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Parenting Experiences Among Single Southern African Immigrant Mothers in Low Socioeconomic Neighborhoods

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Abstract

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MS, California Baptist University, 2011

MA, Trinity Theological Seminary, 2003

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Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

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Abstract

Empirical studies have shown that single-parent families have been overrepresented in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and the children of these families are more exposed to factors that lead to aggressive behavior. Despite these studies, there is limited literature on the parenting of immigrant mothers that may prevent aggressive behaviors in children. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in California working and raising male children who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in schools and in the community. Seligman's theory of positive psychology informed this study. Research questions were focused on how the participants make meaning of and positively cope with their parenting experiences. Data were collected through semistructured interviews using purposive sampling of 8 single Southern African immigrant mothers. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, 5 themes emerged: (a) working hard, (b) religion, (c) family, (d) education, and (e) positively coping. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by informing policy makers from California and high school personnel about the need to develop programs that are culturally responsive to the needs of adolescents with aggressive behaviors.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me life and strength to get to where I am today. This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Pastor/Dr. Themba M. Mzizi; my twin sons, Sabelosethu and Samukelwe; and my two daughters, Sandisiwe and Angela. My husband and my children have been a source of encouragement throughout the writing process. Without their support, I could not have made it this far. My husband took his precious time to do the things I should be doing as a wife and a mother, just to provide me an opportunity to write. This dissertation is also dedicated to my parents and my 7 surviving siblings for their intercessory prayers. I am the first one in my immediate family to make it this far educationally. This dissertation is also dedicated to my niece, Nosisa Mzizi Ngona, and her husband, Eustus Ngona, for their supportive presence during my 10-day Academic Year Residences in Minnesota. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to all single immigrant mothers who strive daily to cope positively with working and raising their high school adolescent sons in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the individuals involved in this academic experience. It has been a long and arduous process. I am thankful to my committee: Dr. Elizabeth Clark, my chair, and Dr. Andrea Goldstein. A special thank you to Dr. Clark for your availability and unwavering support throughout the dissertation process. I could not have made it this far without your guidance and timely feedback.

To all my family, friends, and church family, thank you for your prayers and words of encouragement. Once again, a special thank you to my husband, Dr. /Pastor Mzizi, for being there for me when I did not feel like writing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Many single immigrant mothers experience situations raising children that other single parents may not. Between 2011 and 2015, an estimated 30.6% homes in the United States were headed by single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The U.S. Census (2013) has indicated that family socioeconomic status was lower in single-parent families, especially among immigrants, when compared with two-caregiver households. Children raised in single-parent homes are likely to receive less emotional and financial support than children raised by married parents (Petts, 2014). Additionally, adolescents from disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors than adolescents from advantaged neighborhoods (Lawson & Lawson, 2013). Adolescent behavior problems and the differences in socioeconomic status between single-parent families and two-caregiver households led to my interest in how single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods make meaning of their experiences as they raise high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community, which was the focus of this study.

Single mothers must perform all parental activities without the presence and support of another parent in the home (Petts, 2014). For instance, single immigrant mothers raising their children in low socioeconomic households are more likely than other single mothers to compensate for the financial deprivation by participating in civilian labor force (Knoef & Ours, 2016; Toma, 2016). Because of this, researchers are

concerned that single immigrant parents have less knowledge of the activities and whereabouts of their children (Barbot, Crossman, Hunter, Grigorenko, & Luther, 2014; Malczyk & Lawson, 2017). Furthermore, adolescents and mothers living in single-parent homes often display higher levels of negative behaviors (e.g., detachment, and lower quality mother–child interactions) than children and mothers in biological married-parent families (Wong, 2017).

Policy makers need to develop collaborative home–school–community partnerships that are designed to help single mothers identify ways of monitoring the activities of their male children attending high school in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Neglecting the needs of these single immigrant mothers may result in harmful effects that lead to their male children to engage in aggressive behaviors (Low & Espelage, 2014). In my study I explored how single Southern African immigrant mothers make meaning of their lived experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. Knowledge about the parenting experiences of single Southern African immigrant mothers can be used to guide and inform prevention and intervention practices that other ethnic single mothers can use to improve behavioral adjustments of their high school adolescent males.

In this chapter I present nine major sections relative to my study. The sections include an overview of the background, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Other sections of this chapter include the research questions and the theoretical foundation of the study; a summary of assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations; and a description of the significance of the study. I end this chapter with a summary.

Background

In 2016, an estimated 31% of children in the United States lived in single-parent households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), and an estimated 8.6 million (63%) families headed by working single mothers (Wang, Parker & Taylor, 2013). With the increasing number of immigrant families in the United States over several decades, the number of single immigrant families has increased as well (Camarota, & Zeiglar, 2016). For example, in the United States in 2015 there were 59 million immigrants and U.S.-born children (under 18) with either an immigrant father or mother (Camarota & Zeiglar, 2016). In 1980, California became the state with the largest immigrant population (Grieco et al., 2012). By 2012, California was one of the four states that represented over one-third (36%) of the foreign born from Africa (Gambino, Trevelyan, & Fitzwater, 2014). In California, it is likely that more than one in four public elementary school and high school students are from an immigrant household (Camarota, & Zeiglar, 2016).

Having both parents in a family has indicated a higher level of economic strength and a higher level of parental supervision (Paat, 2013). However, research has shown that about 55% of the U.S. children who lived in homes that were headed mostly by single mothers were Black children (Anton, Jones, & Youngstrom, 2015; Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, & Shoulberg, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), though this did not include children of African immigrants. The relationship between living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and child rearing is a social concern in the United States (Anderson, Donlan, McDermott, & Zaff, 2015; Roy & Raver, 2014). This is a concern that should be focused on single immigrant mothers, as in 2015, 29.9% of immigrants

who had lived in the country for fewer than 4 years had incomes below the poverty threshold (Camarota & Zeiglar, 2016). Despite this concern, there is limited research that addresses single Southern African immigrant mothers' experiences raising their high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in the United States.

As the population of single Southern African immigrant mothers increases in California, the results of my study can be used to show how single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods work and raise high school adolescent males with nonaggressive behaviors. Other stakeholders who might benefit from the results of my research are single working mothers from other ethnic groups whose high school adolescent males exhibit aggressive behaviors. The results of my study can also add to the scope of research about the experiences of single immigrant mothers raising male children in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in the United States.

Problem Statement

In my study, I explored how single Southern African immigrant mothers make meaning of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. Raising children in single-parent homes has been an area of concern for researchers for decades (Barajas-Gonzalez & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Shelleby et al., 2014; Taylor & Conger, 2017). Single-parent families are overrepresented in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and the children of these families are more likely to behave aggressively (Wong, 2017).

Some researchers have indicated that delinquent or aggressive behaviors in high school adolescent males might be linked to inadequate parental monitoring and exposure

to violence in the community (Carroll et al, 2016; Everri, Mancini, & Fruggeri, 2015; Hong, Hwang, Tai & Kuo, 2016; Low & Espelage, 2014; Yoo, 2017). For example, parents who knew the activities of their children and whereabouts served as better protectors related to better youth adjustment (Kliewer et al., 2015). In addition, positive parent–child communication has served as an important way of building trust and close relationships between mothers and their sons (Miller, Kahle, Lopez, & Hastings, 2015). More support for parent supervision in single-parent homes is showing the improvement of adolescent behaviors in sons of single mothers due to increased positive parenting, monitoring, involvement, discipline, and warmth (Reed et al., 2013). In contrast, parents who have not monitored the activities of their high school adolescent males have witnessed higher levels of aggressive behaviors (Anton et al., 2015).

Despite literature that has supported the notion that poverty and exposure to violence negatively influences the behavior of children, there is a gap in literature stating how single Southern African immigrant mothers make meaning of their experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Therefore, my study can fill this gap in research by giving a voice to single Southern African immigrant mothers raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. My study can also increase understanding of the parenting processes that underlie raising successful male adolescents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in California make meaning of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. The problem I wanted my research to address is what meaning single Southern African immigrant mothers attach to their experiences of working and monitoring the activities of their sons. As research has indicated, neighborhood risks have a more negative effect on boys than girls due to lack of support and decreasing levels of parental monitoring that a lack of knowledge contributes to (Thomas, Caldwell, Jagers, & Flay, 2016). By exploring the parenting experiences of single immigrant mothers, I sought to add to the literature on positive psychology about raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and to encourage policy makers to identify programs that support single mothers by educating them on how to increase levels of parental monitoring.

The phenomenon of interest in this qualitative study was the lived experiences of single immigrant mothers working and raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. In my qualitative study, I sought to highlight positive psychology, focusing on the positive behaviors these mothers exhibited. The results of my study can add to existing research by showing that while many children are impacted negatively by poor environment, inadequate parental monitoring, and exposure to violence, there are single Southern African immigrant mothers whose high school sons thrive and do not get into trouble in school and in the community in California.

Research Question

The research questions that guided this study were:

Research Question 1: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods of California make meaning of their experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community?

Research Question 2: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising high school adolescent males?

Theoretical Foundation

The foundational theory for this study was Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson's (2000) theory of positive psychology. Because this theory addresses a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience, Seligman et al.'s theoretical work has been used in studies related to psychological interventions that increase individual happiness. For example, by using the WELLFOCUS model, Riches, Schrank, Rashid, and Slade (2016) found that increasing positive experiences, amplifying strengths, fostering positive relationships, and creating a more meaningful self-narrative improved well-being. Other researchers used it to support how a positive outlook to life yields good health and overall life achievement (Jeon & Neppl, 2015; Schofield, Conger, & Neppl, 2014). Researchers who use a positive psychology lens focus on human strengths rather than weaknesses (Horn & Wong, 2016), making it strength based rather than problem based.

Although it can be difficult to distinguish the influence of single motherhood and poverty from psychological adjustments in children, positive psychology can be used to build individuals' strengths and wellness (Horn & Wong, 2016). For instance, some researchers have asserted that family structure and poverty affect the well-being of single parents and their children (Roy & Raver, 2014). But other researchers have found that parental monitoring increases the positive impact of healthy family functioning on adolescent familiar responsibility and counteract the negative impact of problematic family functioning (Everri, Mancini, & Fruggeri, 2015).

In my study, single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods were able to describe, in positive terms, how they make meaning of their parenting experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. I explored what the single Southern African immigrant mothers experience when faced with life challenges of parenting high school adolescent males under economic hardships.

Nature of the Study

This is a qualitative study with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. Phenomenological research begins with a desire to understand a phenomenon from participants' lived experiences (Englander, 2012). An IPA was a suitable method for obtaining detailed analysis of the lived experiences of participants (see Smith & Osborn, 2015). An IPA approach was appropriate because I wanted to understand the lived experiences of the single Southern African immigrant mothers raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and because they understand what

it means to be an immigrant single working mother raising children under such living conditions. Using IPA, I wanted to understand how single Southern African immigrant mothers viewed their experiences as working mothers raising sons in low socioeconomic conditions.

