and keeping in contact. It was noted that even if a father does not reside in the same home as the child, he can still remain in regular contact with the child. The importance of good memories shared with the father was also stressed. A key factor reported as obstructing the relationship with the father was the negative influence of the new stepmother or girlfriend. A common theme that emerged across most of the interviews was that of participants' being different from the father; the participants regularly highlighted the differences between their fathers and themselves. The participants reported the need to be better fathers to their own children and the desire not to repeat the mistakes made by their own fathers. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there was evidence of some elements of ambivalence as participants spoke with multiple voices regarding the role of their father and, although they pointed to the differences between their fathers and themselves, there were in fact many similarities.

Participants revealed a range of emotional responses to the father's absence including hurt, sadness, loss, curiosity, and anger. Many participants expressed a deep-seated pain and hurt. They attempt to cope, reduce, and negotiate their feelings by trying to rationalize and justify their father's absence from the household through the use of a

variety of discursive strategies. The major coping mechanism was to stress how fortunate they were when comparing themselves to other children who are in worse situations than they are. There were mixed representations of participants' fathers evident across interviews, ranging from positive to negative to no mental representation at all, and some participants changed their representations of the father over time. It was evident that the mental representation participants had of their fathers was largely influenced by the representations of and information about the father provided by significant others, in most cases by the mother. These representations acted as important moderating variables either facilitating or impeding participants' own positive or negative representations of the father or creating uncertainty and confusion over the real reason for the father's departure. The nature of the father's absence had diverse effects on the participants' representations and experience of their father and on the participants' self-representation.

Nevertheless, despite the faults and mistakes made by the father, participants repeatedly expressed deep admiration for their fathers, describing them as a 'hero', longing to have the ideal 'best friend' relationship with them, and desiring more active involvement of the non-resident father in their lives. What has emerged out of these narratives is a compelling story of broken dreams, sadness, anger, pain, confusion, and longing.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Although there has been increasing research interest in the field of fatherhood internationally, relatively little research on fatherhood has been done in South Africa (Morrell, 2003; Morrell et al., 2003; Morrell & Richter, 2006). Furthermore, father absence is becoming a critical problem, and the effect of father absence on children is severe and long-lasting (Blankenhorn, 1995; Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Walter, 2000; Weiss, 1999). There is a lack of information available about the causes of father absence, the factors that enable fathers to remain actively involved in their children's lives, and the challenges that they face to maintain this involvement (Bradshaw et al., 1999). There is an increasing need to explore and understand the roles non-resident fathers play, the relationships they share with their children, and the influence they have on their children. This research aimed to understand how a group of young adult males' perceive or perceived their non-resident fathers, the role that their non-resident fathers' fulfils or fulfilled in their lives, and their relationship with and representations of their non-resident fathers.

The findings of the study will be interpreted in terms of the literature including gaps, discrepancies, and surprising results. The implications and contributions of the findings of this research will then be reported. The limitations of the study will be considered, followed by an outline of recommendations for future research.

5.2. Findings of the study

5.2.1 The role of the non-resident father
The review of the literature has suggested that significant confusion and ambivalence exists regarding the role of the non-resident fathers in their child's life following separation and the expectations regarding how he fills that role (Hawthorne, 2000;

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Kissman, 1997; Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). Further research is needed to obtain a deeper understanding of the vital roles that a non-resident father can play in the life of his child (Munsch et al., 1995), especially in the life of his son, as fathers are identified as a son's most significant male role model (Risch, 2001). This study aimed to examine the perceived roles that non-resident fathers played prior to and following separation and the roles their children expect or wish them to play at present.

In this study, participants noted the differing roles that a non-resident father played prior to and following the separation. Participants viewed their father as fulfilling traditional roles of provision and protection prior to the separation. Fathers were identified as the key source of financial support for their families and fulfilled the protector role before separation, ensuring the safety and security of the family. Fathers were viewed as a source of support and protection and they were responsible for providing housing, food, clothing, and other important resources for children, which are significant for their well-being. Participants viewed the fulfilment of this provider and protector role as considerably improving their life chances. Some participants highlighted the hardships they experience at present as their fathers are no longer available to fulfil this financial provider role.

Prior to the separation, fathers were also viewed as fulfilling a number of traditional roles. These included being the dispenser of discipline and deterring the child from negative influences and playing the role of monitors and disciplinarians in their lives by setting limits and correcting inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, fathers were perceived as being responsible for providing guidance regarding manners, reinforcing good behaviour, and punishing undesirable behaviour. Moral development was another area participants identified where fathers had special influence by providing guidance, advice, and direction. They also served as models for their children and influenced their lives by teaching them standards of acceptable behaviour.

Following the separation, non-resident fathers were identified as playing the important role of motivating and encouraging their children, particularly in the academic sphere. A

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key role played by the non-resident father after the separation was the advisor role, providing guidance on relationships and future career plans.

Consistent with the findings of this study, recent research identifies fathers as playing a multitude of roles in their children's lives, and these roles vary as family structures change (Lamb, 2000). "Fatherhood may be understood as conferring a responsibility to provide and protect" (Morrell, 2006, p. 23). Fathers are identified as economic providers in the household (Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio & Day, 1997), and fulfilling this role is associated with significantly improving a child's life chances (Johnson, 1996). Studies reveal that the non-resident fathers' involvement is directly related to the child's educational level and achievement (Richter, 2005), and fathers are viewed as advocates for children's education (Nord et al., 1997; Nord & Zill, 1997). Fathers are also responsible for disciplining children and setting rules and limits (Jain, Belsky & Crnic, 1996).

The findings of this study on the role of the non-resident father are remarkably similar to those of Smith and Richter's (2004) South African study, which explored how children viewed their fathers and the role that they fulfil. Consistent with the findings of their study, participants in this study longed for their fathers to play a more active role in their life. There is a desperate yearning for a constant, secure, and permanent father figure expressed by most of the participants. Despite identifying the vital roles played by the non-resident father prior to and following the separation, almost all participants' expressed disappointments in the roles currently played by their fathers. The overwhelming sentiment is aptly expressed by a participant in this study who said that a father should be a 'fixture in your life'. Participants often viewed their fathers as heroic, and their longing for an ideal father is described in optimistic terms. For example, a participant described the role that non-resident fathers should be playing by comparing a father to 'superman'.

