Fathering by singles

Qualitative views on single fathers’ parental roles regarding discrepancies between norms and practices

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Abstract

The aim of this qualitative study is to look into the experiences of four single fathers in the Stockholm area, regarding how they perceive their situations as fathers before and after their disruptions of their previous unions, societal norms around them; if there are discrepancies between normative pressures and the possible day to day practices available for them to live.

A masculinities perspective is applied for analyzing interviews made with the fathers, drawing on previous findings, mainly the omnipresent hegemonic masculinity but under which is also found the transnational masculinity and the child oriented masculinity. These masculinities are used as a back-drop against which the empiric material is viewed and analyzed in the search of the fathers’ views on their life worlds’ discrepancies between normative pressures and societal discourse, in comparison with the boundaries set up by their day to day practices, which limit their possible choices of action.

The results show that there are discrepancies between different external pressures connected to norms for the fathers and that this at the individual level can at times cause internalized conflicts. A select few topics for future research in the field of single fathers’ fatherhoods are suggested, which conclude the study.

Key words

Fatherhood, gender, masculinities, hegemony, norms.

Thank you!

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The levels of disruptions of marriages and marriage like unions in Sweden have been rising over recent decades (Andersson, 2002). This combined with increasing levels of education and labor market participation of women, leading to less dependency on their spouses partly through higher degrees of their economic emancipation, is used by Jensen (forthcoming) as a foundation for a discussion about how family formation patterns and conditions for parenting have changed. She describes that an overview of the young of today suggests that they hold an ambivalent stance towards children. Fathering, on an aggregate level, has gone through changes. In recent years an increased disparity between men and fathers has evolved, in the sense that fewer men become fathers but those men who do become parents father more children (Op. cit.), crude birth rates\(^1\) remaining relatively stable (Santos, 1996).

Jensen (forthcoming) describes how men have more choices available to them than before, and how their situation differs from that of women. She unveils how the situation for men, perhaps as somewhat of a paradox, may limit their willingness to become fathers and she notes that “for men fatherhood has developed into becoming a risk project” (p.141). Decisions made by men may affect women and vice versa when it comes to family formations; there is an intertwining of decisions, causality and effect (Op. cit). Individual choices may change and yet structural patterns may remain relatively unscathed.

The present paper studies relations between single fathers from disrupted family unions and their child/ren in their societal context. Through that the study closes in on masculinity and hegemony, focusing on discrepancies between the transnational business masculinity, as Connell (1996,1998, see section 2.2.2) calls it, and the child oriented masculinity described by Bekkengen (2003, see section 2.2.3), but also the differences between ideal types of behavior in correspondence to Connell’s and Bekkengen’s categories as well as the day to day practices people experience.

\(^1\) Crude birth rates do not take sex or age into account and may therefore give a good overview but without revealing descriptive details about the fertility situation.
1.2 Aim of the study and research questions
The aim of the study is to gain insight to how disruptions of family unions may affect relations between the fathers partaking in the study and their children, but also to find out about the fathers’ own views on how they as fathers acted in relation to the normative father role before and after the dissolutions of their unions and the impacts of that in their surroundings. From this aim the following questions emanate:

- Do the fathers feel that other people view them differently since they became single parents, if so, how?
- How do the single fathers perceive the children’s feelings about the relationships with themselves?
- Are there discrepancies between the practice of fatherhood and the norms and discourse surrounding it?

1.3 Limitations
This study focuses single fathers, from disrupted heterosexual marriages or cohabiting relations, and their relations with their children, but also with their overall surroundings when it comes to normative pressures, expectations as well as practices. This is filtered through the fathers’ perceptions, looking into possible discrepancies between ideals and practices and thus possibly perceived costs of answering up to normative father role ideals.

1.4 Disposition
Immediately below is an overview on terms relevant as background for chapter two which contains the theoretic foundation of the paper. Thereafter, chapter three describes the respondents of the study and also issues regarding procedure and choice of method. Chapter four presents the empiric material and the analysis. Presentations of results are found in chapter five. Chapter six concludes the work in looking back at the aim of the study and the research questions, connecting them to the result with a discussion. Finally a few topics within the field are identified as suitable for further research.
1.5 The Lifeworld

In order to successfully advance understanding of such multi faceted issues as the family in general and fatherhood in particular it is recommendable to keep in mind that individuals form their behaviors and lives with their experiences and expectations influencing them. And that they do so in interaction with the world available to them and around them (Berger & Luckmann, 2007), which has been called the lifeworld of individuals.

1.5.1 Socialization

When people grow up they go through socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 2007). It is a process in which is learnt how to understand the world, what is right/wrong, important and unimportant. [This is learnt from (in order of importance) parent/s or other main care giver/s, adult/s and child/ren, relative/s and friend/s that are important to the ones growing up (so called significant others)]. In short, the ideas of society as they are best to be understood from the viewpoint of the one growing up. Socialization takes part in steering the development of ideas about the world, opinions and attitudes within individuals, institutionalizing them (Op. cit.).

Wishes as well as expectations affect the attitudes people hold (Montgomery, 1993) and may affect their behavior so they start to form habits which in turn may lead to the establishing of long term and thus self- reinforcing patterns of behavior, affecting entire life styles. Attitudes form in interaction between considerations of what is right or wrong at the individual level, and the values of the individual. They are reinforced as a result of the acts performed based on them. Attitudes therefore influence people in their perceptions and in how they interpret sensory inputs (Myers, 2005, p. 133 pp.; Passer & Smith 2007, p. 618 pp.; Hakim, 2002). An extension of this is that socialization helps structure/limit the frame in which individual ideas and values that people have are held, and thus sets up paths for people along which behavioral tendencies may be found (Berger & Luckman, 2007; Passer & Smith, 2007). Plantin (2003) describes how individuals’ ideas are influenced by and partly based on their cultural belonging and how that takes part in shaping their thoughts and behavior.

