Masculinities and Fatherhood in a South African Context:

Exploring Xhosa men's experiences of fatherhood and ideas about masculinities

"How does active fatherhood influence notions of masculinities among Xhosa fathers in Cape Town?"

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study that explores meanings around fatherhood among Xhosa fathers in Cape Town. In so doing, the dissertation goes on to explore attitudes, beliefs, and needs of these township fathers have with regards to taking care of their children. This is a descriptive and exploratory qualitative study which was conducted with a sample of 4 Xhosa fathers. Responses around fathering clustered into the following themes: challenging notions of nurturing as women's roles, changing patterns in fatherhood, fatherhood as a process, multiple ways of fathering, communal and familial support structures, and deviation from 'traditional' norms and 'traditional' ideas around fathering. The fathers in this study identified a number of benefits and opportunities to being good fathers who were actively involved in their children's lives.

INTRODUCTION

This study was a collaborative effort between UCT's Knowledge Co-Op and Ikamva Labantu Organisation. This research focused on men's experiences as fathers who have been involved in their children's lives. 'Father' is defined as a man who is actively involved in their child/ children's life/lives. The fathers that were selected for this research ranged from early thirties to late thirties. 'Fatherhood' is then defined as the acts that comes with taking care of the child/ children, being there for them, caring and being actively involved in their lives.

It is acknowledged that there are many different kinds of masculinities which are shaped by variety of factors, thus for purposes of this paper, the definition of 'father' is borrowed from Richter & Morrell (2006) thereby referring to a vast number of men that take on the fatherhood role when it comes to their children, their families and all other children in the wider community that are not biologically theirs (Richter& Morrell, 2006). Masculinity as a construct refers to how those who are gendered as men, 'do' gender. This research therefore considers how these fathers understand and construct their masculinities.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

This study attempts to trace the discourses of masculinity with particular interest in parenting masculinities locating my study within a South African context. The gendered politics of black South African fathers raising their children and being pro-active in their development in South Africa has too often been silenced and marginalized in contemporary gender discourse. This study's main aim then was to explore discourses of masculinities with a particular interest of parenting masculinities. Furthermore, this research provides an examination of how these men assume this role, and their experiences in how they their methods of fathering shape their notions around fatherhood, and what it means to them to be a father, and the demands fatherhood has on them, and to also highlight some of the support structures they relied on in times of hardships.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, fathers and fatherhood are examined in three thematised sections which were guided by core writings in the field of masculinities and fatherhood. With Richter and Morrell as the major influence in the background knowledge of this study, it was then thematise the study as follows; **(i)** Historic Constructions of Masculinities in South Africa, **(ii)** Current Trends of Fatherhood Masculinities in South Africa, and **(iii)** Notions of Masculinities and Fatherhood, as these were areas that had foregone research. I considered these areas critical in that, they spoke directly to my research question and my sub-questions which looked into exploring Xhosa men's experiences of fatherhood and ideas around masculinity.

Historic Constructions of Masculinities in South Africa

Morrell argues that, masculinity as a 'gender', personal identity and political subject matter is infused with histories and complexities that are vary across different contexts. Thus, an interrogation of masculinities directs one to take on historical perspectives and experiences; even then, this provides only a glimpse into the lived realities of people gendered as men (Morrell, 2001). Historically, it has always been important for fathers to just be responsible to providing for material needs of the child and not really availing their capacity to needs of the child. However, the meanings of fathering and fatherhood changes according to various factors such as time, location, culture etc.

Traditionally, in African cultures, fatherhood was an ascribed status rather than an achieved one. One did not just become a father by virtue of having biologically fathered a child, and various idioms bear testimony to this. In Sepedi it is said that *"ngwana ga se wa shete, ke wa kgoro",* literally meaning that sperm does not beget a child, but also asserting that a child belongs to a broader family, just like there are many Xhosa idioms that also gives support to the fact that, it takes an entire village to raise a child. In Setswana they say, *'ngwana ke wa dikgomo' or 'o e gapa le namane'*, which means that marrying someone also means marrying his/ her children (Lesejane, 2006).

In an African context, marriage in the traditional sense includes more than husband and wife, both families marry each other and then become each other's relatives. A child acquired through marriage or 'acceptance of responsibility' also received the benefits of fatherhood, and this is a role most fathers are eager to play in current world we live in (Lesejane, 2006).

In South Africa, discourse on masculinities has permeated in academic, political and activist spaces. Moreover, Morrell (2001) argues that the theorizing of masculinities has been framed within hegemonic gender binaries that engage with masculinity in relation to femininities. Hearn (2007) extends on this arguing that, discourse on masculinity has been framed within violence, fathering, provider and so on.

For a very long time, the 'provider' as the 'ideal father' is something that was internalised by society within which Black people lived, thus, men attached 'manhood' to a provider capacity, and further equated their ability to provide with 'fatherhood', to them and the larger Black community, any men that could provide for their families and children was a good father irrespective of time he spent away from home, or their inability to interact with their children, and partner with their spouses in taking care and managing the domestic responsibilities.

Mamphele's (2006: 75) conducted a study in Cape Town at the Crossroads Township. The study examined how South Africa's historic family life has always disrupted by the migrant labour system that was imposed on Black South Africans which placed them away from home and took away time with their families, as the men worked in mines outside where their wives and children resided and only got to see them on annual holidays. This disruption of Black men's family lives were a direct result of "a political system gone wrong, a political system that was built around poverty", colonialisation and an apartheid system whose constructs all worked against the prosperity of a Black man both in the public and private spheres of their lives.

Current Trends of Fatherhood Masculinities in South Africa

The dominant perception has always been that men are not caring, are never active participants in the home. The South African literature on men is rife with statistics that is dominant of a deficit of male involvement. However, through the various democratic, economic and social transformations that South Africa has gone through, documented and literature around men that assume a range of gender roles and identities remains mediocre in publications. However, "parenthood now is dominantly conceptualised as a considered enterprise and very much a project of the self where many men have willingly taken on to self-reflect and questions their activities as good parents, fathers, and to work towards the ideal of being a 'good' father"(Lupton, Barclay, 1997: 142).