This study suggests that it is not just the fathers' financial role that is valued; participants longed for more. The findings highlight the emotional need that a child has for his or her

father as crucial. Participants' longed for fathers to spend more time with them and be more involved in the day-to-day care of their children. It seems that the father's love and involvement makes a unique and significant contribution to the child's development and operates independently of the mother's love and involvement. The participants in this study desired a closer, continuous, and loving relationship with their fathers, thus revealing that a child needs the emotional presence of his or her father. The father's love and emotional presence - or lack of it - is an essential yet under-researched factor in child development. From this study, it seems that the father's love serves as a buffer against the hardships and difficulties participants expressed of not having their fathers physically present. There is some evidence that the perceived emotional bond that children have and feel for the absent parent is more predictive of well-being than the actual contact with the parent (Amato, 1994). Thus, a child's expressed desire to see his or her father should not be denied.

In the father's absence, his role is often performed by a range of father figures. In this study, this role was reported to be taken over by uncles, older brothers, step-fathers, friend's fathers and, in most cases, the mother. The latter is not surprising, as Frey (as cited in Richter, 2006) states that the contribution men can and should make to their children's development is precisely the same contribution that women make to their children's development. This sentiment was also expressed by some participants in this study who reported that the mother had taken over and adequately fulfilled both roles.

However, despite these initial similarities to those of other studies, the findings of this study seem to suggest that the father fulfils a unique role in a child's life, one that cannot necessarily be subsumed by the mother. Although participants initially reported the availability of father surrogates, participants would then state that they longed for their own fathers to be involved in their lives and expressed the need for their own father to fulfil this important role rather than a 'surrogate' father. Participants spoke with multiple voices regarding the roles that their fathers play, as they noted that, as much as their mother attempted to play both roles, she could not replace the father. Therefore, the findings of this study contradict those of other studies which seem to suggest that as long

as there is an adult present, regardless of the gender, the child will develop normally. However, this study found that fathers are perceived to play an important and distinctive role in a child's life, and they have something unique to offer, which goes beyond their financial contribution. It appears that the father brings something different to the child's development and that each parent brings different strengths and styles to the parenting roles. In this study, fathers were identified as playing a unique and crucial role in guiding children's development.

This study builds upon and contrasts with earlier research that tends to focus on non-resident fathers as essentially payers of child support. Fathers play the traditional roles of financial providers, protectors, providers, monitors, disciplinarians, and advisors and act as advocates for children's education. The current role that non-resident fathers play in their children's lives is often limited. Although other important males serve as father figures in a child's life, participants in this study expressed a longing for their own fathers to spend time with them and a desire for a permanent and loving father-figure. The message seems to be that fathers, just like mothers, always matter and that the father, as a male parent, brings unique contributions to the job of parenting that a mother cannot bring. This study thus stresses that fathers have something unique to offer and the emotional role of the father in a child's life is vital.

5.2.2 The impact of the non-resident father

Research confirms the essential roles that non-resident fathers play and that children do perform better with their non-resident fathers' active involvement in their life (Braver et al., 2005; The National Center for Fathering, 2000). This study planned to further investigate the perceived impact of non-resident fathers on and their contribution to their child's well-being.

This study has revealed that non-resident fathers can make a significant difference in the development and socialisation of a child and provide economic, social, and emotional benefits. Fathers were described as being responsible for moral oversight and moral teaching. Participants reported that their non-resident fathers had a major influence in

their life in terms of instilling good morals and values, socialisation skills, and their outlook on life. Fathers also served as role models and provided advice and direction. It was noted that fathers who set limits and rules, provide moral reasoning and guidance, and are actively involved in a child's life can help foster a child's competence and confidence. This finding is consistent with the literature which notes that fathers' consistent involvement promotes and fosters creativity, moral standards, and social competence (Matthews & Members of the CEMP 09 Planning Tea, 1998).

In this study, fathers were reported as also having an important impact on the participants' academic performance through providing encouragement and motivation and being advocates for their children's education, especially when participants were younger. Participants reported that just knowing that their fathers were concerned and showed interest in their school life and checked their reports regularly motivated them to perform better and achieve academically. However, despite the positive impact father involvement had on children's academic performance, as participants grew older, the majority of non-resident fathers lessened their involvement in their children's school lives. This lessening of interest could be due to the fathers' non-residential status and other barriers that might have prevented him from being involved, which will be discussed later. In accordance with the results of Nord et al.'s (1997) study, this study revealed that it was not contact as such, but rather active involvement in their children's school lives, that makes a difference in school outcomes.

What clearly emerged from this study is that the psychological and emotional availability of the father is a vital way in which a father can enhance a child's development. Thus, regardless of their residential status, non-resident fathers have the potential to make a positive and powerful contribution in their children's lives by being available emotionally. Non-resident fathers can make a critical contribution to a child's life, even though they are not physically present in the household. This finding seems to suggest that fathers are significant for children and that they are just as important to their children as mothers, which, again, hints at the uniqueness of fathers. As Daniel and Taylor (2001)

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state, "To be an asset to the child the father does not necessarily need to be present in the household" (p. 184).

As the previous discussion on the role of the father revealed, fathers do play an important role in their child's life; consequently, their absence in a household potentially has multiple effects. Many participants noted that the contribution to the family income is reduced, and the role of the father as a role-model and parent is reduced. Participants in this study stated that without an actively involved father in their lives to 'look after' and take care of them, providing guidance, they had made poor decisions and engaged in criminal behaviour; hence, their fathers' absence had negatively influenced their lives. Fathers were identified as important for teaching children how to act in the world, the difference between good and bad, and literally keeping them on the correct path. In this study, it seems that the absence of an involved father reduced the emotional and material resources available to children, which consequently increased their vulnerability to the risk of poor outcomes. This finding suggests that fathers do offer something different to children's development. It seems that their involvement protects children from engaging in criminal behaviour and from choosing deviant peers. In accordance with the literature, father absence thus appears to have a destructive impact on a range of child development outcomes including health, social and emotional, and cognitive outcomes (Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Klinger, n.d.; Lamb, 2002; Matthews, 1997).

5.2.3 The importance of fathers for their sons

The important role that fathers play in their son's life and especially their influence on the son's emerging masculinity has been noted in the literature. According to Jennings and Maisel (2004), fathers are important figures in their son's life, showing and teaching him how to be a man. The results of this study revealed that non-resident fathers were perceived as influencing the emerging manhood of their sons positively when they are involved and negatively in their absence.

In this study, participants noted that, as sons, they learn what it means to be a man from their fathers. The father-son relationship is viewed as crucial in the participants'

development as men. Participants in this study identified their fathers as being important figures in their son's life, showing and teaching him how to be a man. Participants noted that fathers play a powerful role in their development and that there are definitely times in life when a boy needs his father; one of these times is during the puberty stage, when fathers can help boys transition from boys to men. Furthermore, fathers play an important role in providing advice and guidance on any problems their son might be experiencing. Participants noted that engaging in more physical play with their fathers enabled boys to become stronger and brave enough to face other boys in schools. Consistent with the literature, fathers in this study were perceived as playing a particular role in helping boys in the transition from boyhood to manhood into the adult world (Horn, 1997; Pittman, 1993b) and teaching boys about growing up as a man, male interests, and activities (Chen, 2004).