1.5.2 Cognitive schemes

Humans tend to automatically and subconsciously simplify their lifeworlds by interpreting perceptual impressions in categorical manners by creating ideal types (cognitive schemes) of whatever needs categorizing so that reality can be dealt with rationally (Friedman &
Schustack, 2006). Through cognitive categorizations, ideas are formed about how the world is organized, and as a result new stimuli are added more quickly to old categories and with more ease than if there had been no categories already in place (Op. cit.). This saves mental resources. It may lead to forming of mental stereotypes. The term stereotypes has been said to describe thoughts and ideas concerning traits and behaviors that people hold. And also that the descriptions may be right or wrong, at a conscious or unconscious level, but that they take part in placing individuals and/or their attribute/s within mental frameworks (ideal typical cognitive schemes) and thus characterize them (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

### 1.6 Parenting

Increasing divorce rates in Sweden make children of divorced parents grow up in circumstances different from what in previous decades has been the case (Andersson, 2002). Normative ideas about how men and women, mothers and fathers as well as families are supposed to behave shape parental behaviors. When society changes so may also these ideas, and consequently also norms, change (Hirdman, 2001; Jensen, forthcoming). How parents strive to lead their lives in accordance with what may be suitable according to roles they are taking on themselves as well as given by their surroundings, plus structural limitations (from for example economy, legislation and/or labor market and social support systems) are also factors that impact parental behavior (Smart & Shipman, 2004). As Rashke (1987, p 600) says “factors in the industrialization and urbanization processes /.../ influenced the divorce rate”.

In Sweden fertility has over time gone through changes (and also overall in Europe), it has decreased since the end of the 19th century (Jensen, forthcoming). Lesthaege (1995) means that the reasons for reduced fertility is to be found in the changed thougths and ideas occupying women concerning what is important in life, but other opinions also exist (Jensen, forthcoming), some for example concerning economic aspects.

The increasing numbers of annual family disruptions (Andersson, 2002) may lead to assumptions along the line that implications for those concerned do not have to be considered to be as severe as they used to be when the disruption rates were lower. According to Amato (2000), the bulk of knowledge in the field of family sociology suggests that disruption of families still generally leads to more or less grave consequences for all concerned, both adults and children. There are exceptions, even though not so common.
1.7 Families

The nuclear family has been the normative family model in western societies in general for a long time (Blood & Wolfe 1960; Becker, 1981; 1993), accordingly that has been the case in Sweden (Duvander, 1999; Plantin, 2007). The most common family formation is based on unions between heterosexual adults in which they have (or, in many cases, will have) child/ren. Traditionally the nuclear family model has been the norm for family formation and it still shapes legislation and debate and overall ideas and wishes that people have about family life (Andersson, 2002; Jensen, forthcoming; Connell, 1996; Smart & Shipman, 2004). Legislation, advertising and society in a broad sense tend to count on people striving toward that goal (Gähler, 1998), even if single parent households are increasing in numbers (Andersson, 2002). There are of course a large number of reasons as to why unions may disrupt (Gähler, 1998), lack of emotions perhaps the first to spring to mind. But couples can have several bindings other than affection, that keep them together or not, for example legal, or monetary (Rashke, 1987).

1.7.1 Changes of family form norms over time

Norms about family formation started to change in the Nordic countries with Sweden as the forerunner in the 1970’s, much due to the transformations of the labor market with the introduction of part time jobs, and the development of the daycare system (Förskoleverksamhet/the popular term being Dagis) (Hirdman, 2001). There were also taxation changes that all together made it easier financially and legally to disrupt nuclear families than what had been the case before these changes took place (Gähler, 1998). These changes resulted in a temporary peak of divorces followed by an annually heightened level of disruptions of family unions. Over time the annual divorces and separations has risen in Sweden (Jensen, forthcoming; Andersson, 2002). At the turn of the last century, in 1900, 0.5 of per 1000 marriages ended in divorce. In 1996 the corresponding figure had increased 25 times to 13 per 1000 marriages in that year (Gähler, 1998).

1.7.2 Marriage

Most modern marriages come about and are built on emotional foundations (Gähler, 1998). However, what is to be considered a true marriage or not is perhaps not as clear cut as it may seem at first glance as Gähler shows. For example he points to situations where people are married but live separate lives and possibly not even share a mutual address, but they are still considered being married. There may be stronger or weaker norms refraining people from
disrupting marriages. The consequences for breaking norms may differ depending on how firmly a given norm is rooted within the individual, the family and the community, and also depending on how common it is to break the norm (Op. cit.).

### 1.7.3 Cohabitation

As the normative pressure of forming nuclear families through marriage has decreased over time cohabitation has become increasingly common, even though cohabiting unions are not as stable as marriages (Andersson, 2002). It has been suggested that cohabitation in some ways may be considered to be like a form of trial marriage (Gähler, 1998). That taken into account, the Swedish marriage/divorce ratio may not be as straightforward in comparison with other countries where cohabitation is not as common as in Sweden.
2. Theory

Below I present the theoretical core of the essay. Starting out by describing the term gender, the scope of attention is then turned to the sub category masculinity before further divided into, in chronological order, the hegemonic-, the transnational- and finally the child oriented masculinity types. Summing up the theory chapter are accounts about fatherhoods as well as changes of norms and father’s self-images.

2.1 Gender

The term gender can be comprehended in many ways and its generally understood meaning has changed over time. However, its meaning can be said to deal with the characteristics associated with how people perceive what is female and what is male (Hirdman, 2001; Myers, 2006). Gender identity is an individual awareness about, and an acceptance of, the sex to which one belongs. This identity is partially formed through socialization and can be related to personality traits and attitudes, among other things. The gender categories carry with them strong stereotypical ideas and attitudes as to what behavior is acceptable and to be expected (Östlund, 2006).

Connell (1996, 1998) shows that what seems to be a fixed frame for socially acceptable gendered behavior at a given time in a given cultural setting may be different in another time and/or another cultural setting. And also that it is about how individuals relate to how they think that men and women in general should behave in given situations, stereotypical in that it is about how individuals in general tend to believe that people behave in given situations (see also Williams & Best, 1990, p. 15).

Throughout the world it is common for people to rate women as being less aggressive, dominant and driven than men (Myers, 2005). Gender based behavior is complex to understand and explain, in part since “gender operates at the individual, interactional and institutional levels” (Wharton, 2005, p. 229), something which is also supported by Tyrkkö (1999).
2.2 Masculinities

Men can be men in many ways (Connell, 1996, 1998; Jensen, forthcoming; Klinth, 2003). Connell (1996,1998) goes on by saying that “there is no masculine unit that is present in all societies and from which we can make generalizations” (p.662). Masculinity as a term is an aspect of the theoretical frame of gender (West & Zimmerman,1987). Connell (1996,1998, 2005) also notes that there are different masculinities within the system of gender and that they carry various degrees of influence with them, and that the relations between them are not solid but that they are subject to more or less change over time. Hill (2003) discusses the Swedish situation in the mid 1970:s when efforts were made to create a new role for males, emancipating them and making them more harmonious than they supposedly were before the efforts were made. Male groups were formed to discuss the male role, and how to evolve it and masculinity. The idea being that the liberation of males would create a possibility of having more equality between the genders, the goal being an equal society in which there was equality, without gender based role categories. This was opposed by many and the ideas did not affect the ongoing discourse more than possibly at the margin (Op. cit.). But it is noteworthy that at the same time there was the occurrence of different currents of ideas on how male behavior could and should best be carried out.