Due to changing circumstances and context in which one might find themselves located in, men have also been responsive to these various global changes by performing roles that have historically been perceived to be that of a woman, roles that have exceeded far beyond economical and financial support and eventually reached a landmark of emotional, educational, and physical support to their children and within the household sphere.

These changing patterns of men as 'carers', 'nurtures', 'supportive and active contributors in private spheres is a result of changing social, political, cultural and economic surroundings where times have encouraged most people to simply shift their thinking beyond "doing gender" and in this study's case, to also examine the broader definition of fatherhood, one that is rooted in " an African cultural value system" according to their own life lessons and experiences as fathers (Lesejane, 2006).

South African men have transformed into better fathers by assessing the value of fatherhood. As Richter & Morrell (2006) put it, South African men are also starting to value fatherhood, it seems there is a greater expansion in the valuing of this role which my study cannot quantify, however, "this could birth great potential for policies on father rights as an international process, as our state

policies have not really evolved to respond directly to father's rights to social welfare and holistic human rights of any involved parent as our legal system remains father-unfriendly"(Richter, Morrell: 2006: 3).

In an article (Richter & Morrell, 2006: 175) talks about images of men and fathers in an African culture as a form of redress since it has been a topic generally silent in public discourse. The intention here was to introduce the views of some men into the discourse, in the hope that it will give birth to less biased perception of the challenges of parenting.

Similarly to my study, Richter & Morrell's (2006) Men and Fatherhood in South Africa also examines experiences of South African fathers who are involved in raising their children. Their studies were conducted in various South African townships and rural outskirts ranging from Kwa-Zulu Natal, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Their studies look at men that have taken on the "nurturing" role for their children and other domestic chores.

Notions of Masculinities & fatherhood in South Africa

Fatherhood has always been associated with manhood. What this pre-supposes is that when one is a 'man' then society expects them to be able to take on the fatherhood role. Again, the point of reaching 'manhood' is contested and is a different process for different people. For example in Xhosa culture, not all men who have undergone initiation return ready to parent a child. This is evidenced in Carl's case, who had already undergone initiation and completed matric when he found out he was about to become a father. His story gives off an indication of his dilemma as he felt unready, did not know how he was going to tell his family the news and had to think of finding a job in order to provide for this child, something he was not even ready to do at the time as that meant him putting his dreams on hold for a while. Thought these were some of the thing that came to his mind then, the admits it was party of 'immaturity' and not knowing any better as he is now a happy father that is hands on with his children.

Morrell (2001)argues that, recognition should yield positive benefits which will eventually lead to the deconstruction of the negative perceptions associated with masculinity so that it gives men a chance and support that will encourage them to do more for this role and to want to hold on to this role. He further proposes that the best way that could be of effect in going about this would be the acknowledgement that there are multiple masculine identities that exist, and one man's way of doing 'manhood' would differ from another "manliness" and so would their ideas around notions of fatherhood.

With regards to the recognition and acknowledgements that Morrell speaks of, my study also agrees with this concept, and further re-iterates these benefits through extracts from the transcripts which basically creates mental images of a happy and fulfilled father, which speak directly to what Lupton & Barclay, (1997) meant when they spoke of 'fatherhood as the project of the self' in relation to what it meant to be good fathers to them and the benefits that reaped for playing this role.

Morrell (2001) writes "masculinity is not inherited nor acquired in a once off way. It is constructed in the context of class, race and other factors which are interpreted through a prism of age". With the changing global community the movement and gendered performance of people gendered as men in various spaces has warranted international attention in recent decades (Morrell, 2001). In support of this, Deutsch further adds by arguing that " gender differences arise from the different resources to which men and women have access to, or the different social locations they occupy, it is through these structural conditions that gender difference and inequality is produced", (Deutsch, 2007: 8).

In an investigation by (Montgomery, 2006) on male involvement in the South African family in rural KwaZulu-Natal, Montgomery examined literature on South Africa's family in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The study took 2 and a half years based on a sample of 20 households caring for at least one adult. The examinations done showed that men were actively involved with their homes and families in tremendous ways. Some were caring for patients and children,

some financially supported immediate and extended family. Those who were married were always present at home, thereby enabling their wives to work and were left to provide support around the household especially pertaining to tasks that are inconsistent with the "norm" (Montgomery, 2006).

This study also showed the positive involvement of male volunteers in home based care programs after nurses identified the need for men to be actively involved in care giving and participation around the domestic sphere. Culturally, it has always been understood to be the woman's role to take care of the sick. The presence of male care-givers in this study points to the contrary. This then concludes that, there are some masculinities that pursue that line of work and do not even conform to negative pressures about stereotypical masculinities or 'manly professional occupations" and instead completely challenged the notion of women as better carers than men or the only ones that are best suited to play the role.

Because 'fathering' has always been linked with providing, men are then regarded as men who "mother" once they get involved with other aspects of fathering or fatherhood. This can have negative and damaging consequences to masculine identities as it may hinder their ability to undertake tasks that fall outside the 'norm' (Montgomery, 2006). More especially, to those masculinities that are seen to be "undoing gender".

Nentwich (2008: 208), mentioned in his study that, current heterosexual parenthood seem to be trapped in a change-retention dilemma, that though many elements have changed there too are many others that have remained the same. , He further extends that just gender can be 'done' (West & Zimmerman, 1987), it should also be possible to 'undo' (Butler, 2004, Deutsch, 2007) or even 'trouble it' (Butler, 1993). Simply, this indicates that though there is room to freely adopt any role one deems appropriate for the self, and the context they may find themselves in at that particular point.

Deutsch (2007) rejects 'doing' gender rationale as a primary basis of gendered difference and in turn, argues that, gender construction is very much dependent on revolutionary change. That gender is dynamic and what is considered appropriate gender behaviour is bound to change over time as people heed the call of changing contemporary norms, and thus, will give rise to the inevitability of 'undoing' gender. It is these changing contemporary norms that active fathers are responding to, and have created their own realm in.

Nentwich (2008) uses Butler as an exemplary case to show how gender can be questioned or troubled. For Butler, identity is performed, and thus rendering gender roles 'performative' (Butler, 1993). Gender is constructed by the acts we do or undertake and interpreted as one's gender identity, and therefore gender becomes something that we 'do' as opposed to something that we 'are'. Therefore, people have come to adopt multiple identities and roles and therefore, 'performances' are vastly enacted in changing times and environment.