Although most participants highlighted the positive impact of their father, the effects of father absence in his son's life were clearly evident across interviews. Participants reported that not having their fathers actively involved in their lives made it very difficult for them to learn and understand what it means to be a man. Lack of contact or the poor quality of relationships with fathers tend to have serious consequences on male children. Without this significant male role model in the participants' lives, they experienced difficulties and engaged in negative behaviours which had dramatic consequences in their lives. Some of the negative impacts reported by participants included underperforming academically and making poor decisions such as joining the wrong company at school. The effects of a lack of this type of guidance are evident in the study when two participants reported engaging in unprotected sex and now having their own child out of wedlock. The literature also reports a range of negative and socially dysfunctional outcomes associated with impaired father-son relationships (Bee, 1974; Cazenave, 1979; Johnson, 1996; Mitchell & Wilson, 1967; Mott, 1994).

If the father is either physically or emotionally absent to his son, the idea of what it means to be a man comes from other men who take on this father role, or the mother. However, participants stressed that they did not want to share these experiences and

problems of becoming a man with these father surrogates and longed to hear guidance and advice from their own fathers. It seems that, without the presence of a father, a son's masculine identity development is negatively affected, regardless of the impact of the father surrogates. The examples of the negative impacts reported by participants and their desire for their own father again seem to point to the fact that the father seems to offer something different, especially in a young man's life, having a unique influence on his son's emerging manhood.

This study re-affirms that for a son, the father is a role model of what it means to be a man, and it is the quality of the father-son relationship that forms the principal influence on the son's masculine development.

5.2.4 The relationship shared between a non-resident father and his son

One of the most vital issues to be investigated in this study was the extent and quality of the relationship shared between the non-resident fathers and their sons. In the literature, it is noted that when a father does not reside in the same home as his children, usually very little contact is maintained, and contact generally decreases over time (Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; King, 1994; Seltzer, 1991). The National Center for Fathering (2000) also states that the quality of the relationship and the strength of the emotional bond shared between father and child may be more significant for the child's well-being than the amount of father-child contact.

In this study, participants expressed sadness and dissatisfaction with the current relationships they shared with their fathers. For most participants, the quality of the father-son relationship was characterised by limited or no communication and was experienced as emotionally distant. A key finding from this study was that it is not just the absence of the father from the household that plays a role, but the reason for and type of father's absence are very important in determining the quality of the relationship shared between the father and son.

If the reason for the absence was viewed positively by other family members and the participant, such as working away from home to bring income to the family, it positively impacted the quality of the relationship between the father and son. Participants reported that when the father would return home on the weekends, they would look forward to his arrival. The father would make up for the time lost and engage in common activities with the son. However, if the reason for the absence was viewed negatively by other family members and the participant and negatively impacted the participants' life, the quality of the father-son relationship deteriorated. For example, if a participant was told that the father left or abandoned the mother for another woman, the participant would often want to have nothing to do with his father and would feel that he does not need his father as he has survived without him. Participants were not willing to explore the possibility of a relationship with their father due to these negative views of him, either conveyed by other family members or by their own negative experiences with him.

Furthermore, the quality of the father-son relationship prior to the separation and the quality of the relationship shared between the parents during marriage as well as after the separation tend to impact the quality of the father-son relationship after separation. This suggests that it is not just the father absence but that there are other factors that affect the quality of the relationship between the father and son. If the participants shared a strong and close bond prior to separation, the relationship has a better chance of survival following the separation. In addition, if the quality of the parents' relationship was amicable after the separation and the mother supported the father's involvement, the father-son relationship was of a better quality than that of those participants whose parents were not on talking terms.

The father's negative behaviour after the separation also influenced the quality of the father-son relationship. Although some participants reported initially sharing a close relationship with their fathers, spending time with them, and doing activities such as playing soccer, it became apparent that after the separation, if the father engaged in negative behaviour such as excessive drinking of alcohol and having other girlfriends, the quality of their relationship was negatively affected.

In this study, most children desired open and closer relationships and longed to spend more time with their fathers. Participants stressed the importance of regular contact and noted that this ideal relationship can be formed and maintained even if the father does not reside in the same house, as long as he maintains contact and gives time. This study highlights that the residential status of the father does not need to negatively impact the quality of the relationship between a father and his son. It is the effort made by the father to maintain contact that positively affects the quality of the father-son relationship. Thus, an important contribution that men can make to children's lives is the building of a caring relationship with them or increasing their involvement. This finding is consistent with the literature which asserts that children who have regular contact with their non-resident fathers over long periods of time perform better and have relationships that are characterised by strong emotional attachments (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Dunn et al., 2004).

In summary, regardless of the current quality of the father-son relationship, children still need and want fathers and long for better, more open, and closer continuing relationships. Participants in this study stressed that warm and close relationships with children can be established by fathers' availability to the children.

5.2.5 Factors affecting the father-son relationship

In light of the gap between participants' current and desired relationships with their father, the increased disengagement of fathers from their children's lives, and the deteriorating father-child relationships after separation, it was vital to explore what factors hinder the formation of a better father-son relationship and how this relationship could be strengthened.

This study reveals that there is a variety of interconnected factors that affect the father-son relationship. As mentioned above, it is not just the father's absence that affects the quality of the father-son relationship but the nature of the absence, the quality of the father's relationship with the child before separation, and the quality of the relationship shared between the parents during marriage as well as after the separation. This study

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also revealed that not only is the quality of parental relationships important, but some participants noted that the father's treatment of and attitude towards the mother is just as vital. Some fathers did not treat the mother with respect and honesty, or they abused the mother, which led the participants to view their fathers in a negative light and not want to have anything to do with their fathers, which, in turn, led to the deterioration of the father-son relationship. Thus, this factor was reported as negatively influencing the quality of the father-son relationship. It is also the father's own attitude and overall behaviour that impacts his involvement. For some participants, the fathers' negative behaviour such as excessive drinking of alcohol forced the sons to detach themselves from their fathers.

A key facilitative factor identified by participants in this study was the importance of good memories shared with the father. Memories were vital in strengthening the father-son relationship and highlighting positive aspects of the relationship. Thus, fathers who had participated in or had had some impact (even if minimal) on the life of their sons prior to the separation left better memories. Some participants reported excitement, eagerly awaiting the arrival of their fathers who worked away from the home. Spending more time with participants and creating happy memories that last were significant factors facilitating the relationship. This finding is consistent with the findings of the Denis and Ntsimane's (2004) study which reported that if the father no longer resided with the family or had passed away; the way he was remembered appeared to influence the child's well-being.