According to Connell (1998), societal models historically originating in Europe and North America largely dominate the globe (but are now subjected to some merging with input from other regions as well) have come to connect femininity with the domestic regions of life and masculinity with the outside world and money. This impacts fathering, along with the boundaries set up by the organization of society, but so do also the day to day practices that Heidengren (2007, pp. 125) means hold a structuring logic within their ongoing continuance (more on fathers’ parenting below, starting with section 2.5.1). That there is tension in the relations between different masculinities is well worth underlining again as it is also a core aspect of the theoretical foundation from which this paper stems (Connell, 1998).

The main focus here is the dynamic scope of tension between the perceived normative pressures of expected fatherhood behaviors that are expressed in different ways depending on the masculinity of choice, and the discrepancies of the everyday practices of the same masculinities. The masculinities studied are the ones that best suited the scope of the paper.

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2 Author’s translation
2.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity

In his work, Connell (1996) identifies multiple masculinities and he argues convincingly that the relations between them are of importance, especially the gender based relations between men (pp. 100). He defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practices that contains the for the moment accepted answer to the question of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (p. 101). He argues that hegemonic masculinity is never fixed in its position but that it upholds its position in a system of gender and other societal based strata, a rather transient position but which nevertheless maintains overall dominance. The collective image of the leading levels of power in society (he gives the examples of the business arena, the military, and government) typically emanate from men and together these areas produce an image of dominant masculinities of authority and power (even if the individuals upholding these hegemonic marked positions may not at the individual level live their lives in such a fashion). There is also an underlying notion of the possibility to use violent force, not necessarily outspoken, but nevertheless there, that supports the image in many cases. Connell goes on by stating that there probably needs to be a correlation between collective cultural beliefs/norms in society and institutional power, at least at the collective level, in order for hegemony to come into place. The way things are masculinity as a whole keeps its dominance over femininity as a whole, even if different masculinities become more or less dominant over time as public opinion changes, as long as there is an acceptance of the prevailing structure.

2.2.2 Transnational business masculinity

There are many examples of differences in the contents of masculinities, which all have their built-in logics and work within their own paradigms (Connell, 1996, 1998). Masculinities are generally not homogenous and historically fixed or created (Connell, 1998). If they are, they are likely to come under increased pressure of remodeling. Over time one type of masculinity has gained strength and influence, growing faster as mass media has grown on a global scale. That is the masculinity of the international business man. The dress code of virtually all political leaders is the dress code of the western business executive, indicative of a certain standing, influence, and power in society. Hegemony is however always subject to change and the masculinities with it, although they coexist.

3 Author’s translation
Mass media helps convey a message and thus set a global standard, a marker of power against which other masculinities are measured, as well as femininities and other societal strata (Connell, 1998). Power relations have also had to do with how masculinities have been perceived over time. To deem men as being more or less manly has been a way of ranking them in importance. The international business man is a man that is expected to be able to work at all times and may also be virile and have many children, an entrepreneur at heart, that opposes paying high taxes. In the equation of the transnational business masculinity lies an implicit demand on another caregiver than himself to take care of his children.

2.2.3 Child oriented masculinity

According to Bekkengen (2003), all men do not strive for identical ways of being men. Some seek alternative ways of life. She reasons about men that focus on their child/ren and on being at home with it/them. She means that since the discourse in Sweden has over time become increasingly focused on the welfare of children and on children’s rights, so has also parenting, naturally with implications for fathering. She concludes that this does not mean that the child oriented masculinity is the same as increasing equality between the sexes, merely that masculinity adapts to surrounding pressures and possibilities and that men get to choose what type of fatherhood they want to exercise. The child oriented masculinity is within the discourse and from the outlook of the father the same as having a good and close relation between father and child, a focus that over times has started shifting from one sided economic support and responsibilities to more of caring and rights. “But a child oriented masculinity may very well mean that the child orientation is stronger on a discursive level than in practice, or that it only exists on the first without having effect on the last mentioned level” (p.190). She makes a point about how ideas along the line of child orientation is a matter of internal conviction that is not necessarily connected with fatherhood per se (see 2.5.1 below).

Continuing in a similar frame of ideas, Jensen (forthcoming) states that some of the different groups of men that become fathers are also generally becoming increasingly active in their fathering. She also adds that yet other groups may not be becoming more active as fathers and more men than before have little or no contact with children at all. Further, she notes how the divide between men and fathers has, at least seemingly, widened. In her analysis men who become fathers and are interested in maintaining a good relation with their children seem to be developing a more child-oriented masculinity than what has been seen in earlier times, a
masculinity which displays and values/seeks emotional ties with the child/ren to a higher degree than before. According to her, as structural possibilities have changed, the very idea of fatherhood is likely to have gone through a transformation, (see also Gillis, 2009) and thus also the perceived implications of becoming a father within men potentially wanting to father a child.

Also according to Jensen (forthcoming) the, brusquely expressed, cost/benefit analysis of parenting seems to have changed for men more than for women over time, making fewer men interested in fathering as the perceived advantages of fatherhood do not outweigh its perceived disadvantages to as many men as before, (a trend potentially at risk of affecting the fertility rate of society as a whole). She also discusses that the demographic point of view in analyses of fertility tend to leave out men but that it is amongst men that “most remarkable changes” (p. 139) have taken place over recent decades, and the fact is that fewer men become fathers but father more children, not necessarily with the same women.

2.2.4 Fatherhoods

As mentioned above (section 2.2) there are different masculinities that have implications on the individual level for men’s values. The Swedish discourse has become increasingly encouraging of upholding and improving children’s well-being and children’s rights, and over time and in an ideological sense, children can be said to have been given higher value (Bekkengen, 2003). At least that is the case in theory, if not always mirrored in the practices of real life. This heightened societal focus on children’s rights is in Bekkengen’s view something that can be seen as promoting the child oriented masculinity and as something that is likely to have effect on contemporary fatherhoods and their implementations.

The discourse and the actual practices that fathers exhibit may differ (Bekkengen, 2003). Discoursive pressure makes it difficult for men not to portray themselves as being child oriented, at least to some degree, even when they at the same time relate themselves and their practices against the measures of the transnational business masculinity within the hegemonic structure of power relations and strata (Connell, 1996; Bekkengen, 2003). So that does not necessarily mean that they carry their child orientation through in their practices. Or it can mean that they practice a child orientation, but to a lesser degree than the demands set up by the discourse would suggest. Of course there are also fathers that are child oriented and practice child orientation. For them, according to Bekkengen (Op. cit.), it seems to be a matter
of inner conviction of what is right and wrong with regards to how they themselves want to be in their father roles, and they have made their minds up about this long before the children where even born. A quote from her sums this up: “To represent a child oriented masculinity does not therefore presuppose fatherhood of one’s own, nor does fatherhood automatically imply a child orientated masculinity” (pp.190-191).