Again, how gender is done varies across different ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, backgrounds, and locations of its 'doer' or 'performer'. Thus, every performance will always be determined or influenced by one's current context (Deutsch, 2007). At times, this norm surrounding one's context might seem natural as it is the only thing they might know and have never questioned, might therefore deem as 'natural' in that context, and that the subjects of its performativity might perpetuate its dominance, its rise to power, and finally to its hegemonic status that will spread across different gender binaries that might the construct gender hierarchies that will oppress those that fall outside the 'normative' or has adopted and actually adjusted well with an 'alternative' form of gender identity or masculinity, and in this case, fatherhood masculinity.

Thus, this body of existing literature which I have chosen to back my study on is quite useful in supporting my own personal mission of expanding on what has already been covered and validating my own arguments with the specific authors I have drawn from in exploring what being a father means, and the men's experiences and ideas around masculinity.

The insights that were drawn from the literature was able to provide me with a knowledge base platform for mapping my own study were taken from Richter& Morrell (2006) for analysing the historical constructions of masculinities which were formulated on a father being a father on a "provider basis" only without and thus deemed a good father through his fulfilled duty as a provider that spends time away from home in order for him to bring an income to the household.

Lesejane and Mamphele's (2006) work on African masculinities supports my theoretical analysis of fatherhood as a process, as their chapters speak of fatherhood as a process , and thus the point of reaching manhood is a different process for different people. Additionally to that, their work on African masculinities speak directly to this study which also examines fatherhood and masculinities in an African setting in one of Cape Town's townships which makes it easy for all of our projects to speak to each other as we can also relate or resonate with each other as Africans, and better understand how fatherhood has always been understood among Africans at different points in terms of locality. In light of the above, **the main research question for the current study is 'how does the experience of fatherhood shape notions of masculinities among Xhosa men in Cape Town'**

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I.   Feminist Research Design

A qualitative study design was selected both because it is people centred and goes well with this collaborative study as it provided me with an in depth understanding of the issues in focus. Since this project entailed real life human subjects together with their experiences. Qualitative Research Methodology was ideal here as it was able to capture and create a picture that enriched this study through these shared narratives.

As this project dealt with human subjects, this form of methodology places value on individual's experiences, life histories, and stories as they are not only valuable, but critical to understanding social interaction. Feminist research values people's experiences and the consciousness-raising ability it has that forms a foundation for the significance of stories and experiences. Stories can also map a path towards a desired positive change in social, institutional, structural, and cultural, contextual, and international relations, laws, and policies (Waller, 2005), as this study also hopes that positive social change will stem from the new knowledge that is uncovered in this study.

Consequently, the feminist research approach brought out experiences and realities of these fathers in this study through its people centred approach. These are experiences that are often over-looked as this group of fathers or rather sample of a representation of active fathers in the development of their children is often taken for granted and often overlooked in South Africa.

A Feminist Research Approach makes clear visibility, thus, exposing just how gendered and political everything around us really is, irrespective of which discourse one is in, the personal is political vice versa. It is through this same understanding that feminist scholars are able to challenge, and map a path towards equality and transformation. As a feminist researcher one is consciously aware of hierarchies, injustices, gendered power dynamics that

perpetuate inequalities, and thus looks deeper in search of the underlying causes in an attempt to redefine, or reconstruct these oppressive notions in the hope of transforming society's way of seeing and thinking in a way that will liberate anyone that is gendered 'male' or 'woman' equally.

II.   Sample

Participants were readily available for me through Ikamva Labantu. Entrance to them was negotiated through the NGO's Community Development Workers who introduced me to them in order for me to win their trust. My sample, though initially aimed at consisting about 6-8 fathers, ended up consisting of 4 fathers who all had some form of a father figure in the form of an uncle, a cousin, brother and so on, that indirectly expanded my sample to what it was initially intended upon. The ages of the fathers ranged from 32- 38 years of age.

One on one interviews in both English and Xhosa were deployed in this study. Interview recordings were then transcribed and translated in English.

III.   Data Collection

(Interviewing)

The purpose of the qualitative interview is to find out the person who is being interviewed thinks, feels, knows and why. Therefore, one on one semi-structured interviews were used in this study with the participants. The aim of the interviews in this study was to explore the level of understanding, knowledge, awareness, attitudes and opinions, among the fathers regarding fatherhood. The interview recordings ranged from 1h; 14min to 54:00min.

Interviews in this study were conducted in both English and IsiXhosa as that was a method that worked best for my participants. Upon the participant's consent to the use of an audio tape in the interview sessions, a voice recorder was then used to record the interviews; thereafter the interviews were translated and transcribed simultaneously in English.

All four (4) participants were interviewed individually in order for them to be given comfortable space that would encourage them to interact freely and also

allow for them to provide the different accounts of their individual experiences. A lot of these accounts triggered and participants were constantly asked if they wanted to take a break, and also informed of the extra measures Ikamva had put in place of availing their professional counsellor if any of the participants felt the need to make use of one. The participants felt very comfortable with me therefore I was able to gain their trust and had them open and to converse freely with me.

Memo Writing

I had brought to the field a journal which was to serve as my ally and to offer aid for such moments when I sensed those not so spoken cues that participant's body language was not communicating with me in words. In between the questions whilst the recorder was running, I would occasionally ink down some information down which I found useful for my data. After each interview, I would wait for the participant to leave the room and allow for some time for recording my own reflections and have a short debrief with myself before calling the next participant in, or before stopping the recorder. The intention here was for me to not rely solely on the recorder as I have always been sceptical of technology, and as a result had to have a contingency plan in place for recording my own comments in between and after each session as some things might fade if not immediately captured in writing or on record.

IV. Data Analysis

Analysis of the results followed the recommendations of Krueger (Morgan & Krueger 1997) and in other instances it borrowed largely from (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). According to Krueger, qualitative data provides a variety of options of analysing and representing the data but the study has to be systematic. This is to ensure that there process is as valid and trustworthy as possible. Qualitative data should have credibility, transferability, reliability (consistency and accuracy) and objectivity. They should reflect the reliability and the ideas of the participants. Both the tapes recorded and the field notes informed the basis of the analysis of this study.