In my study, I used positive psychology to explore participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon of being a single immigrant mother working and raising a high school adolescent male in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Because immigrant and single parents are correlated with higher parenting stress (Parkes, Sweeting, & Wight, 2015), I wanted to conduct a study on what single immigrant mothers do that results in high school boys not getting in trouble in school and in the community. I collected data through face-to-face, semistructured interviews to elicit the single Southern African immigrant mothers' experiences in raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in California. I conducted the interviews at locations chosen by the participants to allow for participants' candidness and anonymity. I analyzed data by following the guidelines of IPA (see Vella, Butterworth, Johnson, & Law 2015). During data analysis, a professional transcriber transcribed each interview. Using Priyadarshini, Kumar, and Jha's (2017) data analysis steps, I read each transcript several times to understand what the mothers were doing to raise high school adolescent males who do not get in trouble. I also generated significant statements and extracted meanings out of the significant statements, organized the significant statements according to themes, and wrote a summary of the interviews.

Definition of Terms

Aggressive behavior: Any act that is intended to harm or annoy another person (Dailey, Frey, & Walker, 2015).

Immigrants: In this study, the terms *immigrant* and *foreign born* are used interchangeably. An immigrant is a person who had no U.S. citizenship at birth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Single parent: Includes one parent and dependent children living in the same household (McNulty, 2015).

Southern Africa: In this study, this label refers to the member states of the Southern African Development Community region, which include Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia (Boshoff, 2010; McCabe, 2011).

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that researchers take for granted in relation to a study (Roberts, 2010). The general assumption in qualitative interviewing is that the perspective of the participants is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). One assumption of this study is that using the IPA approach would allow participants to express themselves candidly and to the best of their ability during the interview. This assumption was necessary for this study because in IPA studies, the aim is to elicit descriptive accounts of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied. Another assumption was that all participants would be able to read, write,

and communicate in English because English is most likely their second language. In this case, the participants would be assured of privacy because there would be no need for a translator as I heard.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem is that the voices of single immigrant mothers are not present in literature. This study addressed how single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods make sense of their experiences raising high school adolescent males who have not exhibited aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. I wanted to show these mothers' experiences in their own words on how they coped with raising raise high school adolescent males in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The scope of the study was limited to what working single Southern African immigrant mothers do to raise high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community in California. Although single parenting may include fathers and mothers, the study reflected only the experiences of immigrant single mothers raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. In order to answer the research question, I explored the meaning of experiences of only the immigrant single mothers who were working and were raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community.

Because IPA studies require a small sample size (Wagstaff et al., 2014), the results of the study are not meant to be generalized. It is possible that the findings of the

current study will be transferable to the readers as they find the results of my study

applicable to their own situations or contexts.

Limitations

Limitations in my study may include methodology constraints, length of the

study, and the response rate. Because the IPA methodology takes on an idiographic

approach (Wagstaff et al., 2014), and is used by the researcher to understand the in-depth

accounts of the participants' experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn,

2015), the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation may take a long

time due to participants wanting to say more during the interviews. Another weakness of

the IPA approach is that researchers who are not familiar with qualitative studies may

doubt the significance of the study's findings given that in IPA studies the researcher

interprets how participants make sense of their experiences (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

However, in using an IPA approach, the research questions are designed to allow

participants to give detailed accounts of their experiences about a phenomenon under

study (Priyadarshini et al., 2017), which fulfilled the purpose of this study.

It is also possible that my values, my biases, influences and thoughts were

represented in the study and influenced the study outcomes. To address this, I used

reflexivity by keeping a journal of my subjective influence on my study. Reflexivity

provides researchers with the opportunity to become aware of and document openly

about their subjective influence on the research (Darawsheh, 2014).

Significance

In my study I explored, from a positive psychology framework, what single Southern African immigrant mothers were doing to raise high school adolescent males who do not get in trouble in school and in the community in California. This study is unique because it shows the experiences of Southern African immigrant single mothers raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods.

Information on the lived experiences of Southern African immigrant single mothers may provide insights into what it means to be a single migrant mother raising a high school adolescent male in a disadvantaged neighborhood. The findings of this study can influence the development of parenting programs for single mothers from Southern Africa and single mothers in general. It is possible that the findings of this study may be used to inform policy makers from the department of Mental Health, high school administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists about the need develop programs that are culturally responsive to the needs of adolescents with serious aggressive behaviors.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented an introduction to the challenges of parenting in homes headed by single mothers in the United States. The problem statement was focused on the parenting experiences of Southern African single immigrant mothers working and raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. I used positive psychology as a theoretical foundation for this study, which will be further detailed in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I also stated the rationale for using a

phenomenological design and an interpretative analysis methodology. In Chapter 2, I

will provide a comprehensive review of literature that supports the topic of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in California make meaning of their lived experiences of working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. The study was conducted to understand single Southern African immigrant mothers' experiences from their points of view and how they positively cope with working and monitoring the activities of their adolescent sons. Although mainstream psychology can be more problem focused on negative behaviors, I used positive psychology to focus on these mothers' strengths. The results of my research can show that while many children are impacted by a poor environment, inadequate parental monitoring, and exposure to violence, there are single Southern African immigrants mothers whose adolescent sons do not exhibit aggressive behaviors.

There is various literature on socioeconomic status, parenting, and aggressive behaviors in African American single-mother homes (e.g., Anton et al., 2015; Kliewer et al 2015; Parent et al., 2013; Roy & Raver, 2014), but there is a lack of literature on parenting experiences among single African immigrant mothers. For example, although Albrecht and Ko (2017) mentioned social support and self-acceptance in their focus on how immigrant adolescents in Canadian secondary schools gained confidence and made friends, they did not note the influence of parenting. In my search, I did not find articles identifying what strategies single Southern African immigrant mothers use to raise well-

behaved sons. Therefore, in my study I explored the experiences of single Southern African immigrant mothers who promoted healthy development and positive coping in their sons. Because single-parenting in low income neighborhoods has been linked to less parental monitoring and increased aggressive behaviors in high school adolescent males (Jeon & Neppl, 2015; Low & Espelage, 2014), and immigrant single mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods often have to work full time (Shea, Wang, Shi, Gonzalez, & Espelage, 2016), I also explored how single Southern African immigrant mothers balanced work and parental monitoring.

In this chapter, I present three key sections: the theoretical foundation, literature review, and related methodologies. I conclude with a summary of key findings from the literature review. Subsections will be supported with information from peer-reviewed journals accessed using databases that include ProQuest, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, and EbscoHost. Search terms included *single mothers and parenting, single mothers and boys, single mothers and work, parenting in poverty, aggressive behaviors, parental monitoring, positive parenting, immigration and parenting, parenting and immigrant mothers, disadvantages neighborhoods* and *low socioeconomic neighborhoods*. Terms such as *parenting in poverty* and *parenting in low socioeconomic neighborhoods* were used interchangeably with reference to low income environments. Each source will be reviewed for the most current and scholarly research on the topic. In some instances, outdated materials will be used to show originality of theories and the evolving studies over time.

Theoretical Foundation

In my study I used Seligman et al.'s (2000) theory of positive psychology to explore how Southern African immigrant working single mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods make meaning of their experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. A criticism of positive psychology is that the White population has been used as the standard for describing the strengths of other cultural groups such as positive psychologists assuming that family strengths of White families could be generalized to Asian American families and other ethnic groups (Raffaetà, 2016). However, I used positive psychology to focus on the experiences of single Southern African immigrant mothers to understand in their own words how they positively cope with raising their high adolescent males.

The originators of the positive psychology movement claimed that it addresses a more complete scientific understanding of the human experience, and it has been used in studies related to psychological interventions that increased individual happiness (Seligman et al., 2000). Other researchers have suggested that the focus of positive psychology is on building strengths and wellness rather than on remedying weaknesses and pathology (Borkar, 2016; Park & Peterson, 2003). Some scholars have viewed positive psychology from a gratitude perspective, stating that incorporating gratitude curricula in schools can bring out people's strengths and capabilities of the youth and promote societal cohesiveness (Lambert, Passmore & Holder, 2015; Parks & Schueller, n.d.).

Aside from the scholarly sources that supported focusing on strengths, I was not able to locate literature with a strength-based approach to understanding African immigrant single mothers. However, research on parenting adolescent males revealed that some scholars (e.g., Jeon & Neppl, 2015; Schofield et al., 2014) supported that a positive outlook to life yielded good health and overall life achievement. For example, Jeon and Neppl (2015) found that parents who were distressed by their economic hardship were unable to engage in supportive parenting practices. Conversely, children who have parents with a positive outlook on life are likely to develop a similar positive disposition (Schofield et al., 2014).

Other research has indicated a need to learn more about what constitutes positive parenting. Horn and Wong (2016) found that open communication with children as well as close family connections contributed to better social problem-solving skills and social self-efficacy in children. Similarly, Miller, Kahle, Lopez, and Hastings (2015) noted that mothers who showed compassion to their children often raised well-rounded children in terms of expressive behaviors, physiological functioning, and social-emotional development. In contrast, authoritarian parenting can lead to higher overt behaviors and emotional problems (Lee et al., 2014). The current study addressed single Southern African immigrant mothers' experiences parenting that led to nonaggressive behaviors in their sons; thus, the study addresses the need to explore positive parenting strategies.

Positive psychology was suitable for the present study because the field of psychology encompasses the well-being of an individual and the welfare of communities (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Lambert, Passmore & Holder, 2015). I wanted to understand

from a strength-based approach how single Southern African immigrant mothers maintained a positive outlook while working parenting high school adolescent males under economic hardships. In my study, mothers described how they made meaning of their experiences and positively coped with raising high school adolescent males who did not exhibit aggressive behaviors in low socioeconomic neighborhoods.

Review of Literature

Single parenting in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and working affect single mothers and their experiences in raising high school adolescent males. Single mothers often experience financial hardships and mental health problems (Golombok, Zadeh, Imrie, Smith & Freeman, 2016) and poor adjustment problems both in adolescents and parents (Burt, Klump, Gorman-Smith, & Neiderhiser, 2016), resulting in harsh parenting and adolescent aggressive behaviors (Anton et al., 2015; Barajas-Gonzalez & Brooks-Gunn, 2014). Because scarce financial resources lead to unsafe neighborhoods, parents resort to harsh parenting (Barajas-Gonzalez & Brooks-Gunn, 2014). As a result, adolescent males raised in poor neighborhoods have a higher chance of engaging in negative behaviors such as stealing, lying, property destruction, assault, or cruelty (Burt et al., 2016). Children's aggressive behaviors, especially in single-mother homes, affect the quality of parenting and vice versa; however, the influence of parenting quality on negative behaviors may increase over time whereas the behavior has less influence on parenting quality (Pearl, French, Dumas, Moreland, & Prinz, n.d.). The same researchers found that the negative effects of child aggressive behavior decreased with time while the poor parenting styles on child aggressive behavior increased.

