

**A Qualitative Analysis of the Construction of Fatherhood
Through the Voices of Children**

Wendy Smith

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Research Psychology) in the School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

February, 2006

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the construction of fatherhood through the 'voices of children' from a selection of schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. An open, exploratory qualitative research design was employed. The results suggest that children's constructions are primarily contemporary in nature, as opposed to traditional stereotypical notions of fathers as providers only. Fathers were cast in a 'new father' role as loving, caring, supportive and involved. Despite contemporary constructions, children also acknowledge a wide range of father imperfections. Differences in constructions were evident between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Increased research efforts could focus on exploring gender and socio-economic differences in greater detail. It is hoped that these findings will provide the impetus for practitioners and researchers to be more inclusive of fathers and children in research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are numerous people I would like to thank for their support and assistance in the completion of this thesis:

Professor Linda Richter for her specialized expertise in the field of fatherhood, her valuable input and supervision.

My mother, Theresa van Bakel, for her unwavering love and support, her assistance with this work and for always being there for me. You will continue to inspire me in all I do.

My husband and children, Patrick, Jesse and Reuben. For the time you have sacrificed, the love that you have always shown, and for believing in me.

My sister Shelly for her constant encouragement, love, availability and wisdom.


E. G. LACHENICHT
13-Dec. 2006.

This study represents original work by the author and has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any university. Where use has been made of the work of others, it is duly acknowledged in the text.

Wendy Smith
February, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Table of Contents | iv |
| List of Tables | viii |
| Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW | 3 |
| 2.1 Fatherhood (un)defined | 3 |
| 2.1.1 Issues of definition | 3 |
| 2.1.2 Images of “Father” | 5 |
| 2.2 A scholarly history of fatherhood | 5 |
| 2.2.1 Pre-colonial and early colonial fatherhood | 6 |
| 2.2.2 Traditional, stereotypical fatherhood | 6 |
| 2.2.3 Contemporary fatherhood | 7 |
| 2.2.4 Social fatherhood | 9 |
| 2.3 Fatherhood in South Africa | 10 |
| 2.3.1 Historical overview | 10 |
| 2.3.2 Socio-economic issues | 12 |
| 2.4 Father involvement | 14 |
| 2.4.1 Conceptualising father involvement | 14 |
| 2.4.2 The role of the father in child development | 16 |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| 2.5 | The relevance of children's voices | 18 |
| 2.5.1 | Children as social actors | 18 |
| 2.5.2 | Children's rights | 19 |
| 2.5.3 | Children's voices | 20 |
| 2.5.4 | Children's views of fathers | 21 |
| Chapter 3: | RATIONALE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY | 24 |
| Chapter 4: | METHODOLOGY | 26 |
| 4.1 | Pilot reading of essays | 26 |
| 4.2 | Questionnaire development | 26 |
| 4.3 | School liaison | 27 |
| 4.4 | Participants | 27 |
| 4.5 | Data collection | 28 |
| 4.6 | Ethical considerations | 29 |
| 4.7 | Analysis | 30 |
| 4.8 | Validity and reliability | 32 |
| Chapter 5: | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION | 34 |
| 5.1 | The wide range of men who fulfill father roles in children's lives | 35 |
| 5.2 | Overall findings | 36 |
| 5.2.1 | Contemporary nature of fatherhood | 36 |
| 5.2.1.1 | Fathering as a direct, personal and nurturing role | 40 |
| 5.2.1.2 | Fathering as an indirect, social role | 44 |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------|
| 5.2.2 | Managing the contradictions | 47 |
| 5.2.2.1 | Awareness of personal faults and shortcomings of the contemporary and ideal father | 48 |
| 5.2.2.2 | Managing the contradictions on a personal level | 52 |
| 5.2.3 | Idealised fatherhood | 53 |
| 5.2.4 | Socio-economic differences | 55 |
| Chapter 6: | LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY | 60 |
| 6.1 | Subjective nature of the study | 60 |
| 6.2 | Questionnaire design | 60 |
| 6.3 | Data collection | 61 |
| 6.4 | Analysis | 62 |
| Chapter 7: | CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 64 |
| 7.1 | The importance of children’s views | 64 |
| 7.2 | Contemporary constructions of fatherhood | 65 |
| 7.3 | Dualistic existence of traditional and contemporary fatherhood | 66 |
| 7.4 | Father imperfections | 66 |
| 7.5 | Idealised fatherhood | 68 |
| 7.6 | Social fatherhood | 69 |
| 7.7 | Recommendations | 70 |
| | REFERENCES | 73 |

| | |
|---|----|
| APPENDICES | 79 |
| Appendix A: Themes generated from children’s essays | 80 |
| Appendix B: Questionnaire | 84 |
| Appendix C: Coding Schedule | 86 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| Table 1 | Percentage of fathers who are alive and resident by household expenditure categories | 13 |
| Table 2 | Number of extracts for contemporary and traditional constructions by schools | 38 |
| Table 3 | Total number of extracts for each sub-construct of contemporary fatherhood | 39 |
| Table 4 | Total number of extracts for each sub-construct of father imperfections | 49 |
| Table 5 | Socioeconomic differences by schools | 56 |

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

That fathers are an important psychological, social and material resource to children is a well known fact, or is it? This topic is one that is hotly debated by the popular media where men are portrayed as abusers who disregard their family's needs, abandon their children and consistently default on childcare payments. In contrast a burgeoning literature on fathers and fatherhood internationally has sought to demonstrate the important role that fathers can play in the care, development and protection of their children, as well as highlight the needs of men and the potentially significant role that fathers can play (Lamb, 1997).

Captured within this literature is the evolution of fatherhood in its many different guises across historical epochs. The turn of the 19th century saw the evolution of the 'traditional stereotypical father' who worked hard, was emotionally distant from his family and children, but nevertheless fulfilled the role of provider and protector. The current emerging model of the 'new contemporary father', whereby fathers are actively engaged in the emotional, physical and intellectual development of their children, challenges this long-established discourse of traditional fatherhood (Henwood & Procter, 2003; Richter, 2003; Tanfer & Mott, 1997).

Whereas internationally fathers can no longer be considered 'forgotten parents', there is a dearth of literature from developing countries on the study of fathers and the portrayal of fatherhood in South Africa has been particularly neglected (Lamb, 1975; Nsamenang, 2000; Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Most pointedly, there is an absence of research in South Africa that seeks to capture the 'voices' of children and investigate their reflections and perspectives of their biological and

social fathers. What do children think about their fathers and are fathers really important in their lives?

This study investigated the construction of fatherhood through the 'voices' of children in a sample of children from a selection of schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It explored the dimensions and parameters by which fathers are defined and perceived by children and, particularly, the extent to which children's constructions are locked into either a 'new contemporary father' framework or that of the traditional 'provider and protector'.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of general academic knowledge on fatherhood derived from current theories and research data, focusing on issues specifically pertaining to fatherhood in South Africa, and pointing to gaps in research and the relevance of children's voices.

2.1 Fatherhood (un)defined

2.1.1 Issues of definition

Undeniably there is no single definition of fatherhood that can lay claim to widespread recognition or empirical support. The meaning is disputed and there is no simple answer as the complexity of fathering roles are constantly being deliberated and reassessed (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000; Sullivan, 2000; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). Tanfer and Mott (1997) differentiate between 'fatherhood' and 'fathering'; in the West the former status is reached by biologically fathering a child, whereas the latter includes both the biological connection and all the child-associated roles that fathers may perform. Men, however, who fulfill a fatherly role in relation to children who are not biologically related to them, may be regarded as fathers as well. Some biological fathers embrace fatherhood, whereas others reject it, and other non-biological fathers may embrace it. (Morrell, Posel & Devey, 2003).

The relationship of father and child may vary in terms of established biological bonds and living arrangements (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002); additionally, social changes and medical advances challenge the biological basis of fatherhood. The structure of the family continues to change and hence many children will grow up in different family configurations - perhaps with both biological parents, with a stepfather, a substitute father, or in female-headed households (Cabrera et al., 2000).

It would be erroneous to assume that all men who are biologically related to a child are or will be good fathers, and that a biological link with a man demands respect and love from a child. In most cases where there is no biological father - who may be absent through work, abandonment, economic necessity or divorce - there are other male adults, 'social fathers', who may more than adequately fulfill the material and economic needs of a child (Morrell et al., 2003). The concept of social fatherhood is a meaningful one as it includes all the childrearing roles, activities, duties and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and fulfill (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Social fatherhood invites an African, specifically a southern African perspective that needs to be addressed. The socio-cultural tradition, which recognizes fatherhood as a social, moral, historical and relational process may offer a better route with which to pursue meanings of fatherhood, especially in South Africa (Mkhize, 2006).

Changes in economic and social conditions have led to greater diversity in family and parenting arrangements. In some cases men are experiencing confusion in terms of their roles and the application of such roles, engendered by the new roles adopted by women in the work force and the absence of role models in their own lives. Key changes include an increase in paid

employment for women (and a decline for men), more women in the workplace, more fathers working part-time to take care of children at home, fathers as single parents, and the decline in numbers of the 'traditional, nuclear family' as we know it (Callister, 1999).