The sharing of common interests and activities after separation, such as playing a sport or fishing, was identified as a facilitative factor. Doing such activities and spending time together was viewed as vital bonding time strengthening the father-son relationship. Some participants reported that court orders, which required payment of maintenance fees and granted visitation rights, facilitated the father-son relationship. These actions showed the participants that their father is dedicated, concerned about his son's well-being, and is willing to provide for him. Some participants stated that small factors like maintenance fee payments were viewed positively because that their fathers were making

an effort to contribute to their lives. This finding is echoed in the literature which notes that regular payments of child support is one of the most critical things a non-resident father can do for his child (Evans & Perkins, 2004).

Following the separation, either or both parents may form new relationships and have children with other people. A major obstructing factor in participants' current relationship with their fathers was the fathers' new partner in life. It seems that fathers who have re-partnered were less likely to share a close and open relationship with their child. The new partner would often cause problems, for example by representing the participant as problematic to the father. Such miscommunications and misunderstandings hindered the father-son relationship. Furthermore, how the father is represented by other family members and friends in light of his absence is another vital factor affecting the father-son relationship. This issue will be discussed further in the next section. Some participants reported that the support and encouragement of family members, especially the mother, meant a lot to the participant and contributed to the maintenance of the father-son relationship. Thus the mother's expectations, attitudes, and views regarding the father's participation and her representations of the father affect father involvement. It also seems that poor representations of the father by family members or significant others might cause father uninvolvement. Thus, although the father might be trying to maintain the relationship with his son and stay involved in his life, the father might feel that since his son is being constantly bombarded with negative information by significant others, there is no reason why he should make the effort and stay involved; hence, the father-son relationship is further hindered.

Participants stressed the importance of alternative forms of communication, such as e-mail or the telephone. For a non-resident father, it is very important to keep regular contact and spend quality time with a child as this contact facilitates the maintenance of the father-child relationship. This can be maintained by making phone call arrangements and visitations at regular times. A crucial facilitative factor reported was the effort made by the father to initiate and maintain contact. Some participants emphasized that even if the father does not reside in the same home as the participant, the two can still have a

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close relationship as there are various ways of staying in contact. Participants added that just because a father does not reside with his children, this absence does or should not imply that he is uninvolved or cannot maintain contact with them.

The critical question then is why some fathers are absent from their children's lives. The reasons why fathers lose contact and decrease their involvement in their child's life are not clearly understood. Some fathers, because of their non-resident status, are simply less available to take care of, guide, and provide for their children. Factors that this study suggests play a role include the nature of the father's absence, the quality of the father-child relationship before separation, the quality of the relationship shared between the parents during marriage as well as after the separation, the father's treatment of and attitude towards the mother, the importance of good memories shared with the father, the sharing of common interests and activities, court orders, the father's new partner in life, the representation of the father by other family members and friends, and the effort made by the father to initiate and maintain contact. As is evident from this study, there are many factors affecting the father-son relationship, some facilitative and some obstructive.

5.2.6 The mental representation of the non-resident father

In light of the father's absence, it was important to explore how the non-resident father is represented by the mother or other influential family members and the impact of this representation on the father-son relationship.

The way the mother or significant others represent the father to the child can facilitate or retard the emotional presence of the father in a father-absent household. From this study, it seems that a child will construct and develop more positive feelings towards the father if the mother or significant others represent him positively. However, sometimes, participants encountered very negative representations of their fathers. As mentioned earlier, this study also revealed that the explanation for the absence of the father resulted in different effects (positive or negative) on the representation of the father. Thus, although the father might be physically absent from the household, there is an active father presence conveyed mentally by the representations of and information about the

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father by other family members. Besides the mother, other significant people such as the child's grandmother, relatives, friends, or the community were reported as conveying information about the absent father to the child. As stated by Daniel and Taylor (2001), these people help the child to develop a coherent and meaningful account that incorporates information about the absent father and why he is absent.

In this study, it was revealed that when a father abandons the family, in most cases, it is the mother who has to deal with the questions and consequences that arise from his absence. Thus, the mother's mental representation of the absent father to herself and child is vital, in terms of what she thinks her child needs to know about the absent father and consequently the information she conveys. Her representation will also influence the extent to which the child expresses interest about the absent father and the quality of the child's relationship with the father. Some participants noted that when they asked their mother about the father and the type of person he was, she would just change the topic and avoid talking about him; eventually, the participants would stop inquiring and expressing curiosity about their father. Some participants noted that they were not able to form a picture of what their father looked like as they had no previous images or experiences with the person to draw from. This lack of information provided by the mother and the absence of any visual representations of the father impeded the child's ability to construct his own adequate mental representation of the father. Hence, as much as the mother or any significant other has the ability to facilitate the representation of the father, they also have the ability to impede or prevent it. As mentioned earlier, such poor representations of the father could contribute to the father's uninvolvement, as the father may believe that there is no point in initiating contact as a negative representation is constantly being implanted in the mind of his son.

Some participants in this study also kept highlighting their father's important role and representing him in a positive light, despite the father's mistakes, thus creating a picture of an 'ideal father' which differed from the reality of his shortcomings. Possible explanations for this representation could be the fantasy picture of the father created out of fragmented pieces of information available about him from significant others, when

the mother or elder siblings reported positive characteristics and experiences they shared with the father to the participant. Another explanation could be that the emotional need the child has for his father leads to the development of a compensatory positive representation of the father. Some participants desired a close relationship with their father, longing for the father to be involved in their lives, despite the father's obvious lack of responsibility for them.

Some participants had mixed representations of their fathers which changed as the participant grew older. Children may feel confused if not properly informed about the father's real reason for departure. When participants were small, their mother conveyed information that attempted to facilitate a positive representation of the father in the mind of the children by not providing the real reason for his absence. However, as the participants grew older, these representations of and information about the father provided by significant others often conflicted with the participants' personal experiences with the father. Some participants expressed confusion, as they were provided with conflicting representations by different people, and they struggled to make sense of these differing representations of their father. It seems that participants were not directly aware of these mixed representations but did experience confusion about the reason for their father's absence.

Although the father might not be physically present in the household, it is the representations of and information about the absent father that family members provide to the child that help the child develop a positive or negative representation of the father. In summary, the findings suggest that the mothers' or significant others' representation of the father influences the child's representation of the father. This information can facilitate or impede the child's ability to construct his own mental representation of the father, which in turn influences the father-son relationship.

5.2.7 Father absence: Resultant emotions and coping strategies

Regardless of the reason for the departure, children experience different emotions at different times and cope with the father's absence in different ways. How the participant

copes and comes to terms with the absence depends on the participant's comprehension of why the father is absent and how the father is represented in light of his absence. Thus, coping with the father absence is tied to the representation of the father.