2.2.5 Changes of norms and fathers’ self – images
When the norm is that the father is to be the breadwinner and society is by and large organized around the idea of the single earner model (Esping-Andersen, 1990), the self image held by the average father is likely to be in line with, striving and aiming for that. When the norm has changed as is the case in Sweden to a dual-earner model (Op. cit.), the average adult (including average fathers) may also have changed her views on what is the right way of behaving when it comes to how to arrange life, earnings, and fatherhood (Passer& Smith, 2007) The idea of fatherhood, what it means to the individual to become a father, and the contents of fathering may on a deep internal, maybe implicit level, mean another thing today than it used to (Gillis, 2000) when norms concerning family arrangements were set on the single earner model.
3. Method

3.1 Procedure

A qualitative method has been used to conduct the investigation. It has been done through semi-structured thematic interviews with four fathers (at separate times and places), allowing the respondents to elaborate on ideas and thoughts if they wanted to, but overall keeping the interviews similar to one another. The method was well suited for gaining understanding in this case at the individual level, since what is explored is a phenomenon based on specific criteria. The results cannot be said to be representative for others than the respondents themselves and they should therefore not be extrapolated (Edling & Hedström, 2003). The criteria were that the respondents were single fathers active in their fathering, that the dissolutions of their unions with the mothers were not too recent (the most recently disrupted union was five years previous to the time of the interview), and that interviews could be conducted within a reasonable time frame. Possible problems of emotionally based bias due to dissolutions being too recent was deemed not an issue needing to be dealt with as could have been the case should one (or more) of the fathers have come out of his relationship with the mother of his child/ren more recently. But of course, time passed is in itself no guarantee that there is no risk of emotional bias even if the risk may be reduced (Myers, 2005).

The fathers were contacted through two organizations; Makalösaföräldrar (www.makalosa.org), and Senior net (www.seniornet.se). The former is a nation-wide organization for single parents. On their homepage, inquiries were made about single fathers that would be interested in participating in this study. The fathers that answered first were the ones included in the material. Three of the fathers were reached this way. Senior net is a country-wide free-of-charge educational organization targeting mainly senior citizens that are interested in learning more about computers and communication. One father was contacted through them.

The interviews took place in homes, over telephone and on a quiet evening in a pub. The length of the interviews varied between 25 to 75 minutes and were carried out within a period of two weeks, the lengthiest interview so long mainly because too much unexpected sudden noise forced a change of place for the interview. The respondents were given information about the nature of their participation and the aim of the study beforehand. The interviews
were recorded and then transcribed, coded and analyzed with guidance found in Aspers (2007). Scientific interviews differ from everyday conversations in that they need purpose and accuracy in ways the others do not. How to handle this challenge of making the respondents open up and share their experiences is up to the interviewer. The ambience during the interviews was relaxed and pleasant, the respondents seemed at ease, but nevertheless the readiness to talk varied between the respondents, themes and questions.

The role of the interviewer is to get extensive valid information regarding the interest at hand, preferably exhaustive, and to do so the interviewer must consider how the respondent will react to his or her presence (Bryman, 2002). This was done through matters such as choice of clothing, the respondents got to choose venue and times for the interviews, and tone of voice. The fact that the interviewer and the respondents shared many things in common may have had an effect on the answers, or how the interviewer carried out the interviews. Things may for instance have been taken for granted because of the shared gender belonging and masculinity structures (see previous chapter) in a way that would not have been the case if the interviewer had differed more from the fathers. For example, if the interviewer had been a woman, younger, older, not a parent, or lived elsewhere. The tension between masculinities or the subordination of women as is stipulated within the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity could have played out another role or not than it may have done. It is also quite possible that a deeper understanding of being a single father with regards to the aim and research questions could have been reached, had there been larger divergences amongst the fathers, or, at least another understanding.

The interviews, after initial background questions, were divided into four themes, corresponding with the headlines in chapter four, each one containing a number of pre-constructed questions with possibilities of follow up questions. The idea was to let the respondents describe their subjective realities through their own words but at the same time to keep a similar structure between the interviews. That is beneficial when wanting to keep the material within reasonable limits, avoiding its swelling (Aspers, 2007) and avoid the analysis from overflowing in richness. The background questions covered areas such as ages of the fathers, mothers and child/ren, education, occupation, living arrangements, and also for example issues regarding the length of the relationship before they became with child, and when the first child was born, length of the relationship before its dissolution, length of time since separation.
When wanting to find out about how people feel and think, and to gain insights on their views, the best way to get to that knowledge is to ask them (Kvale, 1997). The analysis can be said to have started already at the time of preparing how to conduct the data gathering, and what themes and questions to use. Codes used were inductively identified through the material in addition to the partial pre-coding already in place due to the themes invented. According to Kvale, transcribing is a process in which interpretation is present. In this case interpretation was also present when quotes were used in the analysis as they were translated by the author, naturally with the intention of making them true to the respondent’s intended meaning, but nevertheless they were filtered through the vessel of the author. In the quotes /…/ signals that one or some words have been omitted without changing the overall meaning of the sentence.

After the completion of an interview the collected material was transcribed. Other facts were added as well, setting a frame in which the transcribed material was to be read and understood, to enhance the possibility of deeper understanding of the meaning of what was said. These facts were comprised by for example notes regarding objective circumstances like the date, the location of the interview, but also subjectively grounded impressions such as if the conversation ran along smoothly or if there was tension. Together with the transcribed material this information was used in acquiring codes and assessing the material.

### 3.2 Ethics

The respondents were given information about the ethical principles stipulated by Vetenskapsrådet/The Swedish Research Counsil (2002). And, accordingly, the four principles (quite abbreviated in the following) dealing with issues of information (what the aim of the research is, and the interviewee’s part of it), informed consent (participants can freely decide whether they wish to partake or not in the process), confidentiality (information about and gathered from all participants are treated with as great confidentiality as is possible), and usage (information gathered about individuals is only to be used for research purposes) were gone over and agreed upon to be underlying throughout the entire research process.