Immigrant Single Mothers and Parenting

In my study, *immigrant single mothers* refers to mothers who had no U.S. citizenship at birth and had dependent children living in the same household (McNulty, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Immigrant single mothers and nonimmigrant mothers experience single-parenting in different ways. For example, some researchers found that African American single mothers often did not parent their high school adolescent males alone but with the support of a coparent like the biological father, a grandparent, a family friend, or a cohabitating partner (Forehand, Parent, Golub & Reid, 2014; Howard, Rose & Barbarin, 2013; Parent et al., 2013). However, even with minimum support from the paternal side of the family, African American single mothers continued to do well, and their sons' behaviors improved (Parent et al., 2013). In contrast, single parenting for immigrant mothers is a social concern due to lack of social network support (Osman, Klingberg-Allvin, Flacking & Schon, 2016), and working immigrant mothers are not able to adequately monitor the activities of their adolescent males (Anton et al., 2015; Everri et al., 2015; Hong et al., 2016; Low & Espelage, 2014; Yoo, 2017). Despite the efforts to seek assistance from male father figures by single African American mothers, single South African immigrant mothers may not readily access coparental support to assist them with raising their high school adolescent males.

Research has also shown issues with coparenting, though mothers often find more support through this parenting strategy. The results of one quantitative study of African American single-mother families revealed that mother–coparent conflict was associated with parent–child relationship difficulties including parental disengagement and low

parental warmth (Forehand et al., 2014). Yet mothers who parent their sons alone wish there was a father figure to serve as a role model for their adolescent sons (Howard et al., 2013). Mothers who raise their high school adolescent males alone have even tried to encourage their sons to associate themselves with older successful African American males so that they can learn positive behaviors (Howard et al., 2013). Single parenting for immigrant mothers is a social concern due to lack of social network support (Osman, Klingberg-Allvin, Flacking & Schon, 2016), and working immigrant mothers are not able to adequately monitor the activities of their adolescent males (Yoo, 2017; Hong et al, 2016; Everri et al 2015; Anton et al, 2015; Low & Espelage, 2014). Despite the efforts to seek assistance from male father figures by single African American mothers, single Southern African immigrant mothers may not readily access co-parental support to assist them with raising their high school adolescent males.

Single immigrant mothers experience multiple challenges raising their children, which affects children's behavior and relationships. In a quantitative study of Mexicans and non-Mexican Hispanics, Gambino, De La Cruz, and Walters (2012) found that immigrant mothers and children living in single-mother families displayed lower quality interactions when compared to mothers and children living in married and divorced families. Lower quality interactions have also been shown when immigrant low-educated single mothers experience poor health, have more money worries, and have larger families than their higher-educated counterparts (Parkes et al., 2015). Despite this research on lower quality interactions, in a comparison of White American mothers and Indian immigrant mothers, Mccord and Raval (2016) found that Indian immigrant

mothers' children did not have as many behavior problems as those of White American mothers because even though they responded nonsupportively to negative emotions, they reminded their children not to let emotions impede their daily activities and relationships. Based on the results of these studies, efforts are needed to identify support groups and culturally sensitive parenting support for single immigrant mothers and children.

Single Mothers and Adolescent Behavior in Low Socioeconomic Neighborhoods

Living in disadvantaged neighborhoods has been linked to harsh parenting (Anton et al., 2015) and adolescent aggressive behaviors (Anderson, Donlan, McDermott, & Zaff, 2015; Caldwell et al., 2016; Petts, 2014). Some researchers have stated that neighborhood disadvantage involves two major characteristics: dangerousness and belongingness, which affects mother's perceptions and compromises the way they parent (Anton et al., 2015). Despite how neighborhoods can affect adolescent behaviors, self-control and support from family and friends can serve as protective factors against adolescent aggressive behaviors (Anderson et al., 2016). Consistent findings in studies of immigrant single parent families indicated that neighborhoods helped to shape individuals (Leventhal, Dupéré, & Shuey, 2015).

Single-parent immigrant families often experience high levels of economic hardship (Vesely, Goodman, Ewaida & Kearney, 2015), and single mothers experience maternal distress as they raise their adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods (Barajas-Gonzalez & Brooks-Gunn, 2014). Single-parent families, particularly immigrants (Pearl et al., 2014), experience a higher level of poverty when compared with two-caregiver households (Lee et al., 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

The difference in socioeconomic status between single-parent families and two-caregiver households challenges single mothers as they try to balance the demands of work and family (Zhou & Buehler, 2016). Least educated single immigrant mothers' stress is related to smaller social networks, and the high-educated mothers suffer from maternal stress due to reliance on formal childcare (Parkes et al., 2015).

In a quantitative study of how exposure to deep poverty and other related deep poverty aspects impacted homes headed by single mothers, Roy and Raver (2014) found that a disproportionately large percentage of African American families live in deep poverty and single-parent homes, while Latinos and White families are overrepresented in deep poverty and residential crowding. Roy and Raver (2014) suggested that early experiences of poverty lead to poor academic performances on children. Parkes et al. (2015) stated that single motherhood deprived the immigrant family of maintaining regular contact with other family members who would otherwise serve as informal support. Paat (2013), using a quantitative study of low income families, stated that the presence of both parents in a family not only indicated a higher level of economic strength but also indicated the ability to provide the adolescents with a higher level of parental supervision.

In a quantitative study conducted on family and economic issues, Vesely et al. (2015) found that immigrant families were often faced with increased poverty than their native-born counterparts. For example, the same authors (see Vesely et al., 2015) stated that 50 % of immigrants who qualified for government assistance ended up not getting it. Because of the unequal access to financial resources between the immigrant and non-

immigrant families, single immigrant mothers found themselves burdened with the task of managing the stress of parenting in poverty without getting any assistance from the government or family members.

Researchers asserted that family structure and the experience of poverty pose a risk on the wellbeing of single parents and their children (Roy & Raver, 2014). In contrast to the results of the above study, Jeon, Buettner, and Hur (2014)'s quantitative study indicated that it was not the household income that contributed to parental depression and children's social competence but the intensity of socioeconomic difficulties at home. Although it may be difficult to distinguish the influence of single motherhood and poverty from psychological adjustments in children, previous work (Park & Peterson, 2003), showed that the aim of using positive psychology is to build the individual's strengths and wellness versus remedying weaknesses and pathology.

Maternal Distress and High School Adolescent Males Behavior

Maternal distress has been linked to poor parenting, and ultimately poor adolescent adjustment. A quantitative study conducted in Canada indicated that child overprotection and maternal distress were related to behavior problems among children who are 5 years old and under (Mazza et al., 2016). In the United Kingdom, some researchers (e.g., Dermott & Pomati, 2016) found that children with scarce socially accepted necessities such as reading, playing games and eating meals together with their parents, often displayed more aggressive behaviors than children from advantaged neighborhoods. Sharma (2016) defined aggressive behavior as "acts of hostility, injury, violence, or extreme self-assertion." In a quantitative study of Vietnamese immigrants

and Taiwanese mothers, Tsao, Creedy and Gamble (2015) found that parenting and childcare stress led to poor maternal infant bonding because the society viewed childcare as the primary role of a mother. Sharma (2016) found that bonding was necessary for adolescents and their mothers because through this mother-son relationship, the adolescents were able to withstand peer pressure and other environmental factors affecting adolescent behavior. In accordance with maternal bonding, the results of Park, Kim and Park (2016)'s quantitative study revealed that maternal distress led to depression in female adolescents and low-self-esteem for male adolescents. Mental health professionals may need to pay attention to the effects of neighborhood risks on childhood development. Understanding and improving the parenting skills of single immigrant mothers may inform the development of protective factors for preventing adolescent aggressive behaviors.

From a positive psychology perspective, the results of Paat (2015)'s quantitative study of immigrant children and their families indicated that immigrant parents who supported and saw the potential in their children, raised high school adolescent males who did well in the American school system. In contrast to the above study, the results of Lee et al. (2014)'s quantitative study on neighborhood characteristics, parenting styles, and children's behavioral problems in Chinese American immigrant families, indicated a positive relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and children's aggressive behaviors but a negative association with parenting styles. Crocetti et al (2016)'s longitudinal study of Dutch adolescents and their mothers revealed positive associations between maternal empathy, mother-adolescent relationship quality, and adolescent

aggressive behavior. The same researchers found that as adolescent aggressive behaviors progressed, mothers found it harder to remain empathetic and sympathetic with their adolescent males.

The findings of one study of low income single mothers revealed that maternal distress leads to poor parenting practices, and aggressive behaviors in children (Arditti, et al., 2013), and yet when parents were exposed to positive living conditions, they were happy and joyful (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Using a mixed methods approach, Arditti et al. (2013) sought to determine the merits of looking at maternal distress from a positive psychology framework without pathologizing the distress. Arditti et al. (2013) found that a positive outlook at maternal distress predicted better service outcomes for low income single mothers. In contrast, Raffaelli, Iturbide, Carranza, and Carlo, (2014)'s quantitative study of the links between maternal distress and adolescent well-being among Latino families indicated that maternal distress negatively impacted girls more than boys.

Understanding the protective factors that mitigate maternal distress in immigrant single mothers can help inform prevention practices. By using the WELLFOCUS model, Riches, Schrank, Rashid, and Slade (2016) found that increasing positive experiences, amplifying strengths, fostering positive relationships, and creating a more meaningful self-narrative, improved well-being. Thus the results of a study of a quantitative study of single mothers by choice, Golombok, Zadeh, Imrie, Smith and Freeman (2016) indicated that economic hardship lead to stress which in turn resulted in lack of proper parental support.

In a related quantitative study, Jeon and Neppl (2014) stated that there was lack of involvement in children's activities for those parents who were experiencing economic distress, and similarly, results of another quantitative study indicated that lack of parental support led to inadequate supervision or behavioral control necessary to mitigate the youth problem behaviors (Anton et al., 2015). Mental health professionals may need to work with single mothers in developing specific goals to alleviate economic hardships and to improve parenting and family wellbeing.

One of the effects of neighborhood risks on children raised in homes headed by single mothers is that high school adolescent males experienced higher levels of conduct disorder than adolescent females. Wong (2017) stated that high economic deprivation and low informal social control have a high negative impact on high school adolescent males than adolescent females. Consistent with the above research, Doyle et al. (2015)'s research on the parenting experiences of African American fathers revealed that "being there" for their sons, served as a protective factor from adolescent aggressive behaviors. In other words, the presence of both parents provided stability due to fathers serving as disciplinarians while mothers provided love, nurturance, and warmth. Johnson (2016) found that girls raised in single parent homes headed by females often performed better in school than boys raised in similar homes due to the close relationships that single mothers formed with their daughters. Other researchers (e.g., Burt, Klump, Gorman-Smith, & Neiderhiser, 2016) suggested that more studies on the impact of neighborhood risks on child and adolescent aggressive behaviors need to be done across child sex.

Yaros, Lochman, and Wells (2016)'s quantitative study revealed a link between parental aggression in the form of corporal punishment, and male child aggressive behaviors during the transition period to middle school. Yet, on the contrary, a qualitative study conducted with seven Black male participants, indicated that Black men could be successful and resilient when raised by single mothers who show resilience and perseverance (Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante, & Irby, 2016). Wilson et al. (2016) found the following shared experiences among single mothers who raised successful high school adolescent males: "(a) acknowledging the importance of education, (b) discretion with intimate partners, (c) financial struggles, (d) attachment style of the mothers, (e) extended family support, (f) religion, (g) not speaking ill of their children's father, and (h) a desire to help others" (p. 199-120). Nevertheless, what seems consistent from all the research studies in chapter 2 is that parental monitoring, social support, and warmth seem to have a positive impact on the youth adjustments.