As mentioned earlier, many participants appeared confused over the real reason the father was no longer present in the household, and many participants said that they had several unanswered questions they would like answered. Questions such as 'Who is my father?', 'What does he look like?', 'Does my father not love me?' created an environment of uncertainty and confusion. Some participants, whose fathers had abandoned them, had a strong desire to locate and find out the real reason for his leaving and longed to eventually have a relationship with their father. They expressed a strong desire to locate their biological fathers. This desire again highlights that the emotional need that a child has for his father should not be denied.

In this study, consistent with Balcom's (1998) findings, participants expressed one of two variants of intense emotions related to their fathers. Evidence of emotional reactivity was evident in this study when participants distanced themselves from their fathers by expressing that they are very different from their fathers and claiming that they did not want to repeat the same mistakes their fathers had made. This distancing could be directly caused by the father's physical and emotional absence leading the son to deny the importance of his father, the negative representation of the father facilitated by the mother or significant others, or the participant's own negative experiences with the father. The second variant of intense emotions related to their fathers was the idealisation and great admiration of the father expressed by some participants in this study. Despite the father's 'not being there' for the participants, some emphasized they had great respect for their fathers and wished to be like them, idealising their absent father. This idealisation could be based on an actual experience with the father or the fantasy of the 'ideal father' that participants long for, despite the father's lack of commitment and responsibility for his son.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the nature of the absence affected some participants' self-representation and, in turn, how they coped with the absence. This again

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highlights that how the participant copes with this absence depends on the participant's understanding of why the father is absent. Some participants expressed confusion over the perceived reason given for the father's departure, blaming themselves for the father absence. They openly admitted to the thoughts that they had caused the absence and tended to feel responsible for it. Some participants questioned whether their father did not like them, believing the separation was their fault, thus representing themselves negatively. Thus, for some participants, the perceived reasons for the father's departure influenced their own self-representation, resulting in feelings of self-blame and damage to their sense of worthiness. The lack of clarity about why the father left caused the son to question his value to others, asking the question 'was I not good enough?' This lack of clarity also created a desire to connect with the father and seek answers to such unresolved questions. Other participants in this study expressed feelings of a profound sense of deep sadness, loss, and emptiness. Many of the participants felt intense pain and hurt at not having their fathers around and expressed a painful desire to connect with their father some day; two of the participants said that they have the need to call someone 'baba'.

It is also important to note that the presence of multiple voices was evident across interviews. Participants did not speak with one voice and often presented multiple representations of their fathers. Some participants talked about the good characteristics of the father, longing to be like him, representing him positively, but, at the same time, they also said that they hated the father for deserting the family, hence viewing him in a negative light. Reasons for these multiple voices could be due to participants' different personal experiences with the father, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, thus leading to the varied and multiple voices. Another explanation could be the conflicting representations offered by significant others about the father which resulted in multiple and often mixed representations of the father.

In order to cope with these feelings and try to resolve their internal conflicts, participants often employed a variety of discursive strategies. Participants would negotiate and manage these feelings by trying to rationalize the issue through internal dialogue,

constructing, justifying, and substantiating their feelings through talk. Most participants would do this by stressing how fortunate they are and by comparing themselves to children who are in worse situations than they are, such as children who have lost both their parents. Thus, participants attempted to mitigate some of the negative effects of not having a father in the house by normalizing their situation, by comparing themselves to other children with no parents, and thus feeling grateful to still have their mothers in their lives. Other participants substantiated their feelings through talk by stressing the positive aspects of their father and constructing and representing him positively. Thus, although the father may be remarried, he still maintained contact with the participant. By comparing themselves to other fathers who remarry and forget about his children, participants reported feeling lucky insofar as they have their father's love and respect. Employing these strategies helps participants alleviate their feelings of sadness and distress at the absence of their fathers and makes them feel better about themselves and the situation they are in.

5.3 Implications and contributions of this research

This exploratory study presents a description of non-resident fathers from the perspective of their sons and provides a fuller understanding of non-resident fathers and their impact on children's well-being. The findings point to the diverse relationships shared between non-resident fathers and their sons and their reported experiences. This research study on non-resident fathers is complex, compelling, and particularly vital to better understanding this under-researched area.

The current study contributes to the limited existing literature on non-resident father involvement in many ways. Whereas most studies have relied on mothers' reports, this study sought to examine a vital under-explored gap (Smith & Richter, 2004; Sullivan, 2000) by directly obtaining the insights of sons and their perceptions of their non-resident fathers. It is vital to listen to the missing voices of children's experiences of their non-resident father as their views may differ greatly from those of their parents (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). This important gap in the available data is crucial in the debate about the importance of fathers as there is minimal research exploring children's views and

experiences of their fathers (Smith & Richter, 2003). It is clear that although much has been written in recent times about men as fathers, there is much more to learn about the father-son relationship (Smith & Richter, 2004). It appears from this study that additional research exploring the views of children is needed.

Furthermore, most of the studies in the literature have employed a quantitative research design. However, the children's voices often become muted when one relies purely on numbers to describe their responses (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003). This design fails to access the rich descriptions of the experiences of growing up with an absent father. Thus, by employing a qualitative research design, this study sought to enrich the limited data on non-resident fathers.

While this study did not explore the views of the fathers, it builds upon and contrasts with earlier research that tended to focus on non-resident fathers solely as 'cash machines'. Participants voiced a wish for more emotional access to their fathers. They stressed that contact and active involvement of the non-resident father is vital to maintaining the father-son relationship. From the results of this study, it is evident that policies and programs aimed at supporting the involvement of fathers need to focus on strengthening parent-child bonds, helping families sustain the contact with non-resident fathers, and improving the quantity and quality of the time fathers spend with their children. Such programs that help fathers separate their feelings of failure in adult relations from their positive impact on their children's lives may succeed in helping fathers to maintain high levels of contact with their children. Given the importance of fathers for their son's development, programs that stress the complex nature of masculinity, manhood, and fathering may succeed in convincing fathers that their child support payments, although important, may be superseded by their substantive family role in parenting (Julion, 2002).

Essentially, what can be drawn out of the participants' narratives in this study is that, for most participants, fathers serve as a positive male role model, and they deeply feel the absence of their father. Fathers may be unaware of the value of the cognitive, emotional, and social support they can provide to their children (Daniel & Taylor, 2001); hence, the

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value of their support needs to be explained and promoted. There is an immediate need to move beyond the stereotypes and focus on what makes men not commit acts of violence and not desert their families (Jennings & Maisel, 2004). In order to alter these perceptions and attitudes of South African fathers, men need to reunite and reconnect with their children and their families and begin to rebuild and take responsibility for their valuable role. Fathers need to start believing that their emotional and nurturing contributions are important, and one of the catalysts for making this change is talking about fatherhood. As one begins to more fully appreciate the important nuance of the role men play as fathers on a larger social level, "public dialogue and work around fatherhood and manhood will gain increasing momentum and the power to create social change" (Jennings & Maisel, 2004, p. 22). Thus, when feasible, policy should encourage father involvement by finding ways to allow fathers to have a meaningful role in their children's lives and by encouraging and facilitating contact between non-resident fathers and their children.