Thematic Analysis was then deployed as a method for analysing the data in this section of the study. Thematic Analysis occurs when themes and concepts of the coding are derived from the data itself by recognizing and describing the identified patterns and themes. After that, I had to search for meaning and interpret that into findings.

Coding- Is a progressive process of sorting and defining collected data collected that is applicable to the research purpose. Each major code identifies a major concept or a central idea and is often useful to make a coding book where all the codes and their meanings are listed. All transcripts were carefully scrutinised for similar codes that kept reappearing. Thereafter, all the like-minded pieces were carefully grouped together in order to provide a working organisational framework for the analysis.

Peer-debriefing- The transcripts compiled for this study was then shared with my peers/ colleagues in my Honours Research class. The purpose behind this was to get them to verify the analysis and interpretation of the data by providing me and enriching my study with their insights and perspectives, that further gave me different perspectives for analysing and interpreting meaning found in the transcripts in order to provide my study with reliable and sound results. Again, I requested to record the day's class session in order to further decode and analyse more get more themes that could possibly lead to what I could confidently claim as 'new knowledge'. New insights were unravelled that helped build my analysis from all my peers, which I am grateful for as some went as far as emailing me their thoughts on how I could best work with my data analysis. This further helped me fast track my analysis process as I felt the urge to conduct the analysis whilst the interviews and the class session around my transcripts was still very fresh in my mental storage system.

The pattern that the data analysis process adopted involved the following steps;
- Ordering and organising the collected material
- Re-reading the data
- Breaking the material into sections

- Identify and highlight meaningful phrases

- Extracting consistent patterns of meanings

- Searching for relationship and grouping categories together

- Recognising and describing patterns, themes and typologies

- Extracting meaning and interpreting that into findings

V. Ethical Considerations

The University of Cape Town's code of Ethics guideline were used and are attached to the appendices section. The Ethics Guidelines informed participants of their rights, and served as a guide to the researcher's method of the correct and ethical way of doing research. The highlight of this guide revolve around protecting the subject at hand and revolves around 'confidentiality', thus, it is imperative that participants are informed of their rights from the onset and the intent of the study they are involved in, and the protection of their identities. For all participants that were involved, I ensured that each person had a copy of the study information and consent letters before partaking in the study. Again, I allowed for them to go over their study information letter and consent forms, and made sure that they had read and understood before signing and handing back to me. Again, for ethical reasons, and due to my lack of knowledge around my participant's level of education, I decided to make the letters and consent forms available in both a Xhosa and English version. Every effort was put in them understanding everything about this research so everything was prepared in both English and IsiXhosa including information letters and consent forms.

Since any human experience that is touched on can trigger certain emotions which I was bound to tap into, the NGO assured me that there was a counsellor in place that I could refer my participants to if ever I found myself in a state of uncontrollably overwhelming emotional turbulence. My participants were all informed of their right to make use of such provision, and their intrinsic right to stop the interview whenever they felt they could not continue anymore, and if they are not comfortable, they have every right to ask to go to the next question. Lastly, the participants were also assured that their identity will be protected

and that they will be given pseudonyms instead of using real names and those pseudonyms were used throughout in this study.

VI. Limitations of study

Due to the limited time that an Honours dissertation is allowed, it becomes hard for a researcher to try and develop it into what they really dream or wish to make out of it, as the time constraints are there to be adhered to. **Time constraints** served as a hindrance on the quality I had initially envisioned to produce, and also impacted on my **sample size**. As fatherhood is a very complex process, some of the things that fall within this process that affected my study were time and sample issues, along with my bilingual practice. Interview appointments were constantly shifted and renegotiated with them as they had multiple responsibilities which ranged from them having to be at work, or attending to other impromptu commitments that concerned either one or more of their children. One of the interview that I conducted with "Dean" even took place in his car where he had brought along his pregnant wife. Some valuable information might have been forgotten in that space as a car is not really a comfortable place, but then again, it could always be argued that it is the best place as its intimacy creates room for one to open up. Another important factor to be considered here was the use of two **languages.** This at times worked as a double edged sword in the sense that the participants were able to express themselves and would always revert back to another language at any time they wanted. However, a lot of meaning from their body language, non-verbal cues and those tiny little things that are equally important could have gotten lost in translation, as it is impossible to translate and transcribe with a hundred per cent accuracy.

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RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY.

As Butler was previously quoted in this paper explaining how the experience of being gendered is often inscribed into various institutions one becomes a part of (Butler, 2004:42). Thus who I am as 'a female student' was something I had to apply a lot of thinking into, and how I would negotiate entrance into the lives of these men, and which identities I was going to take with me to the field, and which ones I would have to discard or suppress as I entered the world of respectable fathers to try and open them up and get them to share with me their experiences, what they perceive me to be and what informed those perceptions were things anticipated along the way as they were bound to have a lot of significance in my study.

This is precisely what Butler speaks of; Butler (2004: 42) argues that the presence of alternative sexualities or gendered expression proposes new ways of imagining the self in relation to others. Albeit feminist discourse has attempted to engage with gender as a broad social experience, however, discourse around masculinities has often been framed within a hetero normative scope that marginalizes the experiences of men that adopt an alternative identity or parody and marginalise or continue to oppress women or female researchers that are interested in studying something 'taboo' (Hearn, 2007).

These are everyday challenges of every feminist researcher to constantly try and configure their identity in order to gain acceptance, to defend my reasoning behind doing this kind of work, defend my legitimacy as a researcher that is equally competent to carry out this kind of work with dedication, professionalism and everything else a male investigator has to offer if not more. Again this could give birth to another issue of 'over-compensating' in order to gain my acceptance. These are issues I saw coming from day one when I chose this topic.

Again, I am grateful that consensus was reached, and the NGO Project Manager gave me the green light, she also did try cautioning me about what the world I was about to step into. Being Xhosa of ethnicity herself, she did bring to light that "our fathers" will always try affirm their authority and protect their dignity and respect by holding on to 'old ideals', that further creates divide between men and women, and makes visible the traces that some 'hegemonic' notions still permeate.