Summary

In the present chapter, I provided a comprehensive review of the literature and related studies that offered support for the current study. The literature indicated that high school adolescent males from single-mother homes may not get adequate financial support and emotional support as would other adolescent males raised in two-parent homes. The literature revealed that when single mothers were less stressed, they developed a positive outlook of their adolescent males, and were consequently able to bring out their adolescents males' strengths and capabilities. Thus, the literature revealed that the utility of parenting and prevention programs for single mothers could help

parents shape their sons' positive identity as African males, and ultimately help promote

societal cohesiveness (Doyle, Magan, Cryer-Coupet, Goldston, & Estroff, 2016).

Chapter 2 reveals a gap in literature as it relates to providing single Southern African

immigrant a voice to describe what they are doing to raise responsible high school

adolescent males. In Chapter 3, a full, in depth description is presented of the research

design and methodology derived from information gathered from the literature reviewed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how single Southern African immigrant mothers in low socioeconomic neighborhoods in California make meaning of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. The problem I wanted my research to address is what meaning single Southern African immigrant mothers attach to their experiences as they raise high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and how these mothers positively cope with working and monitoring the activities of their sons. I wanted to understand the nature and essence of their experiences from their point of view. Some researchers found that neighborhood risks affect boys more than girls due to lack of support and decreasing levels of parental monitoring (Thomas et al., 2016). By exploring the parenting experiences of single immigrant mothers, I sought to add to the literature on positive psychology about raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and to encourage policy makers to identify programs on how to increase levels of parental monitoring. The results of my research can add to existing research by showing that while many children are impacted by living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods, there are single Southern African immigrant mothers whose sons do not exhibit aggressive behaviors despite living in this environment.

The major sections of this chapter include an overview of the research design, research questions, and justification for the approach. I explain the role of the researcher

and the related ethical issues of the participants. I also discuss the procedures for participant and site selection, the data collection instruments, and issues related to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Research Design and Rationale

In my qualitative study I sought answers to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods of California make meaning of their experiences raising male children who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community?

Research Question 2: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising male children?

Because living in a single-mother family is associated with economic hardship (Paat, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), adjustment difficulties in children (Kliewer et al., 2015), and lack of parental monitoring and warmth (Low & Espelage, 2014), the central phenomenon of my study was the perspectives of single Southern African immigrant mothers on working and raising male children who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in schools and in the community. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of immigrants in the United States, which includes the number of working Southern African immigrants. In 2015, about 75% of sub-Saharan immigrants (ages 16 and over) were in the civilian labor force, compared to 66% and 62% of the overall foreign- and native-born populations, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). This increase indicates a higher rate of immigrant mothers who are working, which might

affect how their children are raised. This study addressed the concern with how immigrant mothers raise their children while working by showing how Southern African immigrant mothers describe their experiences working while raising children who do not show aggressive behaviors.

In my qualitative study, I relied on IPA to interpret what single immigrant mothers do to raise high school adolescent males who do not get in trouble in school and in the community. I chose a qualitative approach because it is suitable when trying to understand how participants make sense of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Priyadarshini et al., 2017). A phenomenological study begins with acknowledging the need to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of a group of individuals experiencing that phenomenon (Englander, 2012). By using a phenomenological approach, I was able to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena from the perspectives of the participants in their own words rather than obtaining results from laboratory experiments (see Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

I chose IPA as an approach because IPA is a qualitative methodological framework that is fitting for gaining new knowledge and deeper understanding about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I also considered its popularity in European and American psychology (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). Researchers use IPA to study the lived experiences of human beings rather than attempting to conceptualize those experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Stephen & Feng, 2014). Additionally, IPA helps researchers produce detailed narratives of participants' lived experiences (Wagstaff et al., 2014), and I used IPA to get detailed

accounts of the single mothers' experiences of working and raising high school adolescent males in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The focus of IPA researchers is to understand, through a process of interpretation, how participants make sense of their world or experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2015). During the interpretative process the participants interpreting their experiences becomes part of the researcher's interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2015). I used IPA to understand the meaning participants attributed to the phenomenon under study, and then I interpreted that meaning using a positive psychology lens.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was that of an interviewer (see Wagstaff et al., 2014) and an interpreter (see Smith & Osborn, 2015). By interviewing the participants, I was able to get as close as possible to their personal world of what it means to be an immigrant single mother working and raising male adolescents; as an interpreter, I tried to make sense of the participants' perspectives of the phenomenon. Interpretation involved making sense of participants interpreting their life, which is referred to as the double hermeneutic approach (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The double hermeneutic approach allows the researcher can view the participants' experiences in different ways (Wagstaff et al., 2014). By using IPA, I tried to get as close as possible to understanding participants' points of view from their perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2015). I analyzed the texts from the participants and interpreted the texts to understand both the intended and the unintended messages that the participants articulated (see Smith & Osborn, 2015).

In phenomenological research, interviewing requires the presence of a researcher as an interviewer and the participant as an interviewee (Englander, 2012), and the ability to help the participants become comfortable with the interview process (Creswell, 2013). To accomplish this, I practiced active listening skills and created a welcoming environment for the participants by asking basic questions at the beginning of the interview. I conducted face-to-face interviews with eight single Southern African immigrant mothers to understand their experiences of being a single mother working and raising a male child in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. I chose eight participants to achieve representation and quality data (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014) as well as allowing for the unforeseen circumstances such as a participant deciding to withdraw from the study. However, four participants has been suggested as a sufficient number to achieve rich data when using IPA (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

All the participants were members of a Seventh-day Adventist church in California. I did not select participants with whom I had personal or professional relationships such as supervisory or instructor relationships. However, because I am also an immigrant Seventh-day Adventist church member, it was possible that I might run into some familiar members of that church. There was also potential for the perception of abuse of power resulting from my position as a pastor's wife of another church while I tried to elicit data from the participants. To mitigate the possibility of such exploitation, I discussed the issue of consent with the participants and maintained professional boundaries during the data collection process (see Wagstaff et al., 2014).

Ethical concerns also included potential bias. Instead of trying to eliminate any biases, conflicts of interest, or power differentials, I temporarily bracketed my personal attitudes and beliefs about the phenomenon of immigrant single motherhood. Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the effects of preconceptions on the research process (Darawsheh, 2014). I bracketed my personal attitudes by using a reflexive journal in which I recorded any biases that became apparent throughout the present study. The goal of bracketing my thoughts, feelings, and attitudes was to decrease bias and to improve transparency in my subjective role as a tool of the research. As an immigrant mother, I wanted to learn from the Southern African immigrant single mothers the meaning they attach to this phenomenon rather than insert my knowledge of what it means to be an immigrant parent. There were no other ethical issues to be addressed.

Methodology

The IPA method (Vella, Butterworth, Johnson, & Law, 2015) was a good fit for my study because I was able to use a naturalistic approach to interviewing, and I had the flexibility to highlight and interpret each description of the lived experiences of the participants. By using IPA, I was able to obtain in-depth, thoughtful accounts of subjective experiences (Wagstaff et al., 2014) of single mothers raising high school adolescent males who have not exhibited aggressive behaviors in school and in the community.

Participant Selection Logic

I used purposive sampling to recruit individuals who were interested in my study as well as snowball sampling to gain a larger sample size. Purposeful sampling can be used to gain in-depth information and target a population (Barry, Abraham, Weaver & Bowersox, 2016) such as recruiting participants to explore why a certain population of people delayed treatment for breast cancer (Iskandarsyah et al., 2014). Potential participants in this study included eight adult Southern African immigrant single mothers of high school adolescent males recruited from a Seventh-day Adventist church in California. Because this church consisted of individuals from Africa, with the largest population from Southern Africa, I thought I could find eight participants willing to be in my study; however, I used snowball sampling to find the rest of the participants.

I used Noy's (2008) snowball sampling technique to get the total number of the needed participants. Snowball sampling is a widely used method of sampling in qualitative research that involves current participants giving the researcher information about others to contact for the study (e.g., Donald et al., 2017; Morandini, Blaszczynsnki, Costa, & Diar-Nimrod, 2015; Roper, Allred, Mandleco, Freeborn, & Dyches, 2014). Snowball sampling may lead to participants willing to share their experiences because the researcher is known to someone they trust or participants already interviewed. Previous research has also indicated that snowball sampling can be used to locate potential participants who are hard to locate. I used snowball sampling to help me to meet other Southern African single immigrant mothers outside the church.

Participants needed to meet the following criteria: (a) they were employed (part time or full time) single immigrant mothers, b) they were heads of their households, (c) they were in a position of legal authority to parent the child, and (d) they were parenting high school adolescent males who had not been in trouble at school and in the community. In IPA studies the samples are usually small (Wagstaff et al., 2014), and the relationship between saturation and sample size is determined by the researcher's decision to either present a comprehensive and in-depth analysis or a general account on a group or specific population (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In IPA studies, a comprehensive and in-depth analysis is more appropriate with a small sample size of six to eight participants so that the process of analyzing data is not so overwhelming and time consuming (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I chose eight participants because I wanted to get detailed accounts of the experiences of the participants to reach saturation.

Participants were recruited by me meeting with the pastor of the church, explaining the study, and asking the pastor to post a flyer where there was my phone number at the bottom so that interested women could contact me. To increase sampling rigor, potential participants who responded to the flyer went through a screening process to filter out those who did not meet the criteria or were not prepared to share their lived experiences. I notified those I chose by phone and informed them that there was no compensation for participation, asked them to meet me at the interview location of their choice, and invited them to sign a consent form upon arrival at the meeting.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, instrumentation refers to how researchers use instruments to collect data. After identifying the participants, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and an audio-digital recorder as my data collection instruments. I developed the interview protocol that I used as suggested by IPA researchers (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The interview protocol comprised the semistructured; open-ended questions that I had prepared to explore perspectives of single Southern African immigrant mothers raising adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. An interview guide assures that each research question is addressed across all participants by consistently asking the same questions (Jewell, 2015). I did not use any historical or legal documents as a source of data because interviews are the primary data collection instruments in a qualitative study. During the face-to-face interviews, I initiated discussion surrounding the research question by using open-ended questions and probes.

The basis for instrument development in IPA studies is the idiographic approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The idiographic approach, in contrast with a nomothetic approach in which the researcher generalizes individual results to the entire population, guides the researcher into treating each individual's experiences as unique from the other participants. The idiographic approach was useful for my IPA study because the aim of interviewing my participants was to treat each participant's description of her experience as unique.

The credibility of researcher-developed instruments is dependent on the researcher's experience in interviewing. An experienced interviewer asks questions that

concentrate on the participant's thoughts, memories, associations, fantasies, and individual interpretation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). To establish sufficiency of data collection instruments in IPA studies, semistructured interviews are one of the most popular methods of eliciting rich, detailed, and first accounts of the participants' experiences and description of phenomena that is under study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). By using semistructured interviews, my participants and I were able to seek clarification on broad questions or responses.