Taken together, the findings of this study highlight the message that fathers' active involvement does matter in the process of optimal child outcomes, and their unique contribution may create a pathway to positive outcomes for children. Non-resident fathers have the potential to exert a positive and important influence, and their non-resident status should not preclude them from active involvement in their children's lives. Fathers are important in teaching children values and morals and deterring them from negative behaviours. There is variation in the consequences of non-resident father involvement for children's well-being. A pervasive picture that emerges from this research is that children long for the continuation of a close, intimate, and fulfilling relationship and a desire for their fathers to play a more active and integral role in their lives, not only in terms of economic needs but also in providing a safe and nurturing environment.

This study presents a deeper understanding of sons' experience of non-resident fathers and the implications for family relationships and children's well-being. This study points to the specific factors that either facilitate or impede the father-son relationship and explores how father involvement shapes children's well-being, thereby facilitating efforts

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to create efficient programs and policies to promote positive father-child relationships. This study opens the door to other important research questions discussed below. It is clear that father absence is a problem whose consequences permeate one's social fabric, and by reconnecting fathers to their children, one can begin to turn the tide in favour of one's children and families (Klinger, n.d).

Blankenhorn (as cited in Weiss, 1999) claims that one lives in a society which questions whether fathers are really necessary for a child. Participants in this study described their longing for an active, involved father or how different their lives would be if their fathers were involved. It seems that a child requires the different experiences that mothers and fathers offer for optimal child development. To conclude, the motto of the National Fatherhood Initiatives sums this sentiment up in these words, "Fathers change the world one child at a time" (as cited in Weiss, 1999, p. 11).

5.4 Limitations of this research

The data in this study are a reflection of the views, beliefs, and perceptions of a group of young adult males from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Pietermaritzburg region. Thus, the participants and the area itself cannot be assumed to be representative of all young men who have or had non-resident fathers in general. Participants drawn from a wider range of areas might have permitted a broader observation of young, adult males' perceptions of their non-resident fathers. However, this study did not attempt to be representative; rather, it sought to preliminarily identify the key issues.

One of the difficulties that emerge with the qualitative analysis of interviews is that while analysts interpret the respondents' words, one should recognize that these words could be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Throughout this type of research, it is important to bear in mind that "all research contains biases and values, and that knowledge and understanding are contextually and historically grounded" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 122). Throughout this research project the researcher engaged in careful self-reflexivity which includes self-knowledge and a conscious and repeated checking of themes (Reason

& Rowan, 1981). Having discussions with supervisors and colleagues regularly also helped to maintain a constant awareness of possible biases that might have occurred.

Furthermore, informed by Silverman (2000), the researcher has included a wide variety of examples with the direct quotations from the original interview transcripts in support of her conclusions, but she has also tried to find examples in the data that counter her conclusions in order to improve the validity of this study. Also emphasised by a number of authors (Kvale, 1996; Silverman 2000) is the significance of a clear explication of procedures used in qualitative research, which allows the reader to scrutinise and assess methodology and data analysis. Following this advice, a clear and detailed explication of methods and procedures has been documented in order to improve the reliability of this study. These explanations will enable the reader to evaluate the trustworthiness of the results and permit another researcher to replicate this research.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Given the current particular lack of research on fatherhood in South Africa (Morrell, 2003; Morrell et al., 2003; Morrell & Richter, 2006) and the increasing number of non-resident fathers, there is an urgent need for further research in the area of fatherhood.

An examination of the literature reveals that there is a need for research that focuses on the perceptions of non-resident fathers themselves. Thus, a closer examination of the roles non-resident fathers play as well as a more complete understanding of their relationships with their children must be informed by research that includes their views, perceptions, and experiences. Hence, a follow-up study focusing on the views and experiences of the participant's non-resident fathers in this study is recommended. Current research is also limited about why men choose (or do not choose) to parent actively when their child is born. The link between the fathers' motivations and their fulfilment of the fathering role is an issue that warrants further investigation. As noted by Day et al. (1998), this area will have direct application on the effort to strengthen families.

This study revealed that without a father present, a son's masculine identity development is negatively affected, regardless of the impact of the father surrogates. However, the link between fatherhood and masculinity is under-researched (Plantin et al., 2003) and it is important to develop a better understanding of this relationship. Further research in the area of fatherhood should focus on South African issues that impact on South African men. Of particular importance is the impact of HIV/AIDS and a generation of South African children who will grow up without parents. In the context of the epidemic, the father's contribution is essential, given the escalating need for care and support for the ill adults and children (Desmond & Desmond, 2006). Millions of children grow up in father-absent households, and in some ways, this situation is viewed as contributing to childhood vulnerability, including vulnerability to HIV infection (Campbell, 2003). Minimal research focusing on the effect of HIV/AIDS on fathers and their children has been conducted (Wilson, 2006); thus, this is an area that requires immediate attention.

Furthermore, the negative effects of father absence were highlighted by participants in this study. Most studies note that too many non-resident fathers disengage from their children's lives (Horn, 1997), which, in turn, contributes to children being disengaged from their own children's lives, creating a never-ending cycle (Dawson & Richter, 2004). Although this research sheds light on the factors that contribute to and obstruct the continuation of the father-son relationship, a more detailed examination into why fathers engage or withdraw from their children's lives could be a vital link in promoting the well-being of the children (Mhlize, 2004). It also seems that poor representations of the father by family members or significant others might be a cause instead of an effect of father uninvolvement, this link could be further explored.

As mentioned under the methodology section, the primary purpose of this study was not generalisability, and no attempt was made at quantification in the analysis. Hence, this study could form the basis from which further insights are generated which then could be formalised into a testable hypothesis using a quantitative design. Varying the methodology and using a quantitative analysis would incorporate a broader sample base

and qualify some of the perceptions of non-resident fathers that were elicited in the present study.

What emerges from the present study is the need for continued work in the area of fatherhood in South Africa and for researchers and theorists to enrich our understanding of the factors that facilitate fathers' involvement in their children's lives, as children long for an active, involved father.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Advertisement

Research Volunteers Required

I am currently doing a Masters thesis focusing on non-resident fathers. For the purpose of this research, I would like to interview **MALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS** who have or had **NON-RESIDENT FATHERS.**

A non-resident father is a father who does not live/has not lived in the same household as his child for e.g. through divorce, death.