2.1.2 Images of 'father'

The father archetype has traversed time and space in many different guises such as the heavenly father, absent father, king, and violent father (Abramovitch, 1997; Lindegger, 2006). According to the Jungian view, images of men are split into 'cruel, savage men' who desert their families and abuse their children, and 'soft men' who are gentle and play a valuable role in their families (Bly, 1991). As much as a father may be decent, respectable and kind, he is equally capable of destructive and damaging behaviour. Contemporary men's movements worldwide have reacted against images of fathers as 'deadbeat', 'soft' and 'vicious and cruel', and have attempted to recreate images of fathers who successfully maintain the 'golden mean'. Such men view fathering as manly and gratifying, while embracing contemporary forms of non-oppressive masculinity (Sullivan, 2000; Lindegger, 2006).

2.2 A scholarly history of fatherhood

Historical contexts have framed academic and popular notions of parenting, families and children. At a cursory glance it appears that traditional constructions of fatherhood have been replaced with contemporary constructions. However, in order to validate this, a deeper exploration of historical context needs to be pursued (Coltrane & Parke, 1998).

2.2.1 Pre-colonial and early colonial fatherhood

Typically fathers in this period worked at home and interacted a great deal with their children, primarily around subsistence activities (Fagan & Palm, 2004). Whereas mothers fulfilled most of the care-giving role, fathers were understood to be the 'primary parent', taking greater responsibility for disciplining children, fulfilling material needs, controlling family property and functioning as caregivers where necessary (Pleck, 1987, cited in Palkovitz, 2004). In traditionally African and southern African settings, children were nurtured and raised in large, extended, clan-based families where child-rearing was seen as the collective responsibility of the whole family (Mkhize, 2006). African fathers maintained positions of extreme importance in families, being the ones to provide economically and materially, solve problems, make decisions, protect and discipline children, confer social connections on children, and act as moral guides and teachers transferring knowledge, traditions and skills on to their children. In order to fulfill these roles fathers were available, took responsibility for supervising their children's lives and interacted constantly with their families (Lesejane, 2006; Nsamenang, 2000).

2.2.2 Traditional, stereotypical fatherhood

Increasingly, with changes from agrarian-oriented societies to the industrial age in the second half of the 19th century, more and more men were drawn into the market place and out of livelihoods based in or near the homestead. Where previously fathers had been intimately involved in raising their children whilst fulfilling the role of breadwinner, this era witnessed a significant weakening of fathers' role as principal parent, and the distinct emergence of the primarily 'provider and protector' role. Fathers at the workplace were no longer available to

play a role in caring for and engaging emotionally and socially with their children (Cabrera et al., 2000; Fagan & Palm, 2004; Sullivan, 2000; Tanfer & Mott, 1997)

In sub-Saharan Africa the increased demand for labour, government taxes and the decline of the agricultural sector, to name a few, were precursors to increasing numbers of African men being drawn out of the home into the labour market, heralding significant changes in family life. Increasingly, with the growth of the mining sector, more and more men were pulled into a system of migrancy that disconnected them from their homes and families for significant periods of time. In many instances African fathers were only able to see their families once a year. Cumulatively, these changes in social structures influenced the type of relationship fathers could enjoy with their families and children. Clearly, the ability to engage closely and emotionally with children diminished, and father's role increasingly became constrained to that of 'provider' (Hunter, 2006; Lesejane, 2006).

2.2.3 Contemporary fatherhood

The evolution of fatherhood from the traditional 'provider, protector' model to the 'new, contemporary, modern father' model with father as co-parent saw unheralded development in the West during the latter part of the 20th century (Cabrera et al., 2000). The origins of this 'new, contemporary father' model marked a turn in conceptualization of fathers roles, where the new father was more of a 'dad' who was close to his children, had fun with them and was involved to some degree in childrearing activities (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

A number of economic, social and familial shifts have accompanied the growth of the new father model. The first is the entry of significant numbers of women into the workplace due to economic expansion and increased wage rates, leading to adjustments in the 'good provider role' for men and changes in family structure, orientation and child-care (Demos, 1982; Tanfer & Mott, 1997). The second shift is that of the growing prevalence of divorce, single parenthood, absent fathers and even single fatherhood in some cases. The new model claims greater father involvement of (some) men in the lives of their children, with interchangeable mother/father roles as more women move into the workplace (Cabrera et al., 2000).

South Africa has been regarded, until recently, as a 'man's country' wherein men, both Black and White, have "made decisions, earned the money, and held the power" and have upheld the stronghold of chauvinism (Morrell, 2001, p.18). Historically, White men and their families have enjoyed economic, social and political privileges and the luxury and comforts of a first world existence. In contrast, *Apartheid* created a social structure where Black men and their families were marginalized and dehumanized, forced to live in the shadow of poverty, powerlessness and unemployment.

Post-apartheid, both Black and White men are in transition, with no one conventional construction of the 'South African man'. Increasingly the idea of the 'new man' is growing among White South African men, with more Black men embracing something of this masculinity as well. Simultaneously, in this mix are the more conventional representations of masculinity that bolster violence and gender inequalities. Hence there are those men who are attempting to break the mold of chauvinism by embracing a new man' masculinity, and others who endorse the traditional, exploitative 'it's a man's world' model (Morrell, 2001).

Critics of the 'new father' role argue that the image is merely a construction of popular culture and the media, disguising the fact that women are still primarily responsible for child-care and housework. Fathers in the Henwood and Proctor study in the United States (2003), however, showed a very clear preference for new, contemporary fatherhood as it cuts a contrast with the established model of the financially supportive, authoritative and inaccessible man and father. The interviewees indicated their willingness to live up to the ideal of a selfless, sensitive and child-centered parent, matching the cultural image of the 'new man' or 'new father' and creating an environment for men to occupy in the shifting space of family life.

2.2.4 Social fatherhood

The socio-cultural tradition recognizes that the process of fathering does not occur in isolation but always in a specific cultural context defined by the history, geography and social dynamics of that context (Nsamenang, 2000). Responsibility for the care and upbringing of children may fall within the domain of a 'social father', perhaps a grandfather, uncle or brother (Engle & Breaux, 1998). In this context, children, exposed to a number of adult figures, may not 'belong' exclusively to their biological parents (Nsamenang, 2000). It is important to consider that fathers derived their positions of authority in the home from prescribed cultural notions of manhood where they are not actively engaged in child care, a role left to women. Positive constructions for men derived from their cultural systems, for example, include the ability to provide economically for one's family and not to resort to violence against women or children (Mkhize, 2006). Demographic studies show that social fatherhood, where men assume a father-like role in

children's lives, is on the increase as more biological fathers, through personal choice or not, are disconnected from their children (Palkovitz, 2002).

2.3 Fatherhood in South Africa

2.3.1 Historical overview

Any examination of families, children and father-child relationships in South Africa has to be viewed in terms of harsh and exclusive legislation entrenched by the *Apartheid* regime wherein White people were regarded as superior and Black people as inferior. *Apartheid's* strategy was to establish and maintain White privilege and supremacy through a system of separation from Black people, and the consequent 'management' and subordination of Black people. Through a series of legislative changes including influx control, pass laws, forced removals and the Group Areas Act, Black people were evicted from their homes and separated as families (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

The Group Areas Act, passed in 1950, paved the way for the 'legitimate' segregation of residential areas by race whereby Black people were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated far away enough for "white comfort but close enough to fill low-paying domestic, service, mining, and manufacturing jobs in areas designated for whites only" (Barbarin & Richter, 2001, p. 31). The entrenchment of such legislation and the migrant labour system, to control and mobilize labour, had a huge impact on the movement of workers, predominantly men, from rural to urban areas. The opportunity for men, women and children to live together in

towns as families was seriously undermined, spouses and children were not permitted to live with fathers, and permanent settlement in town was impossible for families (Morrell, 2001).

Such a system of segregation within families, executed with diligence for decades, produced a legacy in which many Black African children grew up without the presence of their biological father (Morrell, 2004). Le Roux (1994, cited in Wilson, 2006) reports that in 1993 “two-thirds (66%) of black children were not living at home with both parents, compared to only 13 percent of white children in the same situation” (p. 28). Additionally, 87% percent of White or Indian South African children under the age of 19 lived at home with both parents, but only 34% of Black South African children enjoyed the same advantages. Where men were absent from the home because of migrant labour, this was not necessarily indicative of a lack of concern and care for children. Fathers may have been physically absent but emotionally present as far as family life was conceived (Desmond & Desmond, 2006). For Black South African men the migrant labour system had serious repercussions for their living arrangements, with most fathers away from home for considerable periods of time.

The post-Apartheid labour market is distinguished by rising unemployment and ever-increasing labour migration where household members, most often men, are away for at least one month to a year in order to earn enough to feed their families (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Wilson, 2006).

The resultant Black social structure is one where a significant overlap between poverty, migration and almost permanently absent fathers from homes is evident. Such a history, fraught with massive upheaval and injustice, has had a major impact on families in general and fatherhood in particular and the way in which fatherhood has been shaped in different racial and class groupings (Morrell, 2004; Wilson, 2006).

2.3.2 Socio-economic issues

The policies of the *Apartheid* government have created an extremely biased economy where some areas have been highly developed, others are significantly under-developed and most of the resources rest in the hands of White people. First and Third World conditions of wealth and comfort, and extreme deprivation co-exist.