### 3.3 Methodological limitations

Qualitative studies tend to be limited as to reliability and validity of their findings according to Bryman (2002) and Kvale (1997). The purpose with the qualitative research at hand has
been to gain rich, at best even exhaustive insights on a deep level found within the fathers in relation to their implicit or explicit insights in relation to their status as single fathers. The analysis of the dynamics of individual observations makes that possible in a way that analysis of quantitative data does not (Kvale, 1997; Aspers, 2007). This being a qualitative study makes the results such as that they are not possible to generalize or extrapolate to a wider population than the individuals themselves. Quantitative method would not have been as sufficient to investigate the phenomenon given the research questions posed.
4. Empirical findings

In this chapter I present and analyze the results. The subjective experiences of the fathers will be discussed and compared with reference to the aim of the paper and also in order to get an in depth understanding of their views regarding the overall questions the paper seeks to find answers to. The material is divided into four themes; the father norm – in thought, the father norm – in practice, practical experiences of the children, and relations fathers/children. The themes as presented below (sections 4.2 – 4.5) grew out of merging the theories of chapter two with the research interest when constructing the interview guide. But before getting to the themes, there are presentations of the respondents to get somewhat acquainted with their respective specific backgrounds as well as their present situations.

4.1 The respondents

Active interviews were made with four fathers at ages 35, 42, 43 and 68 years of age. Two of the fathers had gone through union dissolutions which they described as having been very difficult with continuous conflict after the finalization of the break-up, whereas the other two had gone through union disruptions with, as described by them, less turmoil and conflict involved. For increased readability the fathers go by pseudonyms in the following: Alexander (35 years of age), Bengt (42), Christian (43), and Johan (68). Time passed since break up from the respective mothers of the children varied between 5 (Christian), 7 (Bengt), 10 (Alexander) and 30 years (Johan).

The fathers vary in ages and experiences. Yet it is possible to loosely define them as white middle class men. Their subjective perceptions about how their unions ended and what has then followed may have changed over time. At focus is their interpretations and perceptions about what are and have been their situations as they see them now.

In Alexander’s case, he and the then mother to be of his child had never lived together during their five-year long relationship when they dissolved their union during the pregnancy. Bengt had a shorter relationship with the mother of his child before the union dissolution. They were together for approximately 1.5 years in total and she became pregnant within something like 5 months according to Bengt’s estimate. Christian had lived together with the mother of his children for 3 years before she became pregnant with the first of their three children. They
were a couple for approximately 17 years altogether before their marriage dissolved some 5 years ago. Johan and the mother of his child had been together approximately for one year before they were expecting a child and their relationship as a couple lasted in the vicinity of 6 years before they separated.

Alexander is the father of a nine year old girl with no siblings. There have been discussions between the parents since she was born on how to divide the time of the girl’s residing between them. His point of view has been all along that an equal division is best. She has opposed that, which initially resulted in limited contact between him and his daughter. He did not want to take the matter to court to claim his right to father his child half the time, as he thought that the long term consequences of such an action on the relationship between him and his daughter, and him and the mother, were likely to be far more negative than positive. Instead, he chose to bide his time and slowly build up the relations, a strategy that has succeeded. The girl’s time spent with Alexander has over time gradually increased and has almost reached an equal distribution. Alexander and the mother have been on relatively good speaking terms all along and both can and do socialize with mutual friends and acquaintances.

Bengt fathers a daughter aged 8 years. She has a not-by-blood-related sibling on her mother’s side. There was no discussion about where the daughter should live after the union of the parents ended as the mother disappeared into sheltered living with the daughter and did not want to allow Bengt to have any contact with his daughter. He wanted to be a good father and take care of his child as he saw fit. It took a lot of struggle with law and authorities, but within relative haste, in Bengt’s estimate after approximately 6 months, the time was divided equally between the parents so that she came to live one week with her father and one week with her mother. This has however been an ongoing source of conflict as the mother constantly challenges the validity of the decision, albeit it has been decided in court.

Christian has three children. A boy aged 13 and two girls at the ages 16 and 19. The living arrangements for the children started out immediately after the split with two weeks alternate living, one week at the mother’s and one with Christian. It did not take many months, however, before she could not sustain a good environment for them while they were there. So the arrangement has shifted toward them living more with him than with her, increasingly so over time. Christian wishes there could have been and that there could be an equal division of the children’s living arrangements between himself and his former spouse, but it just has not
worked out as it has been evident to him that the children have not always fared well living with the mother as she is emotionally troubled. At the time of the interview the boy stayed with the mother 3–4 days every second week, the younger of the girls went back and forth between the parents and the older girl did not alternate but lived with Christian. The mother has given birth to a half sibling to the children, a boy aged 2.

Johan is the father of a woman aged 35. She is one of his two children. He has another child from a previous relationship with an every-second-week living arrangement. This was also the case with the two children the mother brought with her into the marriage. He shouldered the main responsibility of child-rearing after the marriage was terminated and that remained the case for as long as it was needed. The daughter lived with Johan most of the time but went to stay with the mother every second weekend and this was an arrangement that lasted into the girl’s early teens. Then she started to lose interest in going for the predecided weekends to the mother’s, who on her end wanted to keep and prolong the arrangement and therefore bought a dog as an extra incentive for the child to come to her. The daughter also has another half-sibling on the mother’s side. There are no grudges between the parents. The daughter has become a mother of her own and has good contact with both her parents but the contact is still closer with the father just like it has been all along.

All the fathers were at the time of the interviews residing in the greater Stockholm area, with varying distances to the city center. One lived in the downtown area, two in nearby suburbs yet within the wider city limits and one lived in a community farther away but still within the Stockholm region. The respondents’ living arrangements differed between house and flat and between owning and renting their living quarters. All four interviewees can be categorized in a broad sense as middle class citizens according to the SSYK (variable of occupational category) classification system used by statistics Sweden (www.scb.se). They are or had been working in the following occupations: engineer, computer consultant, foster home care manager and medical doctor. They are as such not representative of the population as a whole, nor has that been the intention in the search for respondents.

4.2 The father norm – in thought

This theme was created in order to search for answers to whether the respondents experience that there are discrepancies regarding their fatherhoods between norms and discourse versus
practice. Alexander has somewhat conflicting views on how the father norm is to be comprehended, the meaning of it, its applications, as well as its implications. When he describes how he perceives the father norm he touches upon an implicit comparison between mothers and fathers: “maybe the dad is slightly more in the background, taking that, as mentioned, economic responsibility…. and is more of a … like a… that protects the family from external forces.