To establish content validity, I took field notes in a way that did not interfere with the interview process. I was able to do this by using both audio-tapes and field notes (see Rudestam & Newton, 2015), which also meant that I did not miss important points from the participants' responses. I used a reflexive journal to record impressions, reactions, and other significant events during data collection. I also developed a confidentiality agreement form that I sent to a professional transcriber to sign. When the interview was finished, I contacted the transcriber to find out how to send the audio tapes to him/her. Upon sending the tape-recorded transcripts, I asked the transcriber to return the signed form and the completed transcripts within a reasonable time.

Both the interview protocol and the audio-tapes were sufficient data collection instruments because by using them I elicited rich and detailed first person accounts of the participants' experiences of being a single immigrant mother raising a male child. I kept the keys to the locked storage in a secure place to which none else has access. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) asserted that by using researcher-developed questions, the

researcher is able get access to the way participants perceive and talk about objects and events.

Data Collection

The data collection process began with my meeting with the pastor of a church in California at his church office to present the purpose and goals of my study. Then I asked the church pastor for permission to conduct the study using single mothers in the church. I developed a flyer with a tear off at the bottom stating my name and phone number so people could phone me directly. I then asked the pastor to post a flyer that contained an invitation to potential participants who met the criteria for participating in the study, informing them about the goals, objectives, data collection process, and nature of the study. I asked those participants who both met the criteria and accepted the invitation to provide me with their availability, so we could arrange the date and time of the interview. Because of confidentiality and bias, I did not want someone else deciding who should be part of my study. Therefore, the pastor's role was to post the fliers around the church. Once the person phoned me, I screened them to filter out those who did not meet the criteria, or were not prepared to share their lived experiences. The screening process consisted of the following questions:

1. Are you the sole head of your household?

2. Do you work full time or part time?

3. In which country in Southern Africa were you born?

4. Are you the biological mother to your son?

5. In what grade is your son?

Upon meeting with each potential participant, I provided the participant with a consent form for the participant to sign a keep a copy. The consent form also included a statement that informed the participants that if they decided to withdraw from participating in the study, they would be able to do so without penalty.

Then I collected data by interviewing each of the eight participants in a quiet place at a location of their choice after I had collected their signed consent forms. I encouraged the participants to choose a private location where we could both control background noise. Each participant was able to stop the interview at any time if she was feeling distressed. I offered to provide the participant with a list of professionals who provided free or low-cost counseling if the participant said she needed it.

The length of each one-time interview was one and half to two hours. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) stated that the duration of most IPA interviews is one hour or longer. After the interview was completed, I made a follow-up phone call to each participant if I needed clarification. Then I did member checking to reflect on my own blind sports and to understand the meaning the participants attached to their experiences. I notified by phone those whom I chose, and informed them that there was no compensation for participation. Participants chose the interview location and before starting the interviews I invited them to sign a consent form upon arrival at the meeting.

I informed the participants in advance that their interview would be audio-recorded, and asked each participant to choose an alias to be used throughout the study. I made sure I used the open-ended questions so that the participants could talk at length about their experiences of immigrant single-motherhood of raising an adolescent male

child. The open-ended questions were followed by prompts so that I could get in-depth responses. The order of which I asked the open-ended questions depended on the response given by the participant at the time.

During the data collection process, I monitored how the interview was affecting the participant by noticing when a participant was becoming uncomfortable or avoided discussions about certain issues. As an experienced associate marriage and family therapist, I used my observation and listening skills to determine if the participant began to show signs of being affected by the discussion. I also continued to check with the participant how she was doing by asking how she felt about the interview and if she wished to continue.

To assure confidentiality during the recording process, the participant chose her own pseudonym before I turned on the recorder. Then I placed the microphone close to the participant because I wanted to accurately capture the participant's responses. To allow for a smooth flow of the conversation, I avoided interrupting the participants' while they were talking. Instead, I used silent probes and non-verbal probes to enlist more information. When I needed to ask a question, I waited for 5 seconds after the participant had finished responding to a particular question, and then asked the question. To recruit eight participants, I used Noy (2008)'s snowball sampling technique to get the total number of the needed participants as discussed earlier.

To exit the interview, if someone was stressed I provided her with a list of professionals who provided free and/or low-cost counseling if she felt she needed it. I also informed the participants that I would call them if I needed more information related

to their responses. I also encouraged the participants to call me if they wanted to share more information.

Data Analysis Plan

I used IPA to analyze data so as to answer the question: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods of California make meaning of their experiences raising male children who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community? How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising male children? IPA was best suited for this qualitative study because the theoretical foundations of IPA guided me to elicit descriptive accounts of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Hudson, Duncan, Pattison, & Shaw, 2015). I used IPA to interpret the meaning-making process of the lived experiences of the participants in the present study. A narrative analysis would not have been appropriate for this study because in narrative research the researcher combines the participants' views of lived and told stories and the views of the researcher (Caddic, Smith, & Phoenix, 2016; Creswell, 2013). In my research, I only included the participants' detailed accounts of their experiences of a phenomenon. The advantages of using IPA include richly interpreted data, increased engagement between the researcher and the small number of participants; and the researcher's ability to get detailed phenomenological accounts of participant data (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

Data analysis of all responses from open-ended questions formed the basis for interpreting and understanding the meaning of the participants' experiences from their

viewpoint. The process of data analysis involved data management, coding, storage, content analysis, data interpretation, and preparing the final report (see Evers, 2016). The first step of data management involved reading my notes and listening to the recordings verbatim, shortly after each of the interviews (see Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Then I reviewed each of the transcripts so I could identify the larger patterns and themes that emerged from the participants' responses (see Jewell, 2015). I then developed a contact summary sheet (see Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). The contact summary sheet provided space for breaking down qualitative data into smaller units, regrouping the units according to themes, the context, and theoretical notions without getting lost in the details.

I coded the data by hand, focusing on the emergent patterns rather than trying to use predetermined codes since the purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of the participants. In terms of using software to analyze data, I used manual data analysis instead of using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Marshall and Friedman (2012) found that the CAQDAS share common errors and may or may not be better than hand-coded methods. I realized that in trying to learn how to use CAQDAS such as the NVivo, I might lose familiarity with the data which I was trying to analyze. During data analysis, I was aware that I needed to provide an explanation for any discrepant cases that could arise. Discrepant cases could be identified if the participants' experiences differed from the main body of evidence in the study.

Trustworthiness

Critics of the qualitative research tradition question the rigor or trustworthiness of qualitative studies (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017). For example, Eagly and Riger (2014) pointed out that qualitative research that is not part of a mixed methods design was uncommon in certain high citation journals. Osbeck (2014) and Hill (2012) argued that by using trustworthy qualitative analyses, the researcher could elicit rich descriptions of participants' accounts with enough flexibility for readers to make constructive judgments. Levitt et al. (2017) defined trustworthiness as a term used in qualitative studies to indicate the level of worthiness of research and whether the findings are warranted. This section of my proposal discusses the issues of trustworthiness by explaining how my study ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility may be explained by asking if the account of the study was valid, and by whose standards (Creswell, 2013). To validate findings, Wagstaff et al. (2014) suggested that the researcher needs to be continually reflective on the research. Darawsheh (2014) described reflexivity as the process of examining of both oneself as a researcher, and the research process itself. In the current study, I was responsible for reducing potential biases to safeguard validity by taking note of, and journaling my thoughts, feelings, and impressions of each participant.

Transferability

In my qualitative study, transferability refers to the researcher's ability to provide thick descriptions of the personal accounts of participants' lived experiences for other single mothers to be able to apply aspects of the study to their own experiences. In data analysis, transferability can entail the process of consistently identifying common themes through coding the raw data to the extent that another person can understand the themes and make similar conclusions (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). IPA is a suitable tool for accomplishing transferability because of its idiographic nature. Researchers who use IPA produce in-depth, thoughtful accounts of subjective experiences, incorporating verbatim participant quotes, highlighting metaphors and relevant literature (Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Wagstaff et al., 2014). In my study, transferability can be established when the reader reviews the richly detailed accounts of single Southern African immigrant mothers' experience raising male children in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. I ensured transferability of my study by providing rich, thick descriptions offered by the participants.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability of a study relies on the researchers' attempt to verify that their findings are consistent with the raw data. In other words, the study findings are dependable when other researchers can analyze the raw data of a study and come up with similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions about the data. Dependability can be enhanced by obtaining detailed field notes, using good quality tape recorders, and transcribing the tape (Creswell, 2013). Madill and Sullivan (2017, in press)

suggested that member checking can provide the opportunity for the researchers to reflect on their own blind spots, and gain an insight into what is important to participants. I established dependability of my study by reading the transcripts several times, reviewing my field notes, sending a copy of the transcript to the appropriate member as a form of member checking (Madill & Sullivan, 2017, in press), and thoroughly documenting all the steps of data collection, and data analysis to provide an audit trail. An audit trail is a detailed step by step description of how the dissertation process will unfold from start to finish (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Researchers use an audit trail to validate the steps that the researchers took as they reduced, analyzed and synthesized the data (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study could be confirmed or corroborated by other people (Darawsheh, 2014). I used confirmability to mitigate bias in the data. Darawsheh (2014) stated that confirmability could be achieved by the researchers' effort to demonstrate that findings emerged from the data and not their own interpretations. I assured confirmability by quoting participants' responses word for word when different themes arose. Consistent with the practices of Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) IPA, I kept a reflexive journal where I logged the details of how, as an interviewer, I may have influenced the results of the study because of my biases and misunderstandings. As a married immigrant mother, I became as reflexive as possible by writing down any biases or misunderstandings in my journal. I also made sure that the observational notes that I documented during the interviews, served as a basis for

assuring that the themes and interpretations were bias-free as I analyzed the data. While I was analyzing the data, I kept a journal to record my predispositions and acknowledge beliefs underpinning the decisions I made.

Ethical Procedures

To ensure ethical protection of participants from preventable harm, I followed the guidelines established by the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Code of Conduct (2010) and the Walden University IRB which state that researchers have an obligation to obtain a formal agreement indicating the voluntary involvement of participants. I submitted my proposal to the Walden University IRB for approval of the study before making any contact with participants (approval no. 02-02-28-0310016). As noted in Schrems (2014), I treated all the participants with respect, dignity and concern in order to fulfill the principle of beneficence (2014).

To meet the requirements of the ethical principles of the APA, I obtained informed consent from all participants before they began the interview. I informed the participants about the purpose of the research, how the interview information would be recorded, the risks and benefits associated with the research, the right to voluntarily withdraw from the study for whatever reason, the absence of remuneration for participation, and that there will be no penalties for withdrawing from participation.

In terms of storing the data, I secured field notes, transcripts, and any electronic data in a locked file cabinet in my office. I am the only person who has a key to the cabinet and the office. I kept the keys to the cabinet in a place that is accessible only to me. All data was kept in storage and will remain there for the required five years before

they will be destroyed. Only my dissertation committee and I will have access to the raw data. There were no other ethical issues identified in my study.

Summary

In chapter 3, I restated the purpose of the study, and described my role as a researcher. Then I provided an overview of phenomenological design and gave reasons why interpretative phenomenological is a suitable methodology for the current study. Lastly, I discussed in detail the procedures for participant selection, site selection, data collection instruments, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical concerns related to recruitment, data collection, data storage, data disposal. Chapter 4 focuses on a discussion of the findings and results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of what meaning single Southern African immigrant mothers attach to their lived experiences as they raise their high school adolescent male children in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The research questions I used in this study were:

Research Question 1: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods of California make meaning of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community?