As a feminist scholar, Risman (2009), argues that, as West & Zimmerman have always dominated this area of how gender is actually constructed, through pro-feminist theoretical investigations and recent changed or shifts in gender as a construct that maps difference on the basis of sex, the best way we could ever thank West, & Zimmerman (1987) for the major contribution in scholarly contributions of understanding ways in which gender is done by further moving to "undoing gender' (Risman, 2009). Feminism should be about change, progression, transformation, and the uncovering of new knowledge that will contribute to a large pool of scholarly works within the academic realm

Consequently to my positionality upon entering the field and executing the core part that would give me the answers to the questions I had hoped to have answered, I was well received and I also fitted well with the participants, and the ease that they got from opening up to me in a closed room might have played a big part as the communication flowed freely between me and each participant, also putting me at ease and dismissing any concerns I had initially entered field with. Thus, I was very much accepted into 'this world of fathers' as researcher and a female young student at that.

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The analysis section of this study revealed 4 major themes with several subthemes. These focused on the complexities of fathering as a process, and a different one which further varies in one's geographical context. Again with one's geographical context lies a different historical influence which the fathers could either choose to move away from, or to simply embrace a repertoire of their own father's fathering styles. Again, whether they choose to move away or embrace what they have always known also gives birth to a 'deviation behaviour' etc. Therefore, the main themes that were dominant in this study were; **(i)** Multiple ways of fathering. **(ii)** Challenging notions of nurturing as a woman's job only, There are multiple ways of fathering, **(iii)** Support Structures, **(iv)** Deviation from traditional norms. The sub-themes were aimed at acknowledging that each theme was not as simple as it looked, that there were other broad underlying aspects that had to be taken into consideration as well.

MULTIPLE WAYS OF FATHERING

All participants shared their views of what they thought fatherhood was, and in all accounts, there were similar patterns around the meanings of fatherhood. The first 2 participants (Adam and Ben) spoke of fatherhood as having love, respect and being there for their children. "Carl" associated fatherhood with emotional involvement with the chid which does not really have to be limited to physical availability.

> "*Being a father means being there for your children, it means being there to give them love even you do not have money. Being a good father is not bought with money sisi, as long as you are there to give your children love as they grow up and to teach them all the good things. A good father should be able to teach his children what is good and what is bad, and to be open to them all the time about everything. To me that is what a good father should be. A good father should be someone that always makes time for their children, to play with them, to do everything with them. You know when I am with my kids I transform myself into a child myself! I become small and*

their peer, a good father should be a friend to their children and to teach their children manners and respect-Adam".

"There are so many things that I have learnt and come to understand that can never be bought with money. The rich experiences of being a father and the memories of raising my son are far more enriching. There is so much I know and understand about babies than most men out there who had partners in their lives to raise their children. Also, the love and close relationship I have with my son is worth more than anything in this whole world-Ben".

When these men were asked what it meant to be a good father in the community they lived in, all fathers had these common facets to describe what a good father was; "being responsible for all children in the community", "to be a role-model" etc. Again, 'love', 'care' and 'respect' came up. However, for one to be deemed a good man by society, that man had a responsibility to also love and treat with the same respect children that are not biologically yours. Fatherhood in this sense is a role that does not end in one's own home but a process and a responsibility of all men to be fathers to other children in the community.

"It means exactly that! The way you have just put it is exactly how it should be, a father should be a father inside and outside the house. Now a man who is a good father will have all the other children in the community calling him a good father too because of his treatment of other children in the streets. His word would not only be limited within the walls of his house and fences around his yard but will be outstretched within his community. Being a good father means taking responsibility for all other children even if they are just your friend's or neighbour's children, it means being a father to all the children in the community. It also means respecting everyone in the community and conducting oneself in a manner that will uphold your status and dignity in the community-Ben".

Parenting here carries an 'Ubuntu' spirit that places greater value on others and their personhood by virtue of acknowledging the co-dependence of one another

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within one's community. In an African context, and Xhosa community, a father is not a father by being someone's biological parent only but by being a good enough man to instil life lessons and discipline and leading by good example that would build even those that are not your children, and to further realise that you are a father to all the children in the community. – This sentence is far too long. What this basically translates to is what is termed as "collective fatherhood", whereby uncles, grandparents, brothers, and cousins also assume responsibility for a child's upbringing (Mkhize, 2006: 191)).

Fatherhood as a process

Richter & Morrell's work on traditional African masculinities illustrate how fatherhood has always been associated with manhood, that if a person became man who had gone to the mountain, then society automatically deemed them fit to be a father or someone that could take on the fatherhood role, more especially if they also had a job to sustain their families. However, their further investigations led to their theorisation on the complexities that exist between men as fathers, and that the point of reaching manhood is contested and different for each individual person (Richter & Morrell, 2006)
.

Though financial stability and material wealth constantly were issues raised by my participants, fatherhood for these men was not only restricted to them being fathers by virtue of them being able to provide for the basic and other materialistic objects that money can buy. Fatherhood for these men transcended beyond the basic provisioning of their livelihood, and instead moved on to illuminate traits that men for so long have been perceived to not naturally possess, these being sense of emotional caring, sense of love, and emotional stability and availability to the child's needs.

Actively involved

This sub-heading is quite interesting in the sense that all participants except for participant "Carl's", had a similar meaning for 'actively involved' which basically tied up to being physically there with the child on a daily basis through their development. However, in "Carl's" case, I was introduced to 2 emerging

definitions of fatherhood; **an absent yet actively involved father**, and a **physically available and actively involved father**. The language these men all spoke was similar, however, in "Carl's" case he was not in a position to live full time with his children though he would love to and cannot just move them to Cape Town as there are factors that need to be considered such as them transitioning from a small city to a bigger one in Cape Town, and the burdens that would have to come with changing schools and what that impact that transition would have on the children.

Though others are able to be around their children every day, some felt that they never had enough time to be around their children and to play with them as much as they would really want to. This is evidenced through (Ben)'s narrative of wishing he had more time to spend with his son, and how it hurts him when he gets home from work to find his son already asleep at times. All these men are actively involved in their children's lives and due to different circumstances in one's lives their experiences are bound to differ. Similarly in (Carl's) case, he is not physically there on a daily basis but is there 100% in other aspects. This then disrupts the very meaning of 'absence' and forces us to rethink it and ask ourselves if 'absence' has to viewed as a word that has to be viewed in a negative light all the time as in the accounts provided in the men's narratives.