When asked about how he thinks a father norm role model would be he says: “That is probably fathers that have a well defined soft side... a clearly humanitarian or warm side I think...that doesn’t have that wall against the outer world that I just mentioned (author’s note: as described implicitly in the former quote), … but a dad that is keenly aware, present and listens to the child and sees the child’s needs. And who is with the child and plays and does homework and all that”. He thinks that the father’s role should be ideally positioned a bit closer to how he perceives the mother norm to be, than, from his point of view how things are now. He notes a discrepancy in the normative pressures concerning the boundaries and expectations of fatherhood and how he would like to be as a father himself.

Bengt has a slightly different entry point as to how he views the father’s role in the family. He is clear that there are hierarchical gender relations between mothers and fathers, and in describing how he thinks society views their importance in the parental capacity, he positions the father below the mother. This is disturbing for Bengt since he thinks that both parents are equally important for children, in their own rights. Adding to the frustration is that he experiences that his child also thinks so. And also that at the same time he doesn’t think he is given the response from society as a father that he thinks would be the fair response, instead he feels he is always questioned, never really trusted, as he feels that the mother is. He states: “It is the mother that gets to decide more, one feels always as if in a weak position from the beginning I think”. And then with regards to contacts with authorities: “I constantly feel I must show myself to be so able, to fail feels difficult... one always feels questioned. I don’t feel free to relax and to be who I am and want to be. It is always much of a race. Not so much when it comes to my child because that feels relaxed, but when it comes to contacts with the authorities, family court and the likes”.

The fathers interviewed all thought that the norm of what it is to be a father, what it means, and how the father is supposed to behave is to be a parent in his own right but also to
essentially back up the mother. To be in the background and to be the foundation of the family, taking care of the financial as well as other forms of security for the family in line with ideals found with the international business masculinity category. There were some ideas about that there is no difference between the ideal type father and respective mother in how they are valued as parents. There were also, on a more abstract level, the contradictory idea that mothers are more domestically influential than fathers within the family construct who are more influential with what is outside the domestic sphere. This is perfectly in line with Connell’s (1998) description of what is considered to be typically male and typically female domains.

As mentioned in the theoretical background, normative pressures matter for how people feel they are limited in how they can play out their possible behaviors (Berger & Luckmann, 2007). At the same time norms are generally taken for granted and not pondered upon by individuals more than occasionally, they are part of the lifeworld that people experience. In that sense norms are part of individuals’ perceptions of the logic of how things are, and may not be clear to see for people even if the norms envelop them and they are right there in front of them, in plain sight, comprising part of what Berger and Luckmann coined the social stock of knowledge (Op. cit.). So when norms are challenged and thus come into more direct attention, it is not surprising if they become more evident to people than what is generally the case in their practices of their everyday lives. But, if they are not challenged, chances are that norms remain veiled behind the everyday practices that take priority of what gets attention.

4.3 The father norm – in practice

The rituals and practices of everyday life constitute important aspects of what has to be dealt with in life in general and very much so in parenting (Evertsson & Nyman, 2008). Rituals in this context are connected to what people feel are right or wrong actions in given situations whereas practices are based on relatively fixed behavioral patterns that guide people through their days, like a sort of autopilot. Decisions are probably more often made without than with active thinking being involved (Ibid.). Events take place due to passive, or even unconscious, decision making (non-decisions) that over time largely form the individual life worlds (Evertsson & Nyman, 2008; Heidengren, 2007). Logically, when parenting changes from
being one half of a union of two parents to becoming a single’s activity, rituals become more or less affected. Of interest here is how the father norm is perceived in this respect.

Johan describes how he both before and since the separation from the mother has been the main parent. This has increased over time after the dissolution, and he says that the daughter seems to still feel slightly hurt and abandoned by the mother. Before the dissolution the wife took care of laundry and such things which he had to shoulder after he became a single father. He states that he senses that people looked at him as an odd figure thinking that he could probably not really cope, that he as a man was not really suited for parenting: “And then I have a feeling that one may perhaps have thought that people were more critically scrutinizing me as being single and a man, you know”. A similar account was given by Bengt with regards to how he feels he is viewed by others as a single father: “It is like it is self-evident that one can’t wash or cook or be home with kids”.

Christian has, on the other hand, noticed how him being a single father that is in practice the caregiver and sole provider for the children, and that comes quite close to the normative ideal provided through the media images of how a modern child oriented father is supposed to be, has benefits. He described this when answering a question about whether he thinks his fatherhood behavior equals the fatherhood norm after the dissolution: “Yes I could stress that and especially parts of it. I have done that... especially when I have been trying to pick up women in bars. Then I have been able to portray myself as a kind of hero /.../ saying here you see someone who carries the main responsibility because I have a crazy ex wife... and that was actually true”.

Returning to Johan, it could be suggested he rationalizes in fitting his fathering into his view of the self and his own masculinity correlated with his perception of the normative pressures regarding fathering (Berger and Luckman, 2007 about socialization; Connell, 1996, 2008 about masculinities) when he refers to his parental situation and parental behavior: “It sort of felt natural that I took the child, because she was daddy’s child, you see”. After the separation Johan took care of the girl. He and the child moved. They didn’t move very far, to a calm neighborhood with good daycare/preschool. Johan started working part time when he became a single parent. She felt secure at the preschool, was independent enough and she had such good friends and fun at the preschool that she didn’t want to go home when he came to pick her up after work. Before long he went back to working full time.
Johan fathered his daughter responding to circumstances, adjusting his parental behavior to challenges he faced when becoming a single father. What Johan says about how his situation as main caregiver after the dissolution came about stands in possible opposition to some extent to the results presented by Bekkengen (2003). Her results show that men’s parental leaves (and thus taking on the role as main caregiver) tend to be the result of, and rest on, voluntary choices that the men make almost without exceptions, whereas women’s parental leaves are based on adjustments of the male choices made. These are of course not the exact same situations, but interesting to compare. Johan means that it was natural for him to take care of the child, not really that he chose to. The same goes for Christian who means that his aim is close to the child oriented ideals but also that he never had much choice but to step in as he did because of the mother being somewhat dysfunctional as a parent. It is of course possible to argue that both of them could have chosen not to take on the main caregiver roles. But they did.

4.4 Practical experiences of the child/ren
In this section the aim is to look into the practical experiences of the children regarding their perceptions of the respective disbanding of the unions between their parents and the ensuing consequences. The practical experiences of the children are filtered through the impressions their fathers have, and not as valid as first-hand accounts.

