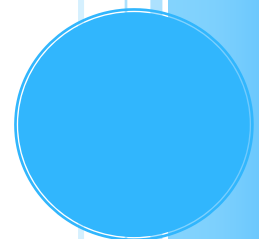


[SINGLE FATHERS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES]

Summary of Results

Dr Bronwyn Harman



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study is part of a five year research program that examines the life experiences of parents. This stage examined single fathers in Australia. Data was collected in 2011/2012.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited via online forums (such as bubhub.com.au), social media (Twitter and Facebook), personal contacts, and snowballing. They were drawn from all states and territories Australia wide. Eighteen men participated in this study.

THE SURVEY

Participants were invited to complete an online survey of open-ended questions designed to allow them to share their stories and lived experiences as parents. This enabled parents to tell the story in the way they wanted it told.

RESULTS

Several key themes emerged from the data.

Custody: The participants believe the Australian Family Law Court favours mothers, with some reporting spending tens of thousands of dollars on legal fees, fighting for basic access rights. Further, fathers are ordered to pay maintenance to their ex-partners, even when 50/50 custody arrangements are in place.

Education Department: The participants reported that schools fail to inform them of events involving their child/ren, such as assemblies, teacher interviews, and excursions. Continued requests by the fathers for information had limited success.

Society: The participants said they are viewed negatively by society, a “failure”, “with suspicion”, and “rejected”. The participants explained that this is because there is an incorrect but pervasive view that only mothers know how to parent. Support groups for single fathers are not readily available.

Family: The participants reported they were frequently excluded from family events, such as children’s birthday parties, by their ex-partners.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Despite obstacles, the participants were buoyed by small successes, and continue to fight to remain part of their children’s lives. The fathers of now adult children

enjoyed strong relationships with those children. The participants, in all cases, believed their efforts to maintain contact with their children were worthwhile, despite personal sacrifices made.

QUERIES

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