The interview will last about **1 HOUR** and the respondent will be given **R25, 00** for taking time to participate. All the information declared by the respondent will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. In order to be considered, please complete a form obtainable from Ms. Hattingh or myself (Chitra Ranchod).

Completed forms must be returned to Ms Hattingh (Room 24) or myself (Room 5) at the School of Psychology (Slide it under the door if no-one is there).

Should you require any further details please contact me in Room 5 at the School of Psychology.

Name: ---

Age: ---

Contact Telephone numbers: (Home) -----------------------------

(Cell) ------------------------------

E-mail address: --

Appendix B: Article advertising the project

Oh Father, where Art Thou?
Local academics are contributing to the Fatherhood Project, which is trying to help men become more involved in fathering, writes
JANET VAN EEDEN.

Published in The Witness, Wednesday, June 8, 2005, page 9.

Father's Day is around the corner. As it approaches, many people sigh and see it as yet another commercial venture to get people to buy expensive cards and silly gifts. But for the more than 51% of children growing up in a household without a father (not deceased), according to figures (see table) from the HSRC's Fatherhood Project, the festivities of the day must ring hollow.

"There is increasing recognition that the absence of a father, whether physical and/or emotional, is a critical problem for children as it directly contributes to many other problems," says Chitra Ranchod, Masters student at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN). "Fathers are especially important for boys as they play a particular role in helping boys' transition from boyhood to manhood. I recently read a review of literature on Fathers and Families by D.J. Johnson which concludes that impaired contact or lack of contact with fathers appears to have its most dramatic consequences on male children, particularly in areas concerning masculine identity development, school success and social prowess."

"There really is a longing for greater involvement of fathers in the lives of their children," says Professor Graham Lindegger of UKZN's psychology department, and Ranchod's supervisor. Lindegger, who has worked in the area of masculinity for the past ten years, discovered that while "working in HIV-research, it became apparent that much of the challenge in HIV research was around the behaviour of men. Getting men to change their risk behaviours - especially sexual behaviour and spouse abuse - without getting them to rethink what it meant to be a man was a futile exercise," he says. "Secondly, there seemed to be growing concern in the psychological research literature with the so-called 'crisis of masculinity'. Many colleagues reported this phenomenon. UNAIDS (the HIV arm of WHO) also declared 2003 the year of getting men involved in HIV with the slogan, 'Men make a difference'. So there has been a growing sense that the old stereotypical forms of masculinity were in crisis. A need arose to critically rethink what masculinity means. Feminist studies in particular raised critical questions about masculinity. This stimulated me to become involved in research in the area of masculinity in more detail."

As a result, Lindegger has initiated a number of research projects which are in various stages: on teachers' constructions of masculinity and their notions of what it means to socialize boys into adult masculinity, adolescent masculinity, including what adolescents see as the challenges of masculinity, and how it is possible to develop and maintain

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alternative, non-normative patterns of adolescent behaviour around HIV-risk, amongst others.

But the project about Absent Fathers is foremost on the minds of Lindegger and his Masters student, Chitra Ranchod. She is spearheading a research project about absent fathers which will feed into the HSRC's Fatherhood Project. Ranchod has been interested in the issue of Fatherhood ever since she did a research project on how the attitudes of teachers affected the making of masculinity at schools.

"As I began exploring the literature in the field of fatherhood which is inextricably linked with masculinity, I became aware of a surprising fact," Ranchod explains. "It was evident that, while international research on fatherhood is expanding and has become an area of increasing interest, comparatively little research has been carried out in South Africa where millions of children grow up in father-absent households. There is also a very rapid increase in the prevalence of non-resident fathers and the almost complete absence of knowledge about the circumstances of these fathers in this country."

Lindegger explains that this much needed research is "part of the HSRC's Fatherhood Project which is attempting to enable men to become more involved in fathering."
I spoke to Professor Linda Richter, Executive Director of the Child, Youth and Family Development research programme at the HSRC, Julie Manegold and James Mtimkulu in a phone conference from Durban. The Fatherhood Project is Richter's special project which she initiated in 2003, after writing a chapter for a book on child rape. "I was struck by the portrayal of men as extremely brutal," Richter says. "And yet my own experience and that of many others was that most of the men we know are kind and nurturing. So I began to observe the men around me. I saw a man carrying a child across a street, for example, and was struck by the tenderness in his attitude to his child. As my husband is a photographer, I asked him to take photographs of positive images of men. Everywhere we went we saw examples of the gentleness of men. Eventually we got Andy Mason on board to structure a Media Intervention Project. Through this, we created a travelling exhibition of inspirational photographs showing men and children taken by well-known photographers, as well as by children themselves of their own father-figures."

Richter explains that her aim was to create an aspirational gap for men – something positive for men to aspire to - by not dwelling on the negative. "I believe you don't change behaviour by telling people what to do," she says. "We really wanted to speak to men at an affective – emotional – level. We wanted them to see the type of father all of us wish we had. The father-figure is a very powerful archetype. Everybody has some experience of a father, even if it is as an absent father."

The first phase of the project was an advocacy phase. Now the project has moved into areas of research into all areas of Fatherhood while still trying to act as facilitators for fathers and their children. "Men have often been excluded without their consent," says Richter. "Often very young men become fathers, and never see their children again. For example, not many people know that Thabo Mbeki fathered a child when he was a teenager and has spent much of his life looking for this child."

Richter talks about the need to change the image of men as all baby rapists. "We didn't want to deny the reality that some men are brutal," she says, "but if we are going to change anything, we will have to change men. The men are the ones who make most of the decisions in many household – even decisions such as a mother going to antenatal care, for example. We are highly aware that our project could fall into the trap of a new patriarchy, but we walk that tightrope very carefully. We try not to play into this, but we have developed a number of 'rules' for good fathers without being too prescriptive." (See box).

Richter says that the Fatherhood Project evolved from an advocacy platform to a successful research platform into which research such as Chitra Ranchod's feeds. "We now have a lot of support from government funders, as well as UNICEF, who have just created the Fatherhood Project co-ordinator post for James Mtimkulu," Richter says. "We are exploring through the research all aspects of being a family. A family does not necessarily have to be the traditional nuclear one. I see a family as a constellation of people who support and guide one another. But the clearest evidence we have now shows that supportive fathers give girls self-confidence, and help boys develop healthy masculinity and clear identity. One of the biggest impacts of an involved father is that he gives credibility to school work. Children stay at school longer if their fathers support them in education, so an absent father impacts on just this one area of the child's life enormously."