Christian describes how his children have had to deal with issues such as lacking rooms of their own, and problems when it comes to meeting new friends. He thinks it is sad for the children that the communication between him and the mother is not so good and that the mother lacks in some qualities: “The sad thing for the children is that they don’t really have a real female role model. /./ I have kind of been forced into being a present father /.../ there has been no alternative”. Immediately after the break up the children were not really able to, and are still not able to bring home friends to the mother in part due to her mental instability and their living arrangements. But, unfortunately they can’t bring friends home to him either. He lives a bit too far away from the school for it to be convenient to bring friends home when the children stay with him. As a result they have become quite isolated. Christian finds this difficult to handle.
Bengt describes how his daughter has been and still is very much affected by the break-up of her parents. There was much turmoil and conflict in connection with the dissolution of the union (and still is even if it has lessened somewhat and is not continuously ongoing at a crisis level). At her mother’s there are two brothers that demand and get a lot of attention. She does not enjoy playing with them. The daughter has told him she feels somewhat brushed aside. He recognizes how it is hard for the daughter to have two separate lives and parents with very different conditions, socially and economically. And it is also a strain for her to continuously change where she lives every second week, but it is what has become normal for her. He thinks she handles it ok considering the situation. He also thinks that to some extent she has her safe haven and place to relax and be herself with him.

Amato (2000) writes about how it can sometimes be a problem for people dissolving their relationships that they among other things face economic hardships. This is to some extent the case for Christian, in spite of him not having a low salary. He has been forced to move around, due to practical problems that stem from the dissolution process. In addition the mother of the children is mentally unstable. He has a child orientation approach but has by external circumstances felt as if he has no choice but to shoulder a larger proportion of the parental responsibilities than he would have wished for could he have chosen freely. The children have ended up isolated as a result from all this. Amato notes how divorcees themselves often have problems with self image and may not be able to give their children the same support as they could have given should they not have become divorced. Accordingly, Christian can be said to have paid a price for his position within the hegemony (Connell, 1996) as a child oriented father (Bekkengen, 2003) as it has forced him by circumstances to accept virtually full parental responsibilities, making him odd in the eyes of his colleagues at work, none of whom is a full time single father.

Bengt has also paid a price but more indirectly than Christian. Bengt’s living arrangements have been more functional and the price paid has been associated with the hurt of his daughter that has come of the ongoing conflict between the parents. He is now part of her life and can therefore do what he can to give her sanctuary and live out his fatherhood ideals as best he can manage. This would not have been possible should he not have stood his ground in demanding parental rights equal to the mother. His child oriented stance is evidently a matter of the inner conviction Bekkengen (2003) talks about.
4.5 Relations between fathers and children

Like in the previous section, the accounts herein are based on the fathers’ beliefs on how the children perceive and have perceived things. The accounts reflect the fathers’ self images as being fathers, and how they wish to be in that role. And this in relation to if they have been successful with that in the eyes of the children. So the accounts below are both those of the fathers describing their own first hand impressions, and the impressions of their interpretations of their children’s views on their relations.

Alexander’s answer to one of the questions asked ("How did you sense that the child was affected, if at all, by the separation?") explains how: “The first years she was rather tormented by that in that she didn’t like at all to be at my place./…/ So then I think it affected her… /…/ But at the same time it was so that she should perhaps have been more with me so she could have gotten used to that there were two of us. He then unfolds how the frustration his daughter felt, evident through her crying non-stop for hours every time she came to stay with him, was a tremendous strain not only for her but also for him. He thinks that the relationship has improved as time has passed and that it has become much better and normalized over the last couple of years. But he thinks she still values the mother higher than him as a parent.

Bengt on the other hand thinks that he is equally important as a parent as the mother in the eyes of the daughter. To her they are equal and should also become a couple again. She understands the problems but does not fully want to accept them, he says: “intellectually she does understand it, but emotionally she doesn’t understand it at all. Still she talks about that we should move back in together”. The position of the daughter is very exposed and it hurts him to see how she is trying to mediate and how she is always weighing her words in a way he thinks she would not have done if they had not dissolved their union like they did. But he also thinks about how she values the relationship between him and her and he assesses her impressions of their relation as being good and secure: “I believe she thinks it is good. With the continuity she is getting and the love she gets all the time... I believe she experiences it as being secure”.
4.6 Conclusions

In this the last section of the empirical analysis the results are condensed first and then the research questions answered. All the fathers are child oriented (Bekkengen, 2003) in their fatherhood approaches. They have all through varying practices and their individual choices arranged their lives based on their wishes to be good fathers to their children.

Alexander has strategically avoided open conflict with the mother of his daughter so as not to ruin future contacts and the long term functionality of the relationship with the mother, all for the benefit of the child. This has been at the cost of him not having nearly as much contact with his daughter as he has wished to have. He now sees that a possible unfortunate effect of this is that he does not have a relationship as close with the daughter as he would have liked to have, even if it has improved over time and in correlation with increased time spent together between himself and his daughter. He has experienced a sense of weakness, even helplessness, as a parent compared to the mother. In his description she has by the right that comes from being a mother, overpowered his opinions regarding division of time between them for child rearing and living arrangements. He has tried to near himself to the norm of fathering found in the media discourse whereas she has shut him out in opposition to said norm but with support in values along the traditional division of male and female domains (Connell, 1996) in life, a norm he also recognizes and is familiar with but would prefer not to live by. For him there has been a discrepancy between norm and possible practice.

In Bengt’s case there are often conflicts between the parents, the child is aware of how tense the situation is. The mother wanted to shut him out from fathering the daughter in violation of the parental norm that stipulates presence and partaking of both parents. Bengt did not accept that so he fought in court for the right to be with his daughter. This is perfectly in line with Bekkengen (2003). The daughter may therefore understand that he has stood up for being able to take active part in her life and that he is there for her, not just because he is inclined to by outer pressures but that he is emotionally genuine in his fathering.

Christian has in effect always been the main caregiver. The children depend on him more than on the mother. He would prefer an even division of the parenting but feels he has had no choice for the sake of the children but to take on more responsibility than that. Before the disruption of his marriage he was a child oriented father more in thought than in practice
compared to how things have become after (Bekkengen, 2003). He experiences a rift between the ideals of the father norm that he feels he is close to in practice and the jargon amongst nuclear family type fathers as well as other people. He feels like they are measured against the scale of the international business masculinity with him being less left out. But Christian revealed what he considered to be a perk of being a single main care giving father, it makes him more interesting in the eyes of women. This is in line with the findings by Jensen (forthcoming).

Johan became a single father long before the other men, in 1980 before society had had time to change as much as it has later (Hirdman, 2001). It would therefore not have been surprising should he have experienced the highest degree of difficulty when it came to breaking the norms of parenting and fathering as he did by practically becoming the sole care giver of his daughter. That is not the case though. On the contrary, he seems to have had the least issues of that kind to deal with. This may depend on for example his personality, that he doesn’t choose to remember hardships or that he simply didn’t have those kinds of problems. Or, it may depend on that times have changed. He took care of what needed taking care of without giving it much thought, as the day to day practices went on (Heidengren, 2007). He and his daughter are very close and he feels she has always held him dearest of the parents.

