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Sole father's experiences of accessing social services.

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Manawatū

Jason Edward Rushton

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perspectives of sole fathers when accessing assistance and supports from statutory and non-government agencies. This will be achieved by addressing the experiences of men who undertook the role of sole fathers to support their family with the aid of statutory and non-government agencies. The research took a qualitative approach and utilised in-depth semi-structured interviews to gain insight into the experiences of the participants. Eight sole fathers were interviewed, four of the participants identified themselves as straight; while the remaining four participants were divided into two subsets from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexed and Queer/Questioning (GLBTIQ) community namely, three being gay and one identified as bisexual.

The study's findings were congruent with existing literature on the experiences of fathers who accessed social services in the hope of supporting their family. The findings included factors contributing to the discourse fathers felt in accessing supports and their rationale for choosing not to engage with further supports. Furthermore, there were four key findings namely, (1). Men who assume gender reversal roles like that of sole parent, who experience discrimination and minimisation based on gender and sexual identity of their basic human rights as set out in legislation, religion and societies disposition towards men taking up this role. (2). There is still much work to be done to create truly inclusive support services, and an authentically respectful social consensus on issues like marriage equality and non-traditional family types. (3). How social workers can apply this knowledge when supporting and advocating for fathers who are experiencing institutional barriers to accessing social services. (4). The findings provided knowledge around the challenges sole fathers faced in Aotearoa New Zealand when accessing supports in the hope to support and care for their families. These include recommendations to establish a Ministry for Men that oversee men's health, and the required changes to ensure that sole fathers can access social service supports. Therefore, it is the hope that this

research supports social workers when they apply this knowledge in supporting and advocating for fathers who are experiencing institutional barriers to accessing social services.

Only A Dad by Edgar Albert Guest

Only a dad, with a tired face,
coming home from the daily race,
bringing little of gold or fame,
to show how well he has played the game,
but glad in his heart that his own rejoice,
to see him come, and to hear his voice.

Only a dad, with a brood of four,
one of ten million men or more,
plodding along in the daily strife,
bearing the whips and the scorns of life,
with never a whimper of pain or hate,
for the sake of those who at home await.

Only a dad, neither rich nor proud,
merely one of the surging crowd,
toiling, striving from day to day,
facing whatever may come his way,
silent, whenever the harsh condemn,
and bearing it all for the love of them.

Only a dad, but he gives his all,
to smooth the way for his children small,
doing, with courage stern and grim,
the deeds that his father did for him,
his is the line that for him I pen,
only a dad, but the best of men.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all the fathers in Aotearoa New Zealand who have stepped forward to assume the role of custodial fathers and thereby to support their child(ren), and make a positive impact on their lives. You are empowered with knowledge to make informed decisions in your lives and those family and friends around you!

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Poem – Only a Dad	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Structure of the Thesis	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review	11
Chapter Three: Legislation	34
Chapter Four: Methodology	53
Chapter Five: Results	65
Chapter Six: Discussion	97
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	113
Bibliography	128
List of Appendixes	
Appendix A: Screening Questionnaire	151
Appendix B: MUHEC Application Form	155
Appendix C: Information Sheet	170
Appendix D: Participants Consent Form	172
Appendix E: Interview Schedule	173
Appendix F: Authority of Release of Tape Transcript	175
Appendix G: Letter requesting access to participants	176
Appendix H: Advertisement/Script	177
Appendix I: Data Collection Flowchart	178
Appendix J: Confirmation of Approval of Ethics Application	179
Appendix K: Glossary of Abbreviations and Māori Terms	180
List of Tables	
Table 1.1: Families with dependent children by Family type, 1976-2013.	7
Table 5.1: Participants Information	66
Table 5.2: Supports and Ratings of agencies by participants	77