Chitra Ranchod's research is hoping to feed into the Fatherhood Project with even more useful information. Lindegger hopes that this type of research will "facilitate the experience of good fathering for men, especially for absent fathers. Even absent fathers can be good fathers, if they are involved with their children and maintain contact."

Ranchod is asking for volunteers to take part in her project. She is looking for young adult males and their fathers if possible who have grown up with non-resident fathers. "A non-resident father is a father who does not or has not lived in the same household as his child," she explains. "I'm interested in interviewing men whose fathers were absent for a range of reasons for example, divorce, migrant work, imprisonment and so on. All information obtained in the interview will be dealt with in the strictest confidence." She is also interested in talking to fathers who've spent time in prison about the way they and their sons maintained a relationship during that time.

Ranchod adds that "it has been suggested that the concepts of masculinity amongst boys and men may underlie a number of critical problems facing this country, especially the spread of HIV/AIDS, violence and the high incidence of rape," she says. "Thus, research that concentrates on the socialisation of males and the development of constructs of masculinity in young boys and men in this country is needed urgently."

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Contact Chitra Ranchod on 0721516828 or email jranchod@usap.co.za

For more information on the Fatherhood Project, go to
http://www.hsrc.ac.za

BOX:

A few 'Rules' for Good Fathering:

1. A good father has to acknowledge his child. (This is important on so many levels as a father gives a child a social identity and a social network.)
2. A good father must stay in contact with his child.
3. A good father must support his child. If he can't support the child materially, he must try to give emotional support and guidance.

Taken from interview with Professor Linda Richter.

Appendix C: Interview schedule

Early experiences
- Can you tell me about your experiences with your father?
- So how old were you when your father left?
- What did you think about him when he left?
- How did it make you feel when he left?
- What did your mum tell you about your father?
- What reason were you given for his leaving? By whom? (did you ask/got told?)
- What was it like going to school without a father?
- When you had to talk about your father in school what did you say?
- Was there any difference in the relationship you share/shared with your father and your friends' with their fathers?

Roles and relationships
- Can you describe the relationship you share/shared with your father?
- What kinds of activities do you or did you and your father do when you are/were together?
- How have/had you managed to sustain the relationship you share with your father?
- What are/were some of the challenges/difficulties you have encountered in order to sustain this relationship?
- What role does your non-resident father play in your life?
- Has your father had some impact/made a difference in your life? If yes, how?
- How much of your attitudes to life and family comes from your own father?
- Did anyone in your life fulfil this father role?
- What did your mum, friends or other family tell you/told you about your father?
- Did what they said influence the way you viewed your father?
- Would you like to change in any way the relationship you share or shared with your father? If yes, what and how?
- Would you have done things any differently from the way your father has fathered you?
- What is your fondest memory of your father and you?
- What advice would you give to other boys in your position?

Photo
- Do you have any photos of your father?
- So can you tell me about this photo?
- When you look at it what does it remind you of?
- What memories spring to mind?

Fathers and sons
- Some studies show that when there is no father figure in a home it is especially hard for boys to become men. Do you agree/disagree and discuss?
- What sorts of difficulties do you think boys encounter on the road to becoming young men?
- How can or should fathers help with these difficulties?
- How has your father influenced the man you turned/turning out to be today?

- Do you feel a man can be a good father even if he does not live with his son?
- Can you think of any ways to get or keep non-resident fathers actively involved in their sons' life?

Conclusion
- If you could summarize in one sentence if some-one were to ask you what does a father mean to you? What would you say?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add to our discussion or tell me about your father that we have not already talked about?

Appendix D: Transcription (conventions) notations

Please note that the following conventions are used throughout all transcriptions.

One or more colons indicate the extension of the previous sound e.g. Tha::t.

Laughter is marked by hh the number of hh is a rough marker of duration of laughter while .hh indicates and audible intake of breath.

Underlining indicates stress placed on a word or part of a word.

Left brackets mark overlap between speakers e.g.
hh [hhh
   [hhhh

Double parentheses indicate the transcriber's descriptions.

Numbers in parentheses, e.g. (0.2), indicate pauses in tenths of a second, and (.) indicates a micropause.

An equal sign = indicates the absence of a discernible gap between the end of a sentence and the beginning of the next sentence.

Capitals, except at the beginnings of lines, indicate especially loud sounds in relation to the surrounding talk e.g. WORD

The letter X indicates identifying details that were dropped that would link the information in the interview to the respondent.

Note: The respondent's real name was replaced with a pseudonym.
       The Res stands for the researcher.

Appendix E: Matrix of cross-case comparisons of transcribed interviews

Participants are identified by the reason for the father leaving the household in accordance with the following key:

5 participants' fathers left for work purposes	WK-1, WK-2, WK-3, WK-4, WK-5
2 participants' fathers left to marry/ be with another woman	RM-1, RM-2
3 participants' parents are divorced	DI-1, DI-2, DI-3

Core Themes	WK-1	WK-2	RM-1	WK-3	WK-4	RM-2	WK-5	DI-1	DI-2	DI-3
Financial capital role	X			X	X	X	X		X	X
Advisor role	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	
Motivator role	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Security/protector				X			X		X	
Disciplinarian						X		X	X	X
Role model				X	X		X		X	
Father surrogate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Positive impact	X			X	X		X		X	X
Negative impact						X		X		
Being different from the father	X		X		X			X	X	X
Lost out in life			X	X		X		X	X	X
Father importance for sons			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Current r/ship: distant	X				X		X	X	X	X
Current r/ship: non-existent		X	X		X	X				
Desire for close r/ship	X		X		X		X	X	X	X
'Being there' contact	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Pain/hurt	X		X	X	X	X		X		X
Memories	X			X	X		X	X	X	X
Coping: discursive strategies	X	X			X				X	X
Positive rep	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Negative rep	X	X	X		X			X	X	X
Unanswered questions/ confusion		X	X					X	X	

Appendix F: Informed consent for participation in a research project

I--, voluntarily give my consent to serve as a participant in a research project being run by Chitra Ranchod and Professor Lindegger of the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). I consent to an interview administered by Chitra Ranchod on this day --------------------

I have received a clear and complete explanation of the general nature and purposes of the study. I have also been informed of how the results of the research will be used. I am aware that that all information will be confidential and my identity strictly protected. No-one other than Chitra Ranchod will know my personal identity. I am not obliged to divulge any personal information that I do not wish to. I have the right to withdraw at any time and may terminate my participation in the interview. I will be given R25,00 at the end of the interview as compensation for my time.

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Signature of Participant   Print name here

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Date   Signature of Researcher

Permission to Tape

I understand that this interview will be recorded and transcribed and consent to that. The transcripts will be only made available to Chitra Ranchod and Professor Lindegger

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Signature of Participant   Print name here

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Date   Signature of Researcher