CHALLENGES NOTIONS OF NURTURING AS WOMEN'S ROLE ONLY.
Participants disrupted this notion and consequently challenged societal patterns of ascribed gender roles. For a very long time, society has perceived it and actually normalised the process of child-rearing and role of caregiving to be a role only best suited for the mother or women. In this study, the participants were all seen to have taken up a great responsibility in as far as actively engaging their children. These are evidenced by the narratives that were supplied by the participants.

There are testimonies from the participant's responses around the question of them adopting a role that has been for so long associated with mothers/

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mothering and whether they saw any benefits from being actively involved fathers.

> *"Yho! I have learnt so much. The learning and understanding, my knowledge just in general about children and their overall development surpasses all learning and all the money in this world. Their love for me, when I see their faces, that is the benefit, I have gained so much insight on how a child develops. I was there throughout all the stages in their life, I hand washed their nappies, hung them, did everything as my mother had taught me"- Adam*

> *"(Laughs). Those are old beliefs! Things have changed, things have really changed. Those old tales belong in our grandmother and mother's times, not in the present. I am fine with raising my child alone and I do not even entertain such thoughts as I believe there is no inscription that says "for women only" when it comes to raising children. This has no bearing on my manhood and it does not bother me at all"-Ben*

This does away with the generalization of what fatherhood means as this research has evidenced Township Xhosa men willingly investing in the well-being and emotional upbringing of their children through their demonstrated eagerness for adopting gender equitable roles, which in this case would be active parenthood. This then works in contrast with the traditional notions that attribute the child's physical, emotional and social needs to be the duty of the mother only. The men in this study have demonstrated that they too are capable of playing out this role just as a woman would, and other better too as in the case with the first participant to be interviewed*(A)* who though he is unable to provide financially for his child in the way he would due to his unemployment status, yet amidst all of that derives absolute pleasure and contentment in doing the only job he best knows how, which is simply to love and care for his children, this symbolizes how nurturing comes so naturally to him.

Assimilation of mother & father roles

These fathers have come to assume roles that have for a very long time, and even currently still persist to be viewed as motherly roles. This is particularly evident in the first and second interviewed participants "Adam" and "Ben" as they mention how they strive to fill the void of the children's longing for their biological mothers. Thus, they go out of their way to play with their children, to be as affectionate as possible with them in order to close that gap by being mother and father to the children.

Changing Patterns in Fatherhood

The participants in this study were asked how it made them feel as men that had assumed this child-rearing role that is traditionally associated with women, and whether it did not bother them at all if they were perceived as men that 'mother'. The responses all gave an indication of how these parents were mentally liberated and free from societal influences. They all demonstrated how they enjoyed the tasks that came with gender equitable parenting and were happy from the fulfilment it gave them as that was value that surpasses all monetary wealth.

Some of the insights that they shared were how they were also responsible for their children as it takes 2 people to bring a child into this world. These men spoke about 'love' continuously and mentioned that they helped with the homework, they cooked, washed dishes and so on. Even in a township in Cape Town, we see that there are men that perceive being a good father and a good man through little but compassionate acts, humility, kindness, and all other traits that were traditionally 'uncharacteristic' in ways of how was to acquire his manhood status in society, especially in townships where there are a lot of pressures and little role models who aspire to lead by example for the future generations of society.

These men all said they were not bothered by what people thought of them or if ever they were in doubt of their manliness as they highlighted what to them were benefits that came with being a good father, which its basis rested upon

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them being responsible, caring men first if they wanted to excel in the fatherhood domain. Thus, masculinity as a societal construct has shifted from what is used to be as men in society have now shifted their priorities in order to make them inclusive to being around the home and raising their children, and not in contestation with motherhood, but to compliment what mothers have always done best as they also have paternal instincts.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

All participants mentioned a person(s) who was/ were instrumental in supporting them in their roles as fathers.

External familial Support

Mkhize, (2006:187) argues that, "child rearing is the collective responsibility of the extended family". All participants mentioned a person or another who has been very instrumental in supporting them with their undertaking as active fathers in their children's lives. There is not a single person who claimed to have existed in isolation with no support base in place for them to tap into whenever the need arose. (Adam) attributed his financial reservoir for sustenance of his children to his sister who provides for the children's financial needs such as clothes, toys, and other school needs. For daily survival he mentioned his mother and his uncle for the daily upkeep through their government grants, and again, mentioned that he does get money from his sister at times.

Though (Ben) did not live with his children full time, he was actively involved in their lives as he mentions how he brings them up to Cape Town from East London at every school holiday, and how when the children are around they engage in father and child activities, and he tries to make up for all the time he is not there with them. (Ben) Lives with his cousin who is also the same age as he is who also takes care of these children in his absence. Again, (Carl) mentioned his mother whom he stays with and looks after the child when he is at work as his support system and a person that supports him in this role.

Women/Non-biological mothers

Since this is a collaborative study, the topic was initially presented as 'single fathers' that were raising their children without a mother, meaning a biological mother in this case. The analysis conducted from the raw data that was presented from the interviewed participants helped identify some cracks in this definition or term 'single father' and instead maintains a stand that there is no such thing as a single father as no one is ever alone. This is further supported by Dean's response when I asked him what his thoughts were around the word "single" and if he thought there were single men out there.

> *"I don't really think so, you see, we are never single as men so I would say that I don't believe in the word. Maybe we are single in just the sense of not having the biological other, that you made this baby with there, but we are never single because there is always someone there to help us in overseeing this role just like Babes is doing".*

Although (Dean) said he was not big at running to family or anybody else for help, that going to his extended family members was a rare thing and usually his last resort, he on many occasions re-iterated the importance of his wife and the greater significance of her presence in his life by continuously placing emphasis on not knowing what he would do without the wife who has always been there since day one by his side when he had to take on the responsibility of raising his siblings that he adopted after their mother's death and consequent permanent relocation of his father back to the Eastern Cape after his wife's passing.

DEVIATION FROM 'TRADITIONAL' NOTIONS AROUND FATHERHOOD
Comparisons were drawn between their experiences of being fathered and their current fathering styles. Firstly it was very imperative that we look at the role of culture and the fraught history of our people due to the injustices of apartheid system which further led to structural imbalances in development, gender, class, and other discriminatory and oppressive hierarches in order to assess if their own upbringing might have been influenced by that, and whether they too have carried over the same parenting styles, and the same ideas about doing manhood, and how fatherhood should be done.