Research Question 2: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising high school adolescent males?

In this chapter I present the following major sections of my study: setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results of my study, and chapter summary.

Setting

Each of the eight participants chose a private room for their interviews: two participants chose a private room in the university library, one in the participant's classroom, and another one in the participant's private office at her workplace. Two other interviews occurred separately at the participants' residences at their request, and the last two interviews were conducted in private rooms at a community library. At the time of the interview, there were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced

participants, their experiences, or the interpretation of the results. All participants stated that they were satisfied with the settings they chose.

Demographics

The demographics and characteristics of my eight participants, presented in Table 1, include their pseudonyms, country of origin, number of years living in the United States, and number of sons raised who did not get in trouble in school and in the community. All participants met the inclusion criteria of being employed, single immigrant mothers who were heads of their households, in a position of legal authority to parent the child, and a parent of high school adolescent males who had not been in trouble at school and in the community. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' anonymity.

Table 1

Demographics for Single Mothers

Participant	Birthplace	Years in the United States	Number of males who were successful
Thoko	Zimbabwe	18	1
Busi	Zimbabwe	18	1
Erica	Zambia	21	2
Luci	South Africa	17	1
Grace	South Africa	20	2
Ruvarashe	Zimbabwe	17	1
Charity	Zimbabwe	18	1
Rose	Zambia	17	2

As shown in Table 1, all the mothers were born in Southern African countries and had lived in the United States for 17 years and over. Although three of the eight participants discussed how they had each raised two sons who did not get in trouble in

school and in the community, the interview was focused on the adolescent son who was currently in high school. Some information from the interviews may appear sensitive in nature but was volunteered and openly discussed by the participants.

Data Collection

I collected data from eight participants over the course of 4 weeks, between March 4, 2018 and March 25, 2018. Six potential participants responded to the invitation to participate. Out of the six, only four participants met the criteria to participate. Two other potential participants from the church did not meet the criteria for participation in the study because their sons had already graduated from high school. The other four participants came from the community through snowball sampling (see Donald et al., 2017).

All interviews were conducted in private rooms in various locations. Each of the interviewees participated in a onetime interview and each interview ranged between 49 minutes to 65 minutes. Although I allotted 1.5 to 2 hours for collecting interview data, the actual meetings with the participant did not exceed 1.5 hours. All interview data were audio-recorded with participants' consent using an H4nPro Handy Recorder. All recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company in a nearby community. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. Data were collected in accordance with the procedure outlined in Chapter 3, and no unusual circumstances were encountered during the interviews.

Data Analysis

I used the process of IPA by following the guidelines suggested by previous research: (a) reading and rereading the transcript, (b) clustering themes, and (c) transforming clusters into superordinate themes (see Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; see Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; see Smith & Osborn, 2015). I chose this process of analysis because it requires total immersion in the interview transcripts and listening several times to the audio tapes to become familiar with the participants psychological world (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Data analysis was an inductive and iterative process that began with reading and rereading each transcript individually, line by line, commenting on the similarities and differences, echoes, and amplifications in what a participant said. I also listened to the recorded audio two to three times to be sure I did not miss any pertinent details, each time noting similarities among participants as well as any other discrepant cases. The process of reading and coding took several weeks in which there was a 2-hour break and sometimes a 24-hour break in between reading each transcript to get a fresh perspective of what each participant was saying. This move fitted the process of IPA research described by Pietkiewicz (2014) where the researcher maintains contact with the data and inductively codes the associations and comments that come to mind.

While coding, I organized each coded section under a category based on similarities. I read each coded category a few times to ensure the codes were addressing the same idea and the responses were similar. Through the process of contact with the data, emergent patterns (i.e., categories and themes) began to surface, eventually

representing emergent themes (see Table 2). The names that I chose for each category were derived from the overall description of the participants' shared ideas or language. Once I completed naming all the various categories, I grouped them under a broader group called emergent themes to encompass the main idea at hand. Five main themes emerged from my analysis: working hard, religion, family, education, and setting a good example for the family.

The process of clustering themes included the transformation of initial notes into themes throughout the whole transcript (Smith & Osborn, 2015). During this process, I used highlighters to identify themes and rewrote the themes on several white boards to organize the data. As I reviewed each transcript, I began to identify larger patterns and themes that emerged from the participants' responses. Then I developed a contact summary sheet (see Table 2) as suggested by Miles et al. (2013). The contact summary provided space for breaking down participants' phrases into smaller units, regrouping the units according to themes, content, and theoretical notions. Due to the iterative nature of this process, I continued to revisit the data over several weeks, reorganizing the clusters and renaming the themes in support of the participants' data.

Finally, I transformed the clusters into superordinate themes, then, following processes of previous research (see Smith & Osborn, 2015), I used identifiers to indicate where in the transcript each of them could be found by assigning keywords from an extract and the page numbers of the transcript. During this process, some of the themes that did not fit well in the emerging structure or were not rich in evidence were dropped. Over a period of 2 months, I continued reading and rereading the transcribed interviews

to gain a deeper insight into the participants' lived experiences. During data analysis, I

consulted the participants and encouraged them to review their transcripts as part of the

member checking process (see Madill & Sullivan, 2017). None of the participants made

corrections on their transcripts.

Table 2 shows the examples of emergent patterns, superordinate themes, and

examples of codes which emerged from the data. There were five major themes that

emerged from the participants' transcripts: working hard, religion, family, education, and

positively coping. The examples of codes are representative of words taken directly from

participants.

Table 2

Master Table of Emergent Themes, Superordinate Themes, and Examples of Codes

Emergent Theme	Superordinate Themes and Examples of Codes

Working hard	Working more than one job
	    Working two to three jobs
	    Getting up early
	    Working long hours
	    Busy work schedule
	    Sleeping short hours
	    Working and going to school
	Some participants own homes
	Driving long distances
	    Working far from home
	    Spending one to two hours on the road
	Less time with children

Religion	Active involvement in church
	    Mothers hold offices in church
	    Sons participate in youth programs
	    Pathfinders
	    Praise Worship
	    Vespers
	    Going to church together
	Faith in God
	    Mothers giving credit to God for sons' success
	    Family worship
	    Praying with, and for your son
	    Putting God first
	    Bible studies
	    Getting strength in prayer
	    Praying before meals
	    Praying before bedtime
	Church community helping single mothers
	    Elders teach boys morals
	    Men teach boys household repairs, and/ or car repairs
	    Families opening their homes for youth socials members serving as aunts, uncles, and cousins

Family	Lack of a father figure
	    Wish there was a father figure in the home
	    Playing multiple roles
	    Church members providing spiritual guidance
	    Neighbors serving as mentors
	    Responsibility lies on you
	    Unable to teach son men stuff
	Family cohesiveness
	    Eating meals together
	    Adult child caring for younger brother
	    Active involvement in son's activities
	    Knowing son's whereabouts
	    Love, warmth
	    Taking trips together
	    Adult children continue to live in the home
	    Strong family ties (Brothers-in-law, aunts, uncles, and cousins same as nuclear family)

(table continues)

Emergent Theme	Superordinate Themes and Examples of Codes
Family (cont.)	Family stress
	Extended family not always available
	Financial constraints
	One salary not enough
	Frustrated
	Worried
	Participants' experiences from nuclear family
	Most participants were raised by strict mothers
	Family Structure
	Children not allowed to go out at night
	It takes a village to raise a child
	Respect for adults
	Children are an investment
	Sons were taught to wash dishes, clothes, and how to cook
	Tough love
Education	Higher educational expectations
	School is priority
	Good citizenship
	Awards
	Mothers expect A grades
	Participants want sons to be doctors
	No calls from school unless they are positive
	Follow rules/listen to teachers
	Mothers doing everything to support their sons at school
	Maintaining open communication lines with son's teachers
	Open dialogue with son
	Looking to other professionals as examples
Positively coping	Leading by example
	Set goals for self and son
	Be a role model
	Teach son to work hard
	Set rules (no riding with strangers, abide by the law, stay away from drugs, violence, thefts, and gangs, no overnight parties, hang out with the right people)
	Do not use profanity
	Pray with your son
	Make good friends
	Monitor your son
	Know your son's whereabouts
	Know your son's friends
	Know your son's parents
	Do not put your guard down at any time
	Resilience
	Participants have learned to make it work
	You just have to do it
	Getting connected

Note. Table 2 provides a summary of the most commonly occurring responses and emerging themes discussed by participants during the interviews. There were no discrepant cases in the data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are all aspects of establishing trustworthiness in research. Levitt et al. (2014) defined *trustworthiness* as a term used in qualitative studies to indicate the level of worthiness of research and whether the findings are warranted. This section of my study includes evidence of trustworthiness through explanations of how my study ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility means I was concerned about the quality of the data rather than the quantity (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). I accomplished this through member checking (see Madill & Sullivan, 2017), which allowed me to gain an insight into what was important to participants and to get participants' views of whether the transcriptions reflected what they intended to say. I sent transcribed interviews to the participants and asked them to read the transcripts and contact me if any of the information misrepresented what they intended to say. All eight participants mailed the transcripts back without any corrections.

I established transferability by providing thick descriptions of data, through purposive sampling and snowball sampling, so that readers and other researchers can make a comparison of the situation of my study to other similar and familiar situations in their lives (see Anney, 2014). As noted in Chapter 3, participants were chosen from a church and from the community because I did not get enough participants from the church. All eight participants met the criteria to participate in my study. I obtained participants' detailed accounts of their experiences, to produce in-depth, thoughtful

accounts of subjective experiences, incorporating verbatim participant quotes, highlighting metaphors and relevant literature (see Rudestam & Newton, 2015; see Wagstaff et al., 2014). I started to reach saturation by the fourth interview, but I continued to interview the other four participants to see if any different data would emerge, though no new information came from these interviews.

Dependability was enhanced by obtaining detailed field notes, using good quality tape recorders, and transcribing the tape (Creswell, 2013). I established dependability of my study by reading the transcripts several times, reviewing my field notes, sending a copy of the transcript to the appropriate member as a form of member checking (Madill & Sullivan, 2017), and thoroughly documenting all the steps of data collection, and data analysis to provide an audit trail. Qualitative researchers use an audit trail to validate the steps that they take as they reduce, analyze and synthesize the data (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I used an audit trail for keeping a record of everything I did, whether it seemed minor or major, from the notes I wrote in my journal pertaining to my study, to interviews, and transcription, enough for other researchers to easily audit, and replicate if needed.

Throughout data collection and analysis, I used confirmability to mitigate bias in the data. Darawsheh (2014) stated that confirmability could be achieved by the researchers' effort to demonstrate that findings emerged from the data and not their own interpretations. I maintained confirmability by quoting participants' responses word for word when different themes arose. Consistent with the practices of Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) IPA, I kept a reflexive journal where I logged the details of how, as an

interviewer, I might have influenced the results of the study because of my biases and misunderstandings. Therefore, throughout the data collection and analysis, I documented in my research journal my thoughts and ideas as they came to my mind to reflect on my perspectives. I focused on analyzing the data without any predetermined codes or themes so that the data would emerge as representative of each participant's testimony. Furthermore, I explored the data overtime and from time to time discussed with my dissertation chair my involvement with the data to allow the emergence of potential bias in my interpretation of the data. I also made sure that the observational notes that I documented during the interviews, served as a basis for assuring that the themes and interpretations were bias-free as I analyzed the data.