- Since the fathers became single parents as compared to before they became single parents, do they feel that others view them differently, if so, how?
Yes they all do. A common denominator is that they all feel as if they at times are not believed to be competent enough as parents because they are men.

- How do the single fathers perceive their children’s feelings about the relationships with themselves?
Alexander thinks she feels the relation is getting better from having been not so good but that she still values the mother slightly higher as a parent.
Bengt thinks she feels secure and loved with him and that she feels that their relationship is good.
Christian thinks they all think he should be more present than what he sometimes is but that they also know that when it counts he is there for them.
Johan has daily contact with his daughter and they are very close.
• Are there discrepancies for fatherhoods between norms and discourse versus practice?

Yes, there are conflicting norms that the fathers have experienced the challenge in trying to balance.
5. Discussion

Below follows a short concluding discussion, summing up and retracing the work to the aim and theoretical part as well as the literature. Suggestions for future research ends the work.

The aim of the paper has in part been to find out about how relations between fathers and their children become affected by disruption of parental unions. The dissolutions have had negative effects for the children of three of the four fathers, and this is something that also Amato (2000) has found is a common outcome after union dissolutions. But the relationships between the fathers and their children have been good. The fathers all have thought they were rather close to the father norm before their union dissolutions, but maybe even a bit closer after they became single fathers. Some experienced guilt over the fact that they didn’t always live up to their standards but overall they felt they were close to the norm. The fathers’ impacts on the surroundings were not so much that the fathers impacted directly on them. It was rather that others, in the views of the fathers, reacted on them being single fathers with points of views suggesting that they were not fully suited to be parents.

As stated in the background with reference to Jensen (forthcoming), men have a multitude of opportunities in their lives. This may in some ways be good but it may also be confusing if the opportunities are viewed differently by parents when breaking up their unions. This is the case for Alexander and Bengt respectively. They both adhere to the child oriented masculinity but the mothers of their children do not, at least not from the fathers’ perspectives. The choices possible for the fathers that Jensen (forthcoming) describes become choices also for the mothers in that instance. So Jensen’s remark about fathering as a risk project for men holds water in these cases, since the fathers are interested in taking active part in the lives of their children, and as a result have to face consequences of their fatherhoods that are in their views forced upon them.

There is the norm of being a child oriented father which is seen in the media as being the ideal for modern Swedish men which is to be considered in the daily lives of the fathers (Bekkengen, 2003). There are also the norms of the transnational businessman masculinity which have also to be considered since it is part of the hegemonic masculinity and dominant over the child oriented masculinity (Connell, 1996, 1998). It seems as if there are several
trends in motion at the same time. There is the one trend of norms changing towards focus on children and their well-being, making child orientation for fathers the right thing to embrace (Bekkengen, 2003). This is to a large extent a media driven affair, a matter of external influences. Then there is the trend of internal changes of self-images amongst men and fathers which may have come about as a result of societal changes from a single to dual earner model in Sweden (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hirdman, 2001). The former trend seems likely to be more fleeting.

The men in the study have taken on a larger parental role than tradition would stipulate and they are at the same time aware of that they have done so and they are aware of the price to pay that have come with their decisions. Thereby the results are paradoxical. They are both opposing and supporting the work of Jensen (forthcoming)\textsuperscript{4} and they find support in the works of Bekkengen (2003) and Connell (1996)\textsuperscript{5}, at the same time as there are discrepancies in how it is possible to live out the masculinity between norms and discourse. It varies from situation to situation, just as Connell (1996) points out. It cannot be ruled out that it varies more from situation to situation than what there is room for within most individuals.

There are changes to the parental role from being in a union to becoming a single parent. Such a situation forces decisions about how to father the child/ren, the decisions being more or less easy and more or less possible to make. There are changes in how the fathers perceive how they were viewed by others before and after they became single fathers. Single fathers have to deal with domestic matters more than other fathers. Connell (1998) describes how homebound matters are considered feminine and worldly matters male, the former deemed to be of less importance in comparison to the latter that is considered dominant. This has in these accounts spilled over on the fathers. Harshly put, and in relation to the mentioned situation, they became second rate men and second rate parents. As single fathers they are in some ways reduced to becoming lesser men (in relation to the hegemonic strata), as well as above stated, viewed by others (in the experiences of the fathers) as not being fully suited for parenting, since they need to be more all round in their parenting than other fathers (and mothers) may

\textsuperscript{4} in which she points to that the willingness to father may be limited and that there are many opportunities for men to choose from.

\textsuperscript{5} in which Connell describes the hegemonic masculinity with its sub categories and in which Bekkengen describes the child oriented masculinity.
have to be. Being child oriented as a single father is all good and nice in thought, norms and discourse, perhaps also as a pick-up method in bars, but there are practical problems experienced by the interviewed fathers when it comes to their daily routines and practices.

Jensen (forthcoming) has noted that there may be a risk that men in Sweden no longer to the same extent as before think it is worth the effort to become fathers, that the perceived cost has become too high. As fewer men become fathers and those who do become fathers father more children, that may have an effect on how the concept of fatherhood is understood by fathers themselves, their spouses, children and others in society at large. The masculinities mentioned above may be becoming more diverse and dynamic without breaking the boundaries of normativity, there may be multi facetted norms forming (Jensen, forthcoming). Perhaps as a sign of the times, fathers are being recycled.

In the finale of this work are a few suggestions for in which frame of mind further research may be beneficial. The issue of fathering is of importance, both in the short time frame and in the long run over generations, in the individual’s lives and also for society as a whole on an aggregate level. Therefore it can be said to be a matter of multi dimensional importance. Understanding the mechanisms in place for making both men and women wanting men to become fathers may aid in how families are viewed and maybe also in views on issues regarding fertility. What does it mean for men who are not yet fathers to see that fathers’ rights to be fathers are fair or not fair, does it affect their willingness to become fathers, how do they perceive the cost/benefit situation of fathering? Does the transition from being a father in a nuclear family to becoming a single father tend to shift the inner wishes of how to father children towards a more child oriented fatherhood type than before the union dissolution, regardless of the previous inner convictions?

The structures of society, especially the hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1996) make the French proverb plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose (The more things change, the more they stay the same being a common translation) come to mind in that the respondents verify through their statements the inertia with which societal change takes place, in spite of norm changes on the surface in media.
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