Majority of the fathers in this study choose to deviate themselves from how they were brought up and took a shift from the disconnections that their own parent's era had presented when it came to domestic duties, and fatherhood ideals by leaning more on the emotionally available side rather than over placing importance on financial well-being only.

This deviation examines how masculinities have always been perceived in a negative light, and on the same token, it gives evidenced to the positive shifts that have taken place. This then correlated with Mkhize's argument that, despite the negative masculinities that have existed before, it is then possible to engage dynamically with these negative masculinities with a view of challenging and changing them (Mkhize, 2006: 196)

"Adam" never had his biological father around when he was growing up, and as a result, those were the very reasons he willingly took on the fatherhood role and vowed to love and protect his offspring with all the love he possessed, and even sacrificed his financial stability and quit his job out of choice.

This man had many options, if he valued the 'provider role' and the status that comes with it, he could have left the children in the care of his uncle, mother or sister but instead, he opted to forsake all he had and be 'a man with nothing', but all the personal fulfilment and joy that came with being a father to his children and be able to watch them grow and not miss a single milestone in their development. "Adam" in this case chose to transgress the African patriarchal system which has always been imposed on Black men, to value a paying job as a form of 'being a good father' that can take care of his children. Instead, "Adam" placed more value in availing himself to his children's needs, and based his ideas of being a good father around nurturing and being available for his children, thus breaking away from his own experiences in an attempt to not repeat the cycle of what he went through when his own father was incarcerated, and never experienced his biological father's love. .

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This narrative is important in a sense that it provides us with a positive image of fatherhood in South Africa, and closely correlates with Lindegger, (2006) argument on how positive and supportive images of fatherhood and masculinity can be better explored to reconnect South Africans with the idea of striving for their attainment of these positive representations and roles.

Again, we were introduced to (Ben) who was told that his father passed away when he was little, and as a result has no recollections whatsoever of his dad ever around. He decided that he would never want the same for his son and made it his personal conviction to always be there for his child. This is evidenced in this response to the question of what role his father's absence played in his life.

> *"I think it made me more determined to want to know my own child and to want to want to be a permanent part of his life so that he knows his dad and never has to grow up wondering and resenting me for not being around when he was growing up".*

With (Carl) & (Dean)'s cases, they were both by two parents that were married and living together. Whilst brought up by 2 parents, it's evident in their accounts that both did not model their father's behaviours and instead chose different parenting styles that were atypical of a fatherhood role but how they both adopted this role varies as each individual's circumstances and experiences were shaped by different factors.

"Dean" grew up with both parents but his father was passive, and the introverted type. He was what is understood as father as provider. He went to work, barely played with them or sat them down to spent time to talk to them about anything. He was completely disconnected with them and any household responsibilities including their discipline as his children. He came home on pay days and would hand his wife his entire wages still in the sealed envelope. The wife was then responsible of everything, and that included giving the father pocket money from his wages. "Dean" On the other hand is very domesticated. Though he has a very supportive wife he also takes turns with the wife to relive her from household

chores. He is staying with his siblings that he adopted after their mother's death as the father could not cope and instead chose to live the remainder of his years in the Eastern Cape where he still resides. "Dean" Had to be a father at an early age and instead attributes most of what he has achieved and the man he is today to his late mother.

Though "Carl's" upbringing was a bit exemplary of the traditional historic narratives of a father who migrated to another city to work in the mines leaving his wife and children at home and only seeing them on annual intervals over Christmas or so, he too chose a life different for himself. Though he valued holidays when his dad would be around and give him teachings on cultural aspects

> *"What I valued most were the values he instilled in me every time he was around". "You know, I would feel so important, so grown, so responsible and so informed about my traditional customs".* "Carl" further goes on to say, *"he would teach me so much, do everything with me and it would feel as though he had never left in the first place".*

What is of interest in this case and how the participant speaks highly of his father and the man he made him out to be is that there is an immediate resemblance or pattern of how similar his pattern is with that of his father. Irrespective of the circumstance for this argument's sake but he is also living in another city and sees his children during school holidays. His father used to bring them goodies and that would be the best time of his life, and this is the exact same thing that is facing him now with his own children. He acknowledges and sings praises about his dad and is happy with the man he turned out to be and attributes that to his dad, whom he considers to have been very active in absentia and instrumental in his development.

This is precisely what led me to the conclusion that actively involved does not have to be narrowly defined and only attributed to physical availability. There seems to be continuous contestations in the themes that were presented in the analysis section. Firstly, there lies evident contestation of what actively involved

means. Though majority of the participants expressed their viewpoints of "actively involved" as being physically present in the child's life, there is also the set of actively involved parents that, due to one constraint or another, are unable to be physically present all the time in their children's lives though they try make up for the time spent apart from them at any time when they are able to be with them again. Thus, there needs to be a redefining of what constitutes 'actively involved' as it is clear that there are different ways these fathers engage in the practice.

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CONCLUSION

This entire dissertation has been a journey whose main purpose was to delve into the lives of South African Xhosa men that are living in the Townships of Cape Town. It has been a process that has led us to the few conclusions that this section has come to. The main questions we sought to find answers to were; how active fatherhood influenced notions of masculinities around these Xhosa fathers. Further sub-questions were how they managed with the adoption of this role, and the impact it had on them as men. Moreover, the research also attempted to trace whether these fathers were in need of any coping mechanisms that could better propel them in this role as better fathers and if so, what structures they thought would be suitable for them to be better fathers.

Thus, this study has found that there are different meanings attached to fatherhood. What this then culminates into is that, "actively involved' does not have to be narrowly defined and only attributed to physical availability. Moreover, the space that women occupied in these men's lives also needs to be accounted for as none of these men were raising their children single-headedly. This research also opened our eyes to the subtle space that women occupied in these men's lives. Of particular interest was the newly expectant couple "Dean" and wife, who had been adoptive parents for a huge chunk of their lives whilst they were still dating and unmarried, yet supported each other in every aspect of their lives. The wife even came to the interview and was a part of the interview as she had part of his family so much and other things he could not recall were answered by her. Additionally to the wife in Dean's case, there was also an aunt who is the only mother Adam's children have ever known. There were also grandmothers in 3 out of the 4 cases. These are all the women that were always harbouring in the background of these participant's stories, which is how I have come to theorise that "single father" does not exist.

In all other cases, all the participants had given an indication of an influential woman lurking in the background who had been their supporting base from the onset. These women came in forms of aunts, their mothers, their sisters. Thus, all the women that we were introduced to in these accounts all played a significant role in contributing to how these men shaped their ideas of masculinity and how further supported them in enhancing their masculine identities to incorporate fatherhood as willingly selected identities.

To bring this to a close, one thing that has been constantly lingering at the back of my mind as I began working on the Analysis section was the question: "are we really different internally as men and women?" Granted, biology as a construct did birth the difference, but they are merely physical differences. Now, when it comes to capabilities then I would like to think that we were all gifted in that regard. Just as women have been understood to have a softer side, men also have feminine traits in them. Any man is capable of undertaking any tasks that a woman has previously devoted herself to as a daily chore, just as women can to

just about anything that man can today. In one of my interviews I was reduced to tears and I saw a man wipe away a tear as he spoke in pain about his life experiences. We are not that different as humans if we overlook biology, we never were.

This is precisely the world has always operated in two's, and for every woman that is said to have maternal instincts as a mother, then a father also has paternal instincts that work in the same way, it has always been there, but due to outside pressures, men supressed it as they prioritised making money and taking care of home in that front as what was deemed right for a man. What has been evidenced throughout the analysis was a positive developmental shift of individual states of reaching manhood, a shift geared towards individual agency to bring out their paternal abilities for their own fulfilment and personal benefit of bringing up much better responsive children.

Many studies have explored the meaning of men's roles in their children's lives. For example, Lamb (1986) hypothesized that men were less sensitive and less nurturing towards children because they lacked experience. However, he later reviewed his study and showed that fathers who were actively involved had a positive impact on their children's academic readiness skills. He concluded that fathers were as capable as mothers of behaving sensitively and responsively in interaction with their young children
(Lamb, 1991).

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RECOMMENDATIONS

"Parenthood now is dominantly conceptualised as a considered enterprise and very much a project of the self where many men have willingly taken on to self-reflect and questions their activities as good parents, fathers, and to work towards the ideal of being a 'good' father"(Lupton, Barclay, 1997: 142).

Due to changing circumstances and context in which one might find themselves located in, men have also been responsive to these various global changes by performing roles that have historically been perceived to be that of a woman, roles that have exceeded far beyond economical and financial support and eventually reached a landmark of emotional, educational, and physical support to their children and within the household sphere.

These changing patterns of men as 'carers', 'nurtures', 'supportive and active contributors in private spheres is a result of changing social, political, cultural and economic surroundings where times have encouraged most people to simply shift their thinking beyond "doing gender" and in this study's case, to also examine the broader definition of fatherhood, one that is rooted in " an African cultural value system" according to their own life lessons and experiences as fathers (Lesejane, 2006).

South African men have transformed into better fathers by assessing the value of fatherhood. As Richter & Morrell (2006) put it, South African men are also starting to value fatherhood, it seems there is a greater expansion in the valuing of this role which my study cannot quantify, however, "this could birth great potential for policies on father rights as an international process, as our state policies have not really evolved to respond directly to father's rights to social welfare and holistic human rights of any involved parent as our legal system remains father-unfriendly"(Richter, Morrell: 2006: 3).

- In many countries and from many different perspectives attempts have been made to develop policy approaches to encourage father participation and investment in the care, health and education of their children. Past

programmes have attributed project successes on projects being rooted into the 'township" community background, more people-friendly approach, thus, this stance would also be a beneficial approach to Ikamva Labantu's forum. Morrell argues that, Father's involvement is the greatest, yet most underutilised source for children today.

- A child whose father does not take the responsibilities of fatherhood, for reasons in and outside his control suffers a resource deficit that is often irreplaceable. Again, this does not take away the fact that the father too, experiences this loss in a different form (Morrell, 2006).

In order for the NGO to go about executing their plans of establishing a (pilot) Men's Forum, the following would have to apply;

- Identifying the need for an establishing a men's forum was 1st step in supporting gender equitable models of fatherhood and fathering behaviour within communities.
- Men's forum as good strategy that would help people to view sharing in domestic work as positive component of masculinity
- The development of a men's forum would be helping in developing, not just 'fathers' but men develop their skills and self-worth for domestic activities in a way that would also ease the burden from women.
- Clear goals would need to be established for the programme's objectives i.e. healthy childhood development, or healthy relations that will harmonise home life.
- An implementation process should also entail a monitoring and evaluation module that would help in tracking progress and achievements made by the programme.
- Capacitating men in parent training activities would better enhance their skills and build confidence and recognition on the importance of such a role in the communities, and within one's household.
- Programmes that support the role of men and fathers in parenting need to be "father-friendly" when they are designed.

- There needs to be a higher recognition of the critical contributions made by uncles, grandfathers and other external family members that

- Next step would be providing routine training in working with fathers.

- Partnering with community fathers and community leaders involved in the community programme's initiative.

- Parenting classes for the men-at least once a week where the fathers can meet and support each other and offer each other advice whilst disclosing challenges they are faced with and offering other perspectives in tackling them.

- Getting fathers involved needs commitment, determination and expertise in those involved in the programme design and implementation stages.

- The programmes should be gender sensitive in order to omit any gender stereotypes that might hinder the project's success such as the portrayal of men as 'uninterested' or 'uncaring'.

- Fathers need to be recognised for the important role they play in as child's life, and that of the partners and extended family and at times, with their colleagues.

- Fathers can protect and educate their children, care for them, play with them, help them tom sleep, read them stories, help with their school work and to provide them with love as evidenced in this study through their narratives.

- It is not always easy to reach fathers especially considering time constraints and work commitments which usually take up too much family time, but innovative strategies such as (games day or family day) could work.

Morrell & Richter (2006) caution against stereotypical images and behaviours of masculinity and culturally defined roles within the family structure and views these as obstacles to change. Consequently to that, they argue that countries could move forward if they supported initiative that provide men with opportunities that promote gender equitable parenting, in the home and outside their homes" (Richter& Morrell, 2006)

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