Results

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of single Southern African immigrant mothers working and raising a high school male adolescent in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Descriptions of the lived parenting experiences of eight single immigrant mothers were gathered for the purpose of the research. The descriptions of the lived experiences provided me insight into the following questions that guided this research:

Research Question 1: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods of California make meaning of their experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community?

Research Question 2: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising high school adolescent males?

Findings

There were five major themes that supported the research questions. Following are the five major themes that contributed to these findings: Working Hard, Religion, Family, Education, and Positively Coping. The first finding was the importance of religion which encompassed two of the five major themes, namely, religion and family.

Finding 1: The Importance of Religion

The most important finding of this research was the importance of religion. The connection between this finding and the theme of religion surfaced when each of the eight participants described how they relied on religion to make meaning of their lived experiences, and as they also provided me with answers to the second research question, "How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising high school adolescent males?" Participant Luci explained: "I don't want to give myself credit. I want to give credit to God." Participant Rose explained: "If we don't go to church there must be a good reason. Somebody's sick or something, but we're never miss any day of church and I am happy now that . . . even when I'm not around they will still go . . . they . . . they're not late." Participant Ruvarashe remarked: "I could never have done it if it wasn't my faith, just my believing that, you know, I couldn't have done it if God didn't intervene in our lives, so for that I'm thankful." She went on to say: "I just leave the rest to God and, you know, every day I pray God protect my children wherever they are, you know, because there are crazy people out there." Participant Luci

described her experiences with the church as follows: Our church, they go and fix it for single people. Like even me, I've benefitted from other Mormon people. Like let's say I have problem with the drain. If there's a plumber there, he comes and fixes my drain for free."

Family and Religion

Some participants detailed how, in the absence of a father figure, they relied on their church family, their nuclear family, or the extended family to positively cope: Participant Ruvarashe expressed her appreciation for the lessons her son learns from the church: "They teach them morals. They teach them just how to be . . . , you know, respect one another. So I'm pretty sure they do have an impact in what he's doing with his life. Because if he wasn't interested, he wouldn't continue to go." Participant Luci described how she relied on her church family to teach her son how to be a man:

It's hard. It's hard. I wish the father was there. I wish he can learn from the

father because the father was such a very good man. So it's hard because I don't

know what to tell my son. I don't know what to tell my son about the boy stuff

and I'm hoping church people are telling him enough about the boy stuff, how to

do as a man and how to . . . you know, because I don't know what to tell him. I

don't.

Participant Grace shared why family worship with nuclear family is so important

to her:

If God is not with me I'm not going to be in a position to help my kids experience

and know who God is. So they . . . it starts right in the home. We have worship

in the morning and our worship is almost like a mini church service. We sing one song, we pray, and we read the Bible, we take turns and then whosoever that is reading has to give a little sermon and explain what is going on and then we pray"

Participant Busi expressed her appreciation for the guidance the church gives to her son: "The church they have youth classes, they have youth activities where they learn how to become a man, how to become grownups and how to achieve their goals. They taught . . . they teach them a lot of things and also they put them into leadership positions."

Participant Rose noted:

You know, I've had a few challenges and they, they've been there to help me. They've given me their phone numbers, call me anytime and they've given my children phone numbers to call them anytime. So I've had a lot of support that has helped a lot with how the children have turned out because there's been so much positive support all over, just not from family, but from church family.

In referencing her extended family as a natural support, Participant Thoko explained: "I can go for three weeks out of the country and he's taken care of. And even if my child does something wrong, my extended family can discipline the child and I don't have anything to say against it. It's their child." Participant Grace added: "My children have Asian aunties. They have white aunties. They have black American aunties. They have African aunties. So we are a big part, so my family is big. It's not limited to South Africans. It's a big family."

Finding 2: Setting a Good Example for the Family

The second finding was the importance of setting a good example for the family. Each of the eight participants discussed the importance of this finding as they made suggestions for other parents. The discussions of the lived experiences provided me insight into the questions that guided my research. This finding encompassed three major themes, positively coping, working hard, and education. Following are some examples that show how positively coping, working hard, and education are connected to setting a good example for the family.

Positively Coping

Participant Grace suggested: "So my thing is adult you need to be an adult. Lead . . . give a child a goal, help them to reach it. Give a child . . . show them what you expect and show them how to reach there and let them reach it." Participant Thoko added: "So that's one advice I would give to single moms. That we need to be role models, work hard, show our kids that we earn whatever we get so that they also do the same." Participant Erica remarked: "Let your no be your no and your yes be a yes, and just set those positive examples. Be the example, live by example and train your child to be a problem solver, because our children tend to give up."

Working hard

Participant Charity suggested:

Yes. Don't rely on other people because other people will disappoint you, they'll let you down. I've been disappointed in many different ways. They let you

down, so you just have to learn to do things on your own and not to depend on people. You can only depend on God.

Some participants described their experiences with the busy work schedules and working more than one job. Participant Ruvarashe said: "Yes. So I come to work from 9, maybe sometimes 7, 8, I finish at 5. And then from 5 I go to school until 10 p.m. and then I go home, I do my homework and go to sleep maybe about 12, midnight. Do the same the following day and that's pretty much it."

Participant Erica remarked: "So at about 2:15 I leave to go and teach my students that are in their homes, the home and hospital ones. Yes. So that's what I . . . it's overtime because I need that little extra income being a single mother. So I go teach one for one hour and go to the other one who I don't have any more. She passed away last week." Other participants expressed feelings of frustration about the long commute to their work places. Participant Busi noted: "It's not a short distance. You get into the train. For two hours. Then get into the bus, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, then get to work." Participant Rose remarked: "About two hours. Well, because the . . . the boys are older now I'm able to drive there at the beginning of the week and drive back at the end of the week."

Education

Some examples that show how the interviewees used education to set good examples for their families are noted here. Participant Luci stated how her educational success may influence her son's motivation for education:

For me to go to my doctor degree I'm doing this for them because I told them one day I'm going to be a doctor of something. So if I don't do it and they don't finish, like my son, if my son doesn't finish high school, falls out, you know? If I don't finish, if he falls out and if I complain, he'll say, you didn't finish your thing, so why do you expect me to finish mine.

Some participants expressed how much they value academic excellence for them and their sons. Participant Busi reported: "School is the priority. You are here for school and nothing else. You don't have a job. All you do is school and sleep and go back to school. So I don't accept any poor results and I reward an A, I pay them just as . . . if you bring an A, $5." Participant Erica expressed similar sentiments: "Yes, his grades are good and he knows that once they start slipping I will be on his case and I will be . . . even the teachers do not want me on their case."

Some participants described how they encourage their sons to achieve their educational goals, and perhaps, become doctors. Participant Grace stated: "And my children know, I'm not going to accept to have my teacher or the principal call my house. Those people are not allowed to call my house. If I get a call from them, it must be something positive." Participant Charity added: "He wants to go into the health industry. So I told him just do your doctorate and become a doctor. So he said, yeah, we'll see."

Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the procedures for data collection, analysis and interpretation using IPA. I stated how I interpreted data generated from the single mothers' descriptions of their experiences positively coping with working and

raising a high school adolescent male in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The

participants described to me how they make meaning of their lived experiences working

and raising their sons under harsh conditions. I presented the results using the master

table of emergent themes, superordinate themes, and examples of codes supporting the

themes. Five themes emerged from the data: (a) working hard, (b) religion, (c) family,

(d) education, and (e) positively coping. In chapter 5 I will compare these findings to

existing peer-reviewed literature across related disciplines including the theoretical

framework guiding this study: positive psychology.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of single Southern African immigrant mothers' lived experiences working and raising their high school adolescent male children in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Furthermore, I wanted to learn how these mothers positively coped with working and raising high school adolescent males who have nonaggressive behaviors. I designed this study in line with the IPA approach to understand the in-depth accounts of the participants' experiences (see Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; see Smith & Osborn, 2015), and to provide future researchers opportunity to build on my work.

Key findings indicated new knowledge and insights in the areas of working hard, religion, family, education, and positively coping. What seemed consistent with the research studies in Chapter 2 was that parental monitoring, social support, and warmth had a positive impact on the high school youth adjustments. The findings in my study confirmed those of previous research as well. Participants acknowledged the importance of religion and setting a good example for their families as what contributed to their sons' positive adjustments.

Interpretation of the Findings

There is limited literature on the parenting strategies of immigrant mothers as well as studies describing what single Southern African immigrant mothers experiences raising high school adolescent sons in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The findings from this interpretative phenomenological study surfaced from the responses participants

gave of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who have not engaged in aggressive behaviors at school and in the community. I identified two findings from the data: (a) the importance of religion and (b) setting a good example for the family. Following are the five major themes that contributed to these findings: working hard, religion, family, education, and positively coping. I then compared these findings to the existing literature and theory to advance the interpretation of my results.

The Importance of Religion

The most important finding of this research was the importance of religion in answer to the second research question: How do single Southern African immigrant mothers positively cope with working and raising male children? This finding encompassed two of the five major themes: religion and family.

The connection between this finding and the themes of religion and family surfaced when each of the eight participants described how they relied on religion and family to support their adolescent males. Participants felt that church was the family from which both single immigrant mothers and their sons benefitted. Some participants detailed how, in the absence of a father figure, they relied on their church family, their nuclear family, or the extended family to coparent and positively cope with their lived experiences. This confirms the findings of Parent et al. (2013) that during the coparenting experience, African American single mothers received increased support from all other nonmarital coparents except the fathers and paternal grandparents.

Unlike the African American single mothers who received support from a coparent who was either the biological father, a grandparent, a family friend, or a

cohabitating partner (see Forehand et al., 2014; see Howard, Rose & Barbarin, 2013; see Parent et al., 2013), single mothers in my study did not acknowledge the presence of those coparents in their lived experiences. They reported that their older children who still lived with them in the same household, aunts and uncles, neighbors, and some church members all served as mentors for their sons. Most participants in my study recalled how in their home countries the village helped to raise a successful child. This experience confirms the findings of Parkes et al. (2015) that single motherhood deprives the immigrant family of maintaining regular contact with other family members who would otherwise serve as informal support.

Apart from the church family, participants recognized God as their main source knowledge of how to bring up a child. All participants shared how they would not be able raise well-behaved high school adolescent males without God intervening in their lives. To that effect, Participant Ruvarashe remarked, "I could never have done it if it wasn't my faith, just my believing that, you know, I couldn't have done it if God didn't intervene in our lives, so for that I'm thankful." Participant Luci commented, "I don't want to give myself credit. I want to give credit to God."

Setting a Good Example for the Family

The finding of setting a good example for the family encompassed three major themes: (a) positively coping, (b) working hard, and (c) education. All the participants discussed the importance of this finding as they made suggestions for other parents.