According to the NEDLAC report (1998) on the state of social and economic matters in South Africa, 61% of Black Africans were poor compared with a negligible 1% of Whites. The sharp divisions between racial groups is, for the most, evident in differences in household incomes.

According to General Household Survey data (2004) the average monthly expenditure for Black African families is less than R800, compared with an average of over R10,000 for White families.

Overall, three out of five South African children live in poor households. “Grinding poverty in the sense of inadequate income to meet the basic needs of human existence, remains a searing feature of life in South Africa today for a significant proportion of households, particularly those which are black” (Wilson, 2006, p. 30). Lack of economic resources severely undermines Black African fathers’ capacity to adequately meet the most basic needs of their children, and often has implications for a fathers’ presence or absence in the home.

Desmond and Desmond (2006, p 232) explore the degree to which household income holds some kind of a linear relationship with father presence or absence in the home (Table 1). The figures seem to imply that where fathers have little access to economic resources, they are less likely to

be present and active in the home. Economic power, it seems, can significantly affect the extent to which fathers are present in the home, and hence the degree to which children are able to enjoy a relationship with them.

Table 1:

Percentage of fathers who are alive and resident by household expenditure categories

| Expenditure category in SA rands | African Households | All Households |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| R0-R399 | 37 | 38 |
| R400-R799 | 35 | 37 |
| R800-R1199 | 46 | 49 |
| R1200-1799 | 53 | 57 |
| R1800-R2499 | 58 | 65 |
| R2500-R4999 | 64 | 74 |
| R5000-R9999 | 73 | 84 |
| R10000+ | 85 | 93 |

Source: Estimations based on GHS 2002

Although *Apartheid* has been dismantled and discredited, South African history has ensured that generations of children will continue to be affected by a system of racism and inequality (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Traditionally, White children from middle to upper income households, have been raised in nuclear families where fathers are breadwinners working outside of the home, and mothers fulfill the role of housewife and caregiver. In general terms White schoolchildren experience a higher quality education, go off to school better dressed and fed, and have exposure to better learning resources at home and at school (Burman, 1986; Perry & Arends, 2003).

For most Black families and children from lower income households the cumulative effects of inequality, poverty and migrancy have gravely affected the composition of society, schooling and family life, and have negatively affected men's ability to fulfill their financial

responsibilities as fathers (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Many Black African families live below the 'poverty datum line' and have little access to basic infrastructure such as housing, electricity, health services, clean water and adequate sanitation (General Household Survey, 2004).

Where some Black children, from lower to middle income households, have gained access to better education for most the reality is exactly the opposite of White children - fewer teachers and resources, overcrowding, and being 'less fed and dressed'. Additionally, the intensification of urban migration, modernization of family life and the increase in working opportunities for Black women hold serious implications for families and the well-being of children (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

2.4 Father involvement

Despite continued interest and investigation into issues of fatherhood, it is apparent that we are far from understanding the multifaceted ways in which fathers contribute to their children and families (Palkovitz, 2002).

2.4.1 Conceptualising father involvement

Many researchers and practitioners subscribe to the view that fathers can powerfully and positively affect the lives of children, but wrestle with what it means to be an involved father. Conceptual frameworks of father involvement that have been transformed into widely used, psychometrically reliable and valid measures are few and far between (Palkovitz, 2002).

Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1985, 1987 cited in Palkovitz, 2002) proposed one of the most often referred to frameworks used in mainstream research on fatherhood, whereby father involvement can be categorized in terms of

- a) Personal paternal interaction with a child, engaging in play, learning activities and caretaking,
- b) Being accessible and available to a child, even when there may be no physical contact between father and child and,
- c) Taking responsibility for a child's well being and care.

The Fathering Indicators Framework (FIF) was developed by the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) in order to assist practitioners and researchers to appropriately evaluate projected behaviour change in fatherhood programmes. The FIF identifies a number of categories by which fathering can be defined. Father's significance and involvement can be classified in terms of

- a) A father's presence and availability;
- b) Care-giving and nurturing roles;
- c) Active engagement with children to develop social competence and academic achievement;
- d) Supportive and cooperative parenting with other caregivers;
- e) Providing a role model through healthy living;
- f) Material and financial support to children and the existence of a healthy relationship with the mother of the child (Gadsden, Fagan, Ray & Davis, 2004).

2.4.2 The role of the father in child development

Research on fathers in the past three decades shows clear agreement among developmentalists that positive father involvement has important influences on their children. (Hernandez & Brandon, 2002; Palkovitz, 2002). Cultural, familial, personal, and socio-economic circumstances influence the extent of fatherly involvement and subsequent effects on children (Dubeau, 2002). There is no doubt that fathers can play an important role in the lives of their children as caregivers, providers, protectors, moral guides and companions. Father involvement may have both indirect and direct effects. Indirectly, economic support and provision is an important way in which fathers see to the needs of their children. Additionally, the provision of emotional and tangible support to the mother of the child and other caregivers is a significant source of indirect support (Lamb, 1997).

Directly, fathers can positively influence their children through touching, talking, playing and teaching them, as well as taking care of them. In physical play with fathers, less 'instant assistance' in frustrating situations can positively impact on a child's confidence and adaptability to meet challenges. A father's penchant for encouraging uninhibited play may contribute to greater measurable and perceived problem solving competence in a child. Children of fathers who are nurturing, committed, available, warm and loving, generally exhibit greater cognitive capabilities and heightened social competencies (Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Pruett, 2001). In contrast, cognitive development in father-deprived children is likely to be hampered. Biller & Kimpton (1997), in their synopsis of research concerning the significance of father involvement in the school-aged child, identified a strong relationship between father's education and occupation and academic functioning in children. A study in South Africa endeavoured to assess

if there are any differences in academic achievement between children whose fathers are either absent due to migrant labour, or present in the home. Results indicated that children whose fathers are present score considerably higher than children whose fathers are absent, suggesting the negative effects of continued father absence from the home (Mboya & Nesengani, 1999)

Fathers who spend time with their children and exhibit a positive and flexible attitude to life, are also likely to engender a greater capacity for attachment in their children. Heightened empathy and self-control in children has also been positively linked to fathers who help out with personal problems, who are affectionate, and who discipline and institute boundaries (Pruett, 2001).

Highly available fathers assist their children to reach their potential and act as models of perseverance (Parke, 1981).

Although demographic, socio-economic and family conditions will vary from one context to the next, and father resources are extremely diverse, it is the quality and nature of the interaction between father and child that determines consequences of the involvement. Children's well-being, within increasingly diverse cultural contexts, is dependant on continued research addressing issues such as the resources that fathers bring to families, their relationships with significant caregivers of the children and the kind of relationships they enjoy with the children themselves (Hernandez & Brandon, 2002).

2.5 The relevance of children's voices

2.5.1 Children as social actors

New sociological approaches to the study of childhood are a move to study children's experiences. Traditionally, developmental psychology has studied children within the context of 'stages' and has ignored them as actually living in the social world. Children have been regarded as incompetent and unable to give reliable data. So much of what is known about children has been derived from studying the individually located 'timeless' representative child (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998).

New moves to examine children in social context emphasize focusing on the socially constructed and historical child, situated within a range of social communities (Graue & Walsh, 1998). As James et al. point out "precisely because the social space of childhood has been determined for so long through the model of the developing child, questions are now being asked about what children can say and what status children's words can have" (1998, p. 177). It is only when children are positioned as subjects that we may gain access to the complexities of their world. This new paradigm characterizes a move away from the notion that children are an 'imperfect form of adulthood', yet to realize their social significance in the world.

The 'sociological child' is conceived of as a social actor, a new subject rather than 'object' of research, who can be understood in his or her own right, with recognition for the varied socio-cultural contexts in which the 'natural child' grows up and lives. This new paradigm endeavours to situate childhood at the heart of the debate, as opposed to always subsuming their interests to

other familial topics. Without disacknowledging commonly accepted 'stages' of child development, the sociological child is one who does not exist in a predetermined and commonly identifiable form (James et al, 1998). It is acknowledged that attempting to interpret children's work and find their 'authentic world' may be a very difficult task, however, what children have to say may be very different from 'normal' conceptions (Ritala-Koskinen cited in Davis, 1998).

2.5.2 Children's rights

The United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child, Article 12 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990), states that children not only have a right to express their opinions regarding issues affecting them but also to have these opinions heard. That children's rights have been encoded in the Convention heralds the recognition of their position as socially relevant individuals. Overall, the intention is that children's voices need to be taken into account by adults who make decisions about children's lives. Up to the mid-80's children's voices were disregarded with most research focusing on children as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' of study (Jones, 2004). Research around the issue of father involvement most often focuses on adult perceptions, leaving the inaccurate impression that children's views don't matter as much (Pruett, 2001).

Children's presence and their rights are an important issue of our time, and there is strong support for the view that their voices and viewpoints about issues directly affecting them must be heard (James et al., 1998). As Grover indicates "There is a need for authentic social research with children given the fact that increasingly such research is being relied on to inform social policy which profoundly affects the lives of children" (p. 81). Research with children not only

gives them a voice and allows access into their world, but facilitates their involved participation as subjects rather than objects. Giving children the opportunity to actively participate in research underscores their rights and significance as people; “it is time that children were regarded as experts on their own subjective experience” (Grover, 2004, p.91).

2.5.3 Children’s voices

The ‘voices and views’ approach, where children’s experiences and perceptions of school, family life and other situations are examined, has gained increasing recognition for its ability to reveal issues of importance to children in their own words, using their own terms and expressions. Although children are said to shoulder “reliability health warnings” (Kellet & Ding, 2004, p. 165) because they have inadequate life experience and say what is expected of them, recent research challenges such claims. There is simply no safeguard against either adults or children distorting truth and fiction as truth is an entirely individualistic perception. If children are questioned in a non-threatening way about a topic that is important to them, and in a way that they can understand, they can provide reliable and trustworthy responses. It is also understood, by and large, that children in the ‘middle year’ age category (11 - 13 years) are able to read and write and express themselves fairly competently (Kellet & Ding, 2004).

In a study of the influence of television and videos on young children, Belton (2000) endeavoured to find a valid way to ‘read between the lines’ of 500 10- to 12-year-old children’s stories. “We really should not disadvantage those children whose lack of articulacy or ease with the written word renders the complexity or subtlety of their thoughts less accessible than those to

whom these skills come more readily” (Belton, 2000, p.8). A writing project with a group of 8- and 9-year-olds in Sweden attempted to throw some light on children’s constructions of relationships within the family unit. This research context showed that children write from their own perspectives, building “in one way or another upon their own experiences” (Hallden, 1994). Although Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera indicate that “unfortunately, children’s voices, especially very young children, are absent from most accounts of father involvement, perhaps due to the difficulty in validly assessing the perspectives of young children” (2002, p. 614), this does not warrant their exclusion from the fatherhood debate.

2.5.4 Children’s views of fathers

“Literature reveals very few studies that explore children and young people’s view of fathering. It seems there is a significant gap in terms of raw data from the younger generation who are pivotal in the debate about the importance of fathers, the children themselves” (Howard, Curtin, & Hardy, 2003, p 36.)

In the New Zealand study, the *Fathers who care: Partners in parenting children’s views*, various methods such as drawings, story writing, interviews, and focus groups were used to see how children of different ages perceive their father’s roles and responsibilities (Hendriks, 1999, cited in Howard et al., 2003). Some children identified ‘ideal’ and ‘not ideal’ characteristics of fathers and most displayed an awareness of the potential influence of these on father’s behaviours. Children were able to recognize, for example, how factors such as working hard and alcohol misuse can affect the quantity and quality of time spent together with their fathers (Sullivan,

2000). In another study, *Fatherless sons - a review of the voices*, the author sought to capture the voices of two groups, those of mothers and their sons. This four year participatory action research project has involved interviews with participants, as well as the interpretation of projective drawings (Chrisp, 1999). There was strong agreement amongst all mothers about the positive influence that fathers have in the lives of their sons, revealing the vital role that fathers can play in reinforcing values such as respect for women. The interpretation of drawings by 176 male students revealed that the connection between fathers and sons is strongest in the pre- and early teenage years, with the father more dominant than the mother at all periods of the boy's lives.

Working with all schools in Queensland, Australia, the Children's Commission sought to explore children's perceptions of their fathers. Through a state-wide Father's Day competition, children were encouraged to share their ideas in words and pictures about their fathers or those who fulfill a father-figure in their lives. In this key study children were invited to "tell us about the important and valuable role of fathers in the lives of children" (Howard et al., 2003, p. 39). Fathers referred to in the study included biological and non-biological fathers, grandfathers, other family members and friends. Of the 1449 entries received, forty-five themes were identified with the four most important themes being 'sharing time with dad', 'father's work', 'father qualities' and 'love and affection' (Howard et al., 2003). Pruett's (2001) investigation into the perceptions of fathers by children reveals an intense hunger for a secure, abiding, constant father figure in their life. A common theme in children's descriptions is how wonderful they regard their father to be. Fathers matter a great deal, as Stacy puts it "Mommy, what did you do with my daddy? You know I need a daddy or I can't be a child" (Pruett, 2000, p. 206).

There is clearly a need for more research which explores the views of children. Adding children's voices to the research agenda adds a deeply relevant dimension to research on fatherhood. In contrast to adult's views and assumptions of family life and the significance of fatherhood, children's voices provide an alternative view that is distinctive (Christensen, 2000, in Prout, 2001). Overall children's voices seem to point to father involvement that is different, more caring, secure, encouraging and offering new opportunities for growth (Palkovitz, 2002). "It's a revolutionary question, really. What do children think about their fathers, who they actually are and what they do together?" (Pruett, 2001, p. 203).

Chapter 3. RATIONALE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

South Africa is reported to have a deplorably high incidence of child abuse, mainly perpetrated by men, and fathers are often absent from homes for long periods of time (Richter, Pather, Manegold & Mason, 2004). Even when men do contribute to their children's emotional and physical well-being, estimates suggest that more than half of them do not live consistently with their children (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). In addition, the AIDS epidemic has occasioned a crisis of care for affected children, requiring that both the number of people available to care for children and the quality of children's care be increased (Desmond & Desmond, 2006)

Clearly men contribute to children's hardships, but they also have great potential to contribute to positive child development. It is therefore regrettable that programmes that target children, women and family support, fail to include men or fathers. In light of this situation, the Child, Youth and Family Development programme at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) launched an action research project called *The Fatherhood Project* to promote men's care and protection of children (Richter, Pather, Manegold & Mason, 2004).

The Fatherhood Project has creatively attempted to re-invigorate notions of positive, committed fatherhood through visual images, information dissemination and research (Richter, 2003). The Fatherhood Project was initiated with an exhibition of photographs sensitively portraying men and children in protective and caring relationships. Many of the photographs were taken by schoolchildren who were also asked to write essays about their fathers or a father-figure in their

life. A by-product of the Fatherhood Project is the publication of the book *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, edited by Professors Linda Richter and Robert Morrell.

(<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/fatherhood/introduction/introduction.html>).

The rationale behind this research project, '*A qualitative analysis of the construction of fatherhood through the voices of children*', was to enhance and complement the growing body of literature in South Africa and internationally on children's voices. Of the extensive literature on fatherhood, very little has enlisted the voices of children and young people, and their perceptions and construction of fathers and fatherhood. A lack of research in South Africa regarding children's perceptions of fathers is at the heart of this study, actively seeking out their constructions of fatherhood and examining various accounts given by children from a selection of schools in KwaZulu-Natal. This project aimed to investigate the insights of children regarding the role that fathers' fulfil, and identify key dimensions of this relationship. Children can provide us with valuable information about their thoughts and feelings and the way they experience the world. Some of the key questions this project aimed to explore included.

1. What are children's constructions of fatherhood and in what terms and metaphors do children describe fathers?
2. Do children view fathers in the same light as contemporary thinking about 'new fathers' or are their conceptions more traditional?
3. How important are fathers to these children, and along what dimensions?
4. What are children's ideal constructions of fathers, and what are the parameters by which the role is understood?

Chapter 4. METHODOLOGY

An open, exploratory qualitative research design was used to investigate the aims of the project.

4.1 Pilot reading of essays

The basis of the present study and questionnaire development was drawn from a pilot reading of 80 essays originating from the *Fatherhood Project*. As part of the *Fatherhood Project*, two groups of 10 to 12 year olds, one group in a rural area and one in an urban area, were invited to participate in an essay writing competition on the topic of 'my father'. Using current conceptual frameworks of father involvement (such as the Fathering Indicators Framework) as a basis for analysis, essays were repeatedly read, analysed for meaning and examined for themes. Repeated reading yielded 10 major themes that encapsulate and frame children's constructions, words and meanings about their fathers (see Appendix A for general themes).

4.2 Questionnaire development

Based on readings of these essays, a simply structured questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire comprised eight open-ended questions (in English) developed in order to further explore how children perceive and construct fatherhood (Appendix B). Questionnaires asked for some demographic information such as the age and sex of the child, as well as basic information about their relationship with their father. A small sample of children was invited to participate in

answering the questions in a pilot study. Based on responses from this pilot sample, questions were reassessed and refined.

4.3 School liaison

Three schools in KwaZulu-Natal were approached with a view to participating in the project. Heads of schools were consulted and presented with an overview of the *Fatherhood Project*. Letters of consent and project overview were forwarded to parents. Only those children whose parents consented participated in the study. Teachers were briefed and given an information sheet in order to familiarize themselves with the aims of the project, and ensure their participation and that of the children. The children, in school time, were also briefed in a non-threatening way about the project and what was expected of them.

4.4 Participants

Purposive sampling was used as a basis for selecting participants for the study. Such sampling techniques allow for the selection of cases based on the feature in which the project is specifically interested, namely a range of children's perceptions of fathers (Silverman, 2002). This research project did not aim to make any specific generalisations and hence representativeness of the sample was not central to its success. Participants were 280 Grade 6 schoolchildren from three different schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The criterion for inclusion in the study was 11 to 13-year-old 'middle-year' Grade 6 girls and boys.

The schools were selected purposively in order to incorporate variation and obtain as broad a picture as possible of socio-cultural differences.

The participants were selected from the following types of schools -

School A: A historically Black, disadvantaged, lower income, co-educational state school.

School B: A Model C, lower- to middle-income, co-educational state school.

School C: A historically White, privileged, middle- to upper-income, private, co-educational school.

Children were not asked to indicate race, but in the disadvantaged school all children were black, in the privileged school most were white, and in the Model C school there was an equal mix of both.

4.5 Data collection

Questionnaires were administered by teachers to each of their classes at a pre-determined time. Children who chose not to participate on the day, or whose parents did not give consent, were allowed to leave the classroom and engage in another activity. Of the anticipated sample of between 300 - 320 children in all three schools approximately 9% did not participate. The children were made aware of the fact that they had sufficient time to complete the questions within school time, that the contents were completely private (they were not asked to give their names), and that they could write as much or as little as they wanted to. Once questionnaires were completed these were placed directly into individual envelopes, sealed by each child, and

collected immediately thereafter. Two hundred and eighty questionnaires in total were returned completed from all three schools. Of the 280 completed questionnaires, 40 from each school (20 boys and 20 girls), were randomly selected for further analysis - 120 questionnaires in total.

4.6 Ethical considerations

The nature of this research sought the direct involvement of research participants, namely children, as the subjects of research. Research of this nature may be contentious, however, it is the growing belief of a number of researchers that children have the right to be heard and regarded as experts on their own personal experiences (Grover, 2004). Some of the key ethical considerations when doing research with children include obtaining voluntary consent of the research participants, the rights of participants to withdraw should they so wish, and benefits of the research (Greig & Taylor, 1999). Since this study included minors, it was necessary to obtain parental consent, but most importantly assent from the children themselves. Additionally, the support and consent of the principal of the school was obtained in order to enroll learners for whose welfare s/he is ultimately responsible. To this end, consultations with the principals of schools clearly outlined the nature of the research, the requirements for participation, the procedures to be followed, possible benefits and the value of the children's participation.

Each principal outlined the project to the children, highlighting what it was about, how useful the results would be and answered any questions raised. Additionally, a project overview and forms for written consent were sent to each parent. The support and involvement of the relevant Grade 6 teachers was also obtained. Every precaution was taken to ensure that children understood the process and the goals of the project, and that their anonymity was guaranteed. Every effort was

made to ensure that children did not feel coerced to participate because of consent given by parents and teachers. On the day of writing, if a child did not feel up to the task, s/he was given permission to leave the classroom and do another task without any threat of reprisal. Questionnaire access is limited to the author and supervisor only. At all times confidentiality of the participants has been respected and the data used in a judicious and appropriate way. With the recent publication of the book *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, presentations on the issue of fatherhood were made to each of the participating schools, and a copy presented to the school library.

4.7 Analysis

The data were subject to in-depth analysis on the qualitative software package *NVivo 2000*, and employing conventions outlined by Silverman (2000, 2001). Data gathered from the questionnaires was analysed systematically by reading for similarities, differences and relationships between items, developing codes and looking for patterns. An initial coding schedule with free and tree nodes (parent and child nodes) including 'contemporary fatherhood', 'traditional fatherhood', 'father imperfections', 'idealisations' and 'managing the contradictions' was established in accordance with Silverman's principles (see Appendix C for details of the nodes). Silverman's principles were employed in the following way -

- a) Comprehensive data treatment - All cases available in the full data set, 120 questionnaires in all, were incorporated in the analysis. Here the provisional 'contemporary fatherhood' supposition had to be tested against every single fragment of data collected in order to

generate an integrated, clearly-defined outcome that comprehensively illustrated the fatherhood phenomenon.

- b) Constant comparative method - This entailed comparing all cases and fragments of text in order to find other cases through which to test out the provisional 'contemporary fatherhood' hypothesis.
- c) Refutability principle - An attempt was made to refute the initial supposition that children are constructing a contemporary model of fatherhood. Scrutiny of the data endeavoured to acknowledge the rival hypothesis that children's constructions of fatherhood are traditional.
- d) Deviant Case Analysis - This entailed actively seeking out and addressing all deviant cases that contradict the contemporary model, such as father imperfections, until all cases in the data were incorporated (deviant cases contradict the original hypotheses, which is explored in detail in the results section)

It must be acknowledged that this coding schedule was developed for the specific purpose of exploring the issues outlined in Chapter 3 and although inclusive of these, is by no means exhaustive. Primary attributes of school socio-economic status, gender and age, were also identified and entered. Although not the focus of this dissertation, the attributes were included in order to facilitate future analysis of the data across gender, socio-economic status and age.

Each of the 120 questionnaires, 40 per school, was coded with reference to the full coding schedule. Coding the questionnaires was particularly challenging. Careful reference had to be made to the original coding schedule and the full conceptual range of each node (Appendix C) as

some children made reference to more than one of the concepts encapsulated in that node. In such cases, where children made more than one reference to a node, and the concepts were similar but not quite the same, this was counted twice. In order to maintain the integrity of the counts, this method of coding was held constant for all other nodes throughout all the questionnaires.

Thereafter, data sets, inclusive of each extract for that node (free or tree), were generated for each of the nodes across each school. The data were examined and explored for recurrent themes and categories. Although this study is qualitative in nature, use of *NVivo* did allow for counting of the number of times each node is represented in the data set. Counting such nodes proved extremely useful and yielded interesting results.

4.8 Validity and reliability

It must be acknowledged that the production and interpretation of 'voices', at the interface between researched and researcher, is a subjective process (Silverman, 2001). Attempts to authenticate this work, however, were facilitated by following a carefully executed, repetitive, exploratory process, initiated through the preliminary pilot reading of essays from the *Fatherhood Project*. Both sets of data, essays and questionnaires, were read and analysed separately by the author and supervisor of this dissertation. Inter-rater reliability was achieved through constant interaction, discussion and agreement among coders (the author and supervisor) of similarities and discrepancies in the data, and maintaining direct access to the words of the children whilst generating themes and codes as outlined below (Silverman, 2000). Based on the

initial pilot reading of the essays, themes were generated, the questionnaire developed in order to further explore such themes, and data gathered from schools. Thereafter, data gathered from the questionnaires was read and a second set of themes was developed. Based on this and a second, detailed reading of the questionnaires a set of free and tree nodes was produced which formed the basis for the final analysis of the data. The initial coding schedule of free and tree nodes was verified and updated. The nodes were established with reference to all the questionnaires. Once the coding schedule for all 120 questionnaires was completed, the data were examined for recurrent themes and categories.

Additionally, issues of validity and reliability were primarily addressed by adhering to Silverman's (2000, 2001) principles of refutability (refuting initial assumptions), constant comparison (finding another case against which to test conclusions), comprehensive data treatment (incorporating the full data set in the analysis), deviant-case analysis (showing and examining the deviant cases), and the use of appropriate tabulations (simple counting measures).

Chapter 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It must be noted that the nature and the large size of this data set does not allow for a detailed analysis and discussion of all the material. Results presented are primarily qualitative in nature, examining and presenting principal constructs of fatherhood identified through the voices of children. A small quantitative component, namely the presentation of total number of extracts for each construct in tabular form, has been included as a reference point but is not the mainstay of the discussion. Such numbers are by no means definitive but act to support the study. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to engage in a comprehensive comparison and analysis of the extract counts. Such an analysis warrants further investigation and substantiation.

Although there is no one singularly identical construction of fatherhood, this analysis has generated three significant findings with regards to children's constructions of fatherhood. Firstly, children's constructions are primarily contemporary in nature as opposed to traditional, casting fathers in a 'new father' role as caring, loving, supportive and involved. Secondly, despite contemporary constructions of positive fatherhood, children's constructions also acknowledge a wide range of father imperfections. And thirdly, children notably expressed a range of idealised archetypical constructions of fatherhood. A fourth finding, although not a primary focus of this dissertation, examines socio-economic differences between children's constructions and is briefly considered due to its specific relevance to the diverse context of fatherhood in South Africa. Before exploring these, and in order to orient the reader, I look at the range of men identified by the children, as fulfilling a father role in their lives.

5.1 The wide range of men who fulfill father roles in children's lives

Where western traditions and expressions of fatherhood fall within an individualistic view of the self and family, African traditions falling within a communal view of self and family, adopt more of a social approach to fatherhood (Mkhize, 2006). In some contexts children do not 'belong' exclusively to their parents and may not be biologically related to the father-figure in the home. Embracing responsibility for the care and nurture of children who are 'not their own' (perhaps a brother, stepfather or grandfather) enters the domain of social fatherhood (Nsamenang, 2000).

The fathers or father figures referred to by the children and young people participating in the study included biological and non-biological fathers including grandfathers, uncles, brothers, stepfathers, and a mother's boyfriend. Although several biological fathers did not reside with their children, most children in the sample acknowledged an adult male as a father. Many children, especially in South Africa, have significant relationships with men who are not their biological fathers and who fulfill the role of father (Mkhize, 2006).

Of the identified non-biological 'social fathers' in the full sample of 120 questionnaires, three were stepfathers, three were brothers, three were uncles, one was the mother's boyfriend, and one was a grandfather (as indicated in the extracts below). Thirteen children indicated that there was no father at home. Although students were asked to indicate to whom they were referring in the questionnaire, some did not and hence the proportion of non-biological fathers could be higher. The majority of relationships with these social fathers were characterised by warmth, love, gratitude and security. Even in cases where a father is unable to meet frequently with his

child, but is able to provide positive, nurturing and stimulating contact when possible, children can still benefit from father involvement (Halle, 2004).

My stepfather is not a bad guy because he does take care of me. He loves me and I love him to.

My father is died but my brothe... My brother is a good man and I need him in my life...

My father good step father but is not riyel (real) father if is like my father. I live that place that live children that don have Mothe and fathe (an orphanage). I happy for that I have clothe I have school that make my life and mond riter. And this father that is not riyel father is helpy me about the school work and about clother. I so happy for that Lord give me step father that live that one I have now. But my riyel fathe I a one I have 5 years tha time that I see my riye father.

My grandpa helps my gran to look after me and my brother, sister and cousins and he helps in other ways that your people did not mension.

Most of these children, although referring to their real fathers with a sadness and yearning, seem to have developed a real love and respect for the men who fulfil the father-figure role in their life. In circumstances where children live outside of the traditional 'nuclear' family, they still need the positive input and love of a father-figure (Hickman, 2003). Evidence suggests that when 'social fathers' are positively engaged in children's lives this may have a profoundly encouraging effect on them (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002).

5.2 Overall findings

5.2.1 Contemporary nature of fatherhood

Constructions of fatherhood by children were, by and large, contemporary without completely challenging the traditional discourse of fatherhood. Overall, children's constructions support an

emerging 'new father' paradigm where fathers are no longer only breadwinners but are actively and willingly engaged in taking responsibility for children, care-giving, being available and accessible to children, and assisting the mother in the home. Although some fathers are failing completely as one child stated when asked what his father does to help

NOTHING, absolutely NOTHING (emphasis is child's own)

Responses from children for the overall 'contemporary fatherhood' node were fairly uniform across socio-economic strata. Of the 160 references made regarding contemporary fatherhood, 47 were made by children from School A (historically Black, disadvantaged), 50 from School B (lower- to middle-income) and 63 from School C (historically White, privileged) (Table 2). Such constructions give credence to changes in contemporary perceptions of fathers, wherein fathers are viewed as active participants in parenting and caretaking roles, sensitive to their children's needs and placing significant value on family time (Fagan & Palm, 2004; Palkovitz, 2004). Fathers appear to be interacting with their children in a more 'comradely' and recreation based way (Demos, 1982).

Traditional constructions of provider and protector clearly co-exist with contemporary constructions, but in only 25 extracts did children exclusively employ the traditional discourse. Traditional and contemporary constructions together (24 extracts), were often so closely represented in children's citations, that these were coded as 'contemporary and traditional fatherhood'.

Is that he always makes us comfortable with him and he always tells us what good and what bad for us and he always tells us what to do to keep our self safety and he always teach us about hand work and he always tells us about my life of growing. My father is a

youth with strong and healthy body that why he always come back home because he just want to see how his family servive. My father always looks at his family to make sure that his family is protected from enermys out there in the community. He always helps the community for every thing to make sure that it is always healthy and protected for thiefs.

He is kind, loving, caring and funny. He is tall and cleaver. Doesn't mind taking me places like to rugby, movies ect. My dad plays with me a lot and helps build stuff with me. He looks after us well and works hard to get money for food to feed us.

Table 2

Number of extracts for contemporary and traditional constructions, by schools

| | Contemporary fatherhood | Contemporary and traditional fatherhood | Traditional fatherhood |
|--|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
| School A (historically Black, disadvantaged, lower-income, state school) | 47 | 11 | 8 |
| School B (lower- to middle-income, state school) | 50 | 6 | 12 |
| School C (historically White, privileged, upper-income, private school) | 63 | 7 | 5 |
| *Total number of extracts | 160 | 24 | 25 |

* Total number of extracts reflects the number of times that children made reference to a particular node.

Within these contemporary constructions, children appear to differentiate noticeably between two distinct fathering roles; firstly, that of fathering as a personal, nurturing role with direct effects and secondly, fathering as a social role, having indirect effects. In Table 3, of the references made by children regarding contemporary fatherhood, the four primary sub-constructs are 'being there', 'love and nurturance', 'care-giving' and father as 'moral guide' - constructions that are in direct relation to children on a personal level and hint at an affective, close relationship. Whereas role-sharing and emotion work with the mother of the child clearly do

occupy a significant place in the constructions, it seems that children assign greater weight to the first four sub-constructs (114, 110, 105 and 104 extracts respectively) as opposed to 62 and 75 respectively for 'role-sharing' and 'emotion work with mother of the child'. This will be explored in more detail at a later stage. Additionally, the provider role is prevalent in children's constructions, confirming that the traditional construction of fatherhood is by no means absent from contemporary constructions.

Table 3

Total number of extracts for each sub-construct of contemporary fatherhood

| | Total number of extracts |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Being there | 114 |
| Love and nurturance | 110 |
| Care-giving | 105 |
| Moral guide | 104 |
| Role-sharing | 62 |
| Emotion work with mother of the child | 75 |
| Total | 570 |

In an investigation exploring 40 father's views of their roles as fathers, Palkovitz (2002) found that constructions were 'multifaceted' and 'complex'. Key themes, expressed in varying ways by different men, included loving children (68%), fulfilling the role of provider (63%), "being there" (47%) and teacher/moral guide (50%). Although 'loving children' featured highly in these constructions, most fathers spoke noticeably to their role as provider, where typically their ability to provide for their family remains a key component of good fathering. Children's constructions in this study, however, speak to father involvement that is independent of provision and equated with love, accessibility, interaction and guidance. Perhaps what these results reflect is the developing sense of changing fatherhood in South Africa, with fathers wanting to engage in

mutually beneficial relationships with their children, rather than merely as provider and protector (Behr, 2004).

5.2.1.1 Fathering as a direct, personal and nurturing role

Uppermost in children's contemporary constructions were the sub-constructs of 'being there', 'love and nurturance', 'care-giving' and 'moral guide'. This points to children's need for and focus on an intimate, personal, self-oriented relationship with their father. Embedded in children's extracts are positive accounts of their father's depth of love, affection, commitment and time spent together.

He's got a very loving heart and is very special, he's very clever and helps me with all my tests. He makes lovely pancakes and taught me how to make pancakes. He's very healthy and run every day, he spends a lot of time with me and he love's chocolates and bar-one sauce, his hugs are so warm and loving, he's so go(od) at drawing. He's got a lovely smile and laugh, I love him dearly

He makes me happy when he is around. That is the thing that make me happy

Whereas in most cultures mothers are recognized to be primary caretakers and studies show that mothers are far more involved and committed to raising children (Dubeau, 2002; Parke, 1981), research over the past few decades has reaffirmed that when men do care for children, they may also do so in a nurturing way. Directly, fathers can positively influence their children through touching, talking, playing and teaching them, as well as taking care of them (Lamb, 1997). Children see their fathers as so much more than just providers. Fathers teach them about life, read to them, care for them and love them forever (Engle, Beardshaw & Loftin, 2006).

a) Being there

Father presence is at the heart of this sub-construct; children experience fathers investing time in their lives, showing expressions of concern, being accessible and available, demonstrating interest and attention and giving emotional support to children - whether they are physically available or not (Gadsden et al., 2004; Palkovitz, 2002). Such involvement was often reflected in activities such as talking, going on outings, playing and reading together and spending time together. It is not always the nature of the activity that is accredited significance, but rather the activity of father just 'being there'.

At night he say good bye to me and go to sleep because he love me. He write me a test to see that I like to learn or I like to play. He read me a book to get me sleep at night and go and sleep. Sometimes my father and my mother when he visit any shopping I tell my father please can I go with you and he say oh it okay and I fill so happy with my father

I love my father. My father love me. He bake me a cake and I wash he car he bath me he sing of me a song and he teel ma about he live and help me with my homework and polsh my shoe

My father does not have to have to do any thing to make me happy just knowing he is there makes me happy because When I think of many children who do not have a father it makes me appreciate my dad.

My dad doesn't like to see me upset and always tries hard to keep me happy all the time. I can always rely on my dad, he's always at my hockey matches and my netball matches. If he had to climb the highest mountain to get to my match he would and that's what I like about him

My dad often plays with us. He calls me nicknames that I pretend not to like but secretly I love them. My dad is always tickling us. We love it.

b) Love and nurturance

Children see fathers expressing love and nurturance through active engaged caring, listening, affection, encouragement and understanding. This sub-construct, when expanded, includes being

a friend, strong love, hugs and kisses, listening (which expresses love) and sensitivity (Gadsden et al., 2004; Palkovitz, 2002).

My father help me to my garden and he loves me and I love him too. We are family at home. He do not heat (hit) us. He love us and we love him too.

My father take care of people my father love to hold us like his young baby and he love me and my mother and my brother and he do not lie every day

My father makes me happy because he loves me and he often makes jokes. The thing he doesn't do that makes me happy is that he doesn't expect me to be the best in everything he just want the best I can do.

c) Care-giving

In this sub-construct fathers are actively involved in taking care of their children. Children express delight at the intimacy this time affords them with their fathers. Care-giving is extended to a full range of activities - fathers take and fetch children from school, do homework, prepare meals and look after them (often when mother is out or at work). Additionally the care-giving role is embedded in fathers caring for other people, other children and the community (Gadsden et al., 2004; Palkovitz, 2002). This supports the evolution of the contemporary ideal of father as co-parent, who is equally responsible for parenting (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

He watering the garden with us. When we have homework he helps us. When we have a project he helps us till we finishe the project.

We are preparing to go to school and go to him and he will clean us where we are dirty and give us money to eat at school and make us lunch boxes checking our exersize book that are they all in our bags. Asking us tha do we have pens top write at school. And tell us to go before we get late

He always wakes me up in the morning so I am never late. If I am sick he will take the day off and look after me if my grandparents are not home. He will cook me supper when I am hungry ate night if my mother is working late.

My dad helps by on the days she works he picks me up from my grans house and takes my sister to balet and he cooks dinner for us and he helps me and my sister with our home work. On the week ends he does a lot of housework alot. My day at takes me to school and sometimes (when my mom is stuck somewhere) He fetches me. My mom like it when he helps her.

He cooks supper and when my mum and gose out on a girl night (which she dose alot) he looks after us. In the holidays when my mum is at work he looks after me and my brother and friends.

d) Moral guide

In this role, fathers were perceived to be teachers and custodians of the past, transferring knowledge and skill, acting as role models and guiding children into the social and moral worlds of their communities (Gadsden et al., 2004; Mkhize, 2006; Palkovitz, 2002). Children closely observe and disapprove of behaviours such as drinking, smoking, gambling, sleeping around and lying. In contrast they place high value on qualities such as kindness, generosity, faithfulness, honesty, forgiveness, respect and sharing.

...Every day he always tells what he wish for his family and he always tells us about his long bad time he was living for and he always tell us about encient things like histroy of his life with my mother. And he always give us healthy building body food. My father is best hero...

When person do something rong my father us we mus forgive and forget about the whole thing he say's we must are as if the whole happened before.

He's honest he's trustworthy he keeps promises. He knows whats write and whats wrong to do.

He always shares with us if he gets something. He never keeps anything to him self

5.2.1.2 Fathering as an indirect, social role

Popular media and culture cast men as uninvolved and disinterested in domestic work. However, when children speak, the overwhelming sense is that there is widespread involvement of fathers in the home in what were previously considered to be female roles. Children's constructions signify that fathers are fulfilling a 'role-sharing' and 'emotion work with mother of the child' role. As a caution, however, although many men are reported to be in an egalitarian relationship with their wives, this is not true for all (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Not all children reported images of 'domestic bliss' where fathers are engaged in role-sharing. Co-existing with these social constructions were traditional notions of provision. The good provider role is still very much a part of contemporary men's constructions of fatherhood and to a lesser extent, children's constructions (Palkovitz, 2004). As Bonthuys (1997, p. 629) indicates "The good father as nurturant and emotionally available coexists, albeit uneasily, with the traditional paternal role as breadwinner and disciplinarian".

a) Role-sharing

Father's participation in role-sharing and household tasks was positively attested to by children. The domestic work men are doing is not limited to 'traditional chores' such as gardening, taking out the rubbish or cleaning the car. 'New' responsibilities include tasks around the house such as making beds, tidying, cooking, washing dishes and cleaning up. Such involvement is indicative of supportive and collaborative role sharing with the mother or other caregiver of the child. Additionally, household functions were construed by children to be a demonstration of love and affection towards their mother and themselves. Paternal involvement has positive effects for

mothers and indirect effects for children whereby mothers are more available, emotionally responsive and patient (Pruett, 2001; Lamb, 1997).

He help my Mom with the wishing or clean at the house or sweep the floor. After that he play with me or my sister to cards or cooking food.

My father helps my mother in the house by washing the dishes and making beds and just the basic all day around the house jobs. How my father helps my mother to look after me is by making our beds, taking us to somewhere when she needs to study and making supper and lunch.

He is always helping to wash the dishes to clean the house. If their is any other children in the house he always will look after them like he looks after us.

My dad does many things around the house. He cooks, cleans, takes the rubbish out etc. Quite often we give the house a big tidy so that my mum won't have to worry about it. My dad does the washing and general stuff, especially if my mom has been in the car all day. He's really helpful.

My dad helps my mother to do anything that my mom need help with. He cook, vacuums he house, does the ironing and (only when he has to) fold the washing. My dad takes time off work when my mom goes to Bloemfoentein to do her studying. He picks us up from school when mom can't. He take me and my brother to the botanical gardens or to the part to play on the swings or to ride my bike at the bicycle track so that my mom can study for her exams.

b) Emotion work with the mother of the child

Children frequently mentioned and placed high regard on an affirmative and positive relationship between their mother and father, though not necessarily within the context of marriage. Fathers were often involved in 'emotion work' which is an attempt to support and contribute to their partner's emotional well-being. Emotional and tangible support, in the form of housework and child-care, may play a significant role in alleviating work-oriented stress in the home (Lamb, 1997). This sub-construct reflects the existence of a healthy relationship with the mother of the

child, whereby the father supports her financially and emotionally. Children see this very simply, couched in terms such as:

My dad makes my mother happy when he makes supper so she can just relax. When my mom is sick my dad treats her like a queen and brings her breakfast in bed and that makes her very very happy. My dad tells jokes to my mom at supper time so that she laughs. When my mom comes home from work she tells him about her day and he listens with concern, she is happy that someone is concerned and wants to listen to her. She is very happy when my dad gets up at five o'clock to make muffins because she loves the muffins that he makes. My dad loves my mom very very much and my mom gets happy just to see him when he comes home

My father makes my mother happy by always telling her he loves her and also just by being there for her

He love her he care for her he buy for many things and they sit down they talk about the life. They go in other places and they talk to each other. My mother when she is baasy (busy) he help her to finish her work. My father helps Mom with her many works. My mother feel happy when she see my father because he take care of her and he take care of her(his) childrens.

They work together as a team and are not on their separate paths.

My dad seldom brings flowers home and forgets anaverseries to but he gives her lots of hugs and kisses and that makes her happy too.

It is when he always is purposly nice to here like when he calls her his, honey bear shugar darling, and it makes her blush. She and my dad love each other.

c) Provider

Children still attribute great value to the traditional role of father as provider. This construct looks to the issue of economic and material provision. There is recognition and appreciation of the fact that fathers work very hard to 'put food on the table', providing money for school fees and clothes, paying for transport, buying toys and other items and often making sacrifices to meet the needs and expectations of their families. Even in instances where fathers are

unemployed and mothers fulfill the role of breadwinner, children appreciate the efforts of fathers to provide for them in ways that do not necessarily have an economic edge.

He is a very very good person to me and at my family and when it is the end of the month my father buys lot of good at home and when he buy food after that he gave all of the children at home the money to eat for the whole of the month.

My father is not working but he provide us with money for our school fees and he faithful to my mother

He does many things for us He provide us with a shelter, food, water and warm home. He is also trustworthy all the time.

He is generous and fair in all that he does and pays for bills at home, school outings, and clothes, stationery and fund raisers. He is not that involved in extra curricular life, my sister's or mine.

My dad is very sweet and kind. He works very hard so that there is enough money for our health. He cares for the whole family and what happens to us. He is the kind of dad that will do anything for his family.

5.2.2 Managing the contradictions

Despite concentrated evidence of a newly constructed world of contemporary fatherhood in previous extracts, it is very clear that children are, at the same time, sharply aware of a multitude of father imperfections. The primary construct of 'father imperfections' includes four sub-constructs of 'disappoints', 'morally wrong', 'verbally abusive' and 'physically abusive'. Children reported 156 instances of father imperfections, as opposed to 160 extracts relating to positive contemporary constructions of fatherhood. Whereas children's constructions speak to 'nurturing, caring, conscientious and committed new fathers', they also speak to men who are not 'performing' as well as they could. As Tanfer & Mott (1997) and Palkovitz (2002) point out,

more men than ever are defaulting on child-care support, deny paternity and responsibility, are absent from the home, and spend little time with their children

The difference between the constructions is negligible however, and clearly, although children look up to their fathers and love spending time with them, they are compelled to manage this 'world of contradictions', lodged between the 'good father image' and father imperfections. Two main findings are explored here - firstly the sharp awareness of personal faults and shortcomings of the idealised father and, secondly, the attempts by children to manage the contradictions.

5.2.2.1 Awareness of personal faults and shortcomings of the contemporary and ideal father

Children are penetratingly aware of father faults and are attuned to imperfections, oversights and omissions. Fathers engage in behaviours that are morally wrong, they deeply and repeatedly disappoint their children, and they resort to physical and verbal abuse of children and other family members. Such behaviours evidence themselves in neglect, absence and cruelty. Negative involvement, such as inattention and abuse, has direct effects on children (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 1981). Children's constructions of father imperfections were evidenced in a number of unconstructive behaviours. Fathers gamble, smoke, drink, lie and are unfaithful to their partners; they are selfish and ensure that their needs are met first; and they shout, swear and behave in embarrassing ways. Children are sensitive to and deeply hurt and betrayed by these actions; this invokes fear in children and a longing for father love, safety and security. The image of the 'deadbeat' dad phenomenon, the opposite of the ideal new father, is perpetuated through

children's constructions. Although not representative of all fathers, inaccessible, violent and absent fathers clearly do exist (Dubeau, 2002).

a) Disappoints

In this sub-construct children expressed their disenchantment with fathers who are unreliable, repeatedly let them down, lie, spend more time at work than with them, come home late, betray them and are disinterested in them and the rest of the family. In 75 instances children indicated a deep disappointment in their fathers (Table 4).

Table 4

Total number of extracts for each sub-construct of father imperfections

| | Total number of extracts |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Disappoints | 75 |
| Morally wrong | 38 |
| Verbally abusive | 22 |
| Physically abusive | 21 |
| Total | 156 |

Fathers invoke a sense of embarrassment, shame and anger, and make promises that they don't keep. Children are especially distressed by dishonesty, either towards themselves or towards their mothers. Children are painfully aware of and distressed by fathers who do not listen to them or spend time with them, and who are unreasonable in their dealings with the family.

He never stops shouting at us. And he is sometimes so selfish And greedy. He make promicis but he douse not for full them and he let us down when he dose that.

My dad is weird. He is normally making wrong decisions. If I make a mistake and someone says don't do that my dad says he would beat him up

Sometimes when he is in a bad mood he shouts at me for no reason. Instead of him asking who did what, he just shouts and is that makes me unhappy and after him knowing

he does not say sorry and that just brings me to tears. So that what makes me unhappy. Usually some parents do that and they never want to be wrong and think they know everything but you can never argue with your parents.

My father works too much and goes to too much meetings and hardly spends time with us he is never available. I would like him to stop putting work before us and start spending time together

My dad sits on the cellphone all the time when he is in South Africa it is always interfering while playing golf or playing any sort of sport. I would like his to loose the cellphone, stop using OUR money to do stuff

When he said he is coming and he doesn't come on time then only 2 hours later he phones and says he can't come. When he lies

I would like him to keep his cool for a bit longer. I know that that can be a little difficult at times but I would like him to be able to. He sometimes makes promises and then breaks them. Sometimes he will even lie to me to keep me happy. I find it hard to respect someone like that, so I would like him to keep his promises and not tell lies.

When we walk around in shops you can see his BELLY hanging out of his T-shirt. He never has patience. He is always self-centered. He cares more about his girlfriend than about me and my brother. He is always trying to make arrangements with me instead of my mom. He always embarrasses me while I am in a match or anything like that, he is trying to loose weight and he keeps on asking us do we think he has lost weight well he has actually gained. He is always barking at people or growling

b) Morally wrong

This sub-construct includes behaviours that are regarded as morally wrong by children.

Behaviours such as drinking, smoking, drunkenness, gambling, sleeping around and stealing are regarded as inappropriate. Children are keenly aware of their father's shortcomings, are desperate to see an end to such behaviours; many children express a cynicism beyond their years.

My big father steal my granny's sugar and he didn't buy for him self. He makes me unhappy for stealing and he steal my grannys sugar cane because he don't have money to buy it.

He like to drink a lot some he says unnersecery word toward and he changes into another person. He is not now the person we new anymore and I would like for him to stop drink and he the person we new for a long time and the person who my mom married for 27

years and my father would be a good person who is loving and caring and the family would be very much happy if my father stopped drinking...

Something I know about him every Monday he doesn't come home. I don't know or he sleep with his girl friend he come in the midnight at home. He said his in the night he fix the car. My mother knows him now everyday he don't come home.

My father:

- *drinks beer, doesn't really co-operate with her*
- *sleeps around, lies a lot*

The things I don't like about my dad is when he goes to the bar while I'm at a friends house. And when he fetches me he's drunk and I don't like that because it embarrasses me and I don't like it. And whenever I ask him why he's drunk he just tells me that he's not and makes an excuse saying that he's tired and has had a long day and I don't like it when he lies to me.

c) Verbally abusive

Children are troubled by hostility between parents and uncontrolled anger in the home.

Behaviour that causes them distress includes fighting, swearing, shouting, and the exchange of rude words most often with the mother in the home. Children are frustrated by their inability to calm the tide of verbal anger, and afraid to intervene. Fathers break their children down by speaking harshly to them and disrespecting their wives, they invoke fear and submission through verbal tirades.

At times he is impossible and just one word that he doesn't like will make him angry and he will go on a swearing rampage, saying every word known to man to break me down and feel bad about what I've done. When he is like this the best thing to do is sit there, keep quiet and still

He always has to be ugly to my mother. And he even swears at my mother.

He shouts at her just because she is talking while the sports are on T.V. He smacks the dogs when they didn't do anything. He doesn't listen to her. He gets angry with her. He ignores her when she shouts at him. I don't like it when my parents fight because my dad sometimes abuses my mom.

He would blast my head off for no reason and not let me get a word in and explain. I would then tell my mom and she would get upset.

My father in other days(I) feel scrade (scared) when they are talking with my mother and father feel angry and she make noise; he shouted and my mother wants to tould him that let talk. My father does her that she shouted high. She said many sad things and my mother feel scrade (scared)

d) Physically abusive

Some fathers engage in physically abusive behaviour, and children and other family members bear the brunt of beatings, being hit or smacked. In many cases mothers take the worst of these beatings, which are witnessed by children in the home.

My father hurt me in the back and I feel UNHAPPY and he eat meat but we don't eat meat every day....I very very very worried of him and he do not want us to vist other place and I don't want to do wrong thing and my father hurt us and we feel unhappy and we started to stay away from him, and I feel so very very sad and I started to cry and I play quietly every day and I go to sleep. And he do not buy me toys

I come very sad when my parents qaurrelled when we at the church. My father goes to his friend and then he drinks alcohol, dance with some girls busy grooving and hecome again in home he beat my mother.

He beats Momy a lot. When he beats Momy I feel sad when he is to angry no one can stop him from beating.

5.2.2.2 Managing the contradictions on a personal level

It may be inferred that although children's constructions speak to a contemporary model of fatherhood, there is considerable evidence from these findings to suggest that fathers are failing on many counts. Amazingly, although fathers fail dismally in many instances, they are still the object of children's deep affection and idealisations. Children's descriptions indicate an understanding and acceptance of their father's failings, as well as an extraordinary ability to adapt to them. Not only do children acknowledge father's weaknesses, but they manage to justify

and rationalize their inappropriate and sometimes cruel behaviour. In some cases, coexisting with the beatings, children still indicate that father love is significant in their lives. They recognize that they live in a not-ideal world with not-ideal fathers and even when finding fault with their fathers, children begin many of their descriptions with a qualifier such as “I love my father, but ...”.

He is kind but he loses his cool very quickly. When he has lost his cool he is impossible to talk to without him getting angry and me getting frustrated. When he is in a good mood he is quite nice but he is snapped out of it very quickly. If he is in a good mood he spoils me rotten. My father is a nice man at most times. Sometimes a little hard to deal with

I love my father he love me two. My fathr is not a bad person. He is a nice father. He like no-one. My father is like to work for me and no-one is like my father. Is like to sit and talk with me and help me with my homework, but sometimes he just be ever be a not like my father. I know becose he was dranking and he ckich my aunt out of him house because he was drank and my mother lefter him and go. He is live with hes girlfriend.

My Dad hits Mum very hard if my do wrong thing and my mother become said whole weeks and they hut (hurt) my hurt (heart) with that because it like abuse, but it is not like it and love them too very much because they are my parents.

My father does things that hurts me inside, but it is for a good cause. When he screams at me, for I have done the wrong thing, I abseloutly deserve it. Well my father does everything I would like him to do because he is OUT OF THIS WORLD!!

5.2.3 Idealised fatherhood

Portrayals of the ideal father were, by and large, a man who loves his children deeply, helps his wife in the home, and spends time with his children. Children created an archetypical image of the ideal fathers they would either like to be, or have, or be with one day. Traditional notions of provision and protections did not feature as much in the idealised constructions, speaking to an idealised fatherhood that is contemporary in nature - fathers who love to spend time doing things with their children. In the study facilitated by the Queensland Commission in Australia, children also pointed to the significance of a loving and nurturing relationship with a father who takes the

time to have fun with them and shows how important they are to him. (Howard, Curtin, & Hardy, 2003).

Children in this sample did express a wish for the ideal father to have a good job, buy a bigger house and lots of other things but, overall, being together took first place. The children, both boys and girls, seem to have an internalized set of criteria of what a better father is and should be, possibly assimilated through contemporary culture and popular media. They envision themselves and the fathers they want to have beyond the constraints of their current circumstances. Children yearn for a stable, loving and secure father-figure who will 'be there' for them, who is affectionate and caring, and who balances work and family time. Coexistent with this ideal imagery is the father who does not abuse alcohol or drugs, nor punish his children severely or unreasonably. What the following excerpts indicate is that positive, romantic and heroic images of fatherhood are alive in the minds of children.

One day I want my children's to have a caring, funny always happy man. When he have made a mistake to me come and apologise to me, he must love his children and play with them, he must care for his life and his baby. He must not like other mothers that much, he must love his childrens and take a good care, he must not beat me and my childrens, he must not like to fight, he must not rape girls and other mothers who are not good in their minds. The way he must love them

The perfect father and the father I would like to be is kind, loving, caring, gentle, diligent to earn money for my family, a true Christian, spend time with my kids and wife (family), not be so possessive and aggressive, try to work flexible hours and not travel a lot, to be faithful to my wife (one of God's commandments)

Kind, generous, cool, sensitive, but not to sensitive so that he cries for everything, but just a little. He must always be on time and he must help in the house with housework, he must like children and he must have a good job and lots of money

The perfect father wouldn't go to work on the weekends, and his job wouldn't take over