From the perspectives of the participants in my study, single mothers can positively cope by knowing their sons' whereabouts and knowing their sons' friends and

their parents. This finding diverges from Malczyk and Lawson's (2017) study and

Barbot, Crossman, Hunter, Grigorenko, and Luther's (2014) study that living with a

single immigrant parent is associated with less parental knowledge of the activities and

whereabouts of both male and female children. In my study, immigrant single mothers

set strict rules for their sons (no riding with strangers; abide by the law; stay away from

drugs, violence, thefts, and gangs; do not go to overnight parties; and hang out with the

right people). For example, Participant Charity stated, "Don't just let them go astray or

with their friends. You don't know what they're doing with their friends. So just be part

of their life, be with them, show them some love and I think that's all I can say about it."

In addition, the findings from my study suggested that other single mothers can

positively cope by not using profanity when communicating with their children, but by

praying with their children and making friends with people of positive influence. This

finding contrasts the literature on other minority single mothers that adolescents and

mothers living in single parent homes often display higher levels of negative behaviors

(e.g., detachment and lower quality mother–child interactions) than children and mothers

in biological married-parent families (Wong, 2017).

Some participants also described their experiences concerning the busy work

schedules and sometimes working more than one job. This experience confirmed the

findings in the literature that immigrant single mothers living in low socioeconomic

neighborhoods often have to work full time to compensate for financial deprivation, thus

compromising spending adequate time with their children (Shea et al., 2016) and work

harder than other single mothers (Knoef & Ours, 2016; Toma, 2016). However, the

majority of participants in my study reported less financial hardships, and they also reported several strengths in parental monitoring of the activities of their sons. This assertion coincides with Jeon et al.'s (2014) study indicating that it was not the household income that contributed to parental depression and children's social competence but the intensity of the lack of money.

Finally, regarding education, even though participants expected high passing grades from their sons' academic performance, none of the participants indicated that they pressured their sons to succeed academically. In contrast, all of them showed support for their sons by being involved in their sons' school activities, maintaining regular communication with the teachers about their sons' academic progress, which they viewed as setting a good example. Some participants described how they encouraged their sons to achieve their educational goals and perhaps become doctors. This finding supports Wilson et al. (2016), who suggested that single mothers who raised successful high school adolescent males acknowledged the importance of education.

Research has shown that for some immigrant families headed by single mothers, a parenting style characterized by guidance and structure is positively associated with well-adjusted youths who have a positive outlook in life. For example, results of research on parenting adolescent males revealed that some scholars (e.g., Jeon & Neppl, 2015; Schofield et al., 2014) supported that a positive outlook to life yielded good health and overall life achievement. Children who have parents with a positive outlook on life are likely to develop a similar disposition (Schofield et al., 2014). From the perspectives of the participants in my study, maintaining open communication lines with their sons'

teachers, engaging in open dialogue with their sons, and looking to other professionals as examples, may be the primary means of setting a good example for their sons.

Theoretical Foundations

The foundational theory for this study was Seligman et al.'s (2000) theory of positive psychology. The goal of using positive psychology was to focus on human strengths rather than weaknesses (Horn & Wong, 2016). All the participants in my study described in positive terms, how they make meaning of their parenting experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. Throughout the study all participants discussed how well behaved their high school adolescent males were at school as evidenced by getting high scores in their school grades, and in the community by treating others with respect. They described how their sons had managed to stay away from using drugs, and hanging out with the wrong crowds. Each participant focused on the positive experiences in their lives and the lives of their adolescent sons.

Religion played an important role in informing the participants' positive attitudes. Root Luna, Van Tongeren, and Witvliet (2017) suggested that there is a connection between positive psychology and religion because both systems emphasize a virtuous life in which an individual does not brag or boast about their accomplishments. The findings of my study converge with the assertion of these researchers because the majority of participants in my study did not accept credit for raising well behaved high school adolescent males. The participants in my study expressed how much they relied on religion to positively cope with raising their sons under harsh conditions.

Most participants also attributed the origin of their parenting strengths to how they were brought up. Participants reported that they were raised in families where rules were strictly enforced by both the parents and villagers, children were taught to respect elders, and adults had an obligation to discipline the children when necessary. As a result, participants used their upbringing experiences to model the way they raised their sons. Similarly, Medne, Jansone-Ratinika, and Dinka (2017) found that mothers were more likely to use their own upbringing experiences in raising their own children. Everri, Mancini, and Fruggeri (2015) found that parental monitoring increased the positive impact of healthy family functioning on adolescent familiar responsibility and buffered the negative impact of problematic family functioning. All the participants in my study shared suggestions for other single parents to monitor their adolescent males adolescent. The participants stated that knowing the whereabouts of their sons, their sons' friends, and their friends' parents helped promote a sense responsibility among their sons. In turn, all participants felt inclined to model the type of deportment they wanted to see in their children's actions and behaviors.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of this present study, there are also a few limitations. First, the sample size was small because I used IPA, whereby the sample sizes are usually small to provide the researcher the opportunity to get detailed phenomenological accounts of participant data (Wagstaff et al., 2014). For this reason, I chose eight participants for this study. Second, because only single immigrant mothers of high school adolescent males

were involved in this study, the findings may not apply to other Southern African families from more diverse educational backgrounds.

Third, as an immigrant mother, it is possible that my values, my biases, and thoughts were represented in the study, and hence, influenced the study outcomes. Although I bracketed my biases and past experiences, to allow participants' lived experiences to evolve, I also consciously used my familiarity with this population to help single immigrant mothers realize that I understood what they were telling me.

Finally, because in my study I used the IPA methodology to interpret how participants make sense of their lived experiences of being single immigrant mothers working and raising adolescent males, there is a possibility that researchers who are not familiar with qualitative studies may doubt the significance of the present study's findings. I stated the research questions broadly and openly to provide the participants the opportunity to describe in detail how they make sense of their lived experiences raising non-aggressive high school adolescent males under harsh living conditions.

Recommendations

Although previous research indicated positive youth adjustments among families that provide adequate parental monitoring, social support, and warmth, the same body of literature did not discuss parenting experiences among single Southern African immigrant mothers, thus indicating a gap in literature. My study contributed to addressing this gap, and also added some new insights into what these mothers do positively to raise successful sons.

I recommend that policy makers from the department of Mental Health, high school administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists need to develop collaborative home-school-community partnerships that are designed to help single mothers identify ways of monitoring the activities of their high school adolescent males attending school in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Policy makers should develop orientation programs for single immigrant mothers who are coming into the country for the first time, informing these mothers about the interventions that have been successfully used by the participants in my study.

Future research should focus on the development of parenting programs and trainings for single immigrant mothers from Southern Africa and single immigrant mothers from other countries. The current study should be repeated using quantitative studies to allow for generalizability to a larger population of immigrant families headed by single mothers.

Implications

The findings of this study add to the rapidly expanding field of positive psychology. This study contributed to my understanding of how single immigrant mothers make sense of their experiences of working and raising high school adolescent males in low socioeconomic neighborhoods.

Positive Social Change

The findings from the present study have implications for potential positive social change on the individual level, organizational level, and at the societal level. At the individual level, the results of the present study provided single Southern African

immigrant mothers a voice to describe how they make meaning of their parenting experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community.

At the organizational level the results of this study are important for the development of prevention and intervention programs targeting single Southern African immigrant mothers, and perhaps, other single immigrant mothers from various ethnic groups. The knowledge about the parenting strengths of these single Southern African immigrant mothers can help policy makers plan their training programs according to the identified needs of these families. Policy makers can develop collaborative home-school-community partnerships that are designed to help single immigrant mothers identify ways of monitoring the activities of their high school adolescent males attending school in low socioeconomic neighborhoods.

At the societal level, the findings of this study indicated that individualized interventions for single mothers might be one way to decrease further difficulties in homes that are headed by single immigrant mothers, and thus increase youth positive adjustments. Understanding and improving the parenting skills of single immigrant mothers in the United States may inform the development of protective factors for decreasing adolescent aggressive behaviors.

Theoretical Implications

Consistent with the goals of positive psychology (see Seligman et al., 2000), the present study highlights the importance of identifying and developing single Southern African immigrant mothers' strengths and virtues. Providing single Southern African

immigrant mothers a voice to describe their parenting experiences raising high school adolescent males who do not exhibit aggressive behaviors in school and in the community, can help highlight single immigrant mothers' strengths.

From a positive psychology perspective this study can provide policy makers from the San Bernardino County department of Mental Health, high school administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists with insight into developing training programs that can encourage single immigrant mothers to continue leading by example for their families (e.g., parenting approaches that emphasize open and effective communication) so as to encourage better social problem-solving skills and social self-efficacy in adolescent males.

Conclusion

In my study I used an IPA with eight single immigrant mothers to explore how they make sense of their lived experiences working and raising high school adolescent males who have not exhibited aggressive behaviors at school and in the community in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. By using an IPA approach I elicited rich , thick descriptions of what it is that these single immigrant mothers said they were doing right to raise adolescent males with non-aggressive behaviors in school and in the community. Given the vast body of literature that supported the notion that poverty and exposure to violence negatively influenced the behavior of children, my study provided a unique step in understanding the parenting processes that underlie raising successful male adolescents.

My study added to the literature in the field of positive psychology due to the fact that while many high school adolescent males are negatively impacted by the poor environment, inadequate parental monitoring, and exposure to violence, there are single Southern African immigrant mothers whose high school adolescent males do not get in trouble at school and in the community in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. I contend that the single immigrant mothers in my study whose high school adolescent males thrive and do not get in trouble at school and in the community, are strong women who had confidence in part because of the support they got from their strengths and their sons' active participation in church programs. My participants led by example and knew the benefits of parental monitoring. These single mothers obtained strength from their reliance on cultural resources when familial support systems were not available.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Thank you for participating in the interview. I would like to begin by asking you several questions. If you are not comfortable with answering any questions, this is okay and you do not need to respond. All your responses are confidential. You will not be exposed to adverse conditions at any time through the research and your wellbeing will not be compromised.

1. How many children do you have?

2. How many of your children live with you right now?

3. How long have you lived in the US?

    a. Where did you live before?

4. How long have you lived in this area?

5. Where do you work?

    a. How many days per week?

6. Tell me about your typical day as a single mother.

    a. Who else is helping you to raise your child?

    b. In what way?

7. Describe your experience as full time employee.

8. Tell me what it is like to raise your son by yourself.

9. How do you describe positive behavior of your male child?

10. What do you consider as your strengths in raising your child?

11. When was the last time the school called you for your child's behavior?

12. How does your neighborhood influence the way you raise your child?

13. What role does religion play in the way you raise your son?

14. Describe how your life would be different if you were raising your male child in a different location.

15. What are the most serious dangers faced by adolescent males in your neighborhood?

16. With whom do you talk about the dangers in your neighborhood?

    a. When do you have these discussions?

17. Before we conclude this interview, what is it about your experience in your neighborhood that you think influences how you raise your son that we have not discussed?

    a. What do you do to try to prevent your neighborhood from negatively influencing your child's behavior?

18. If you were to give advice to another single mother raising a male child in your neighborhood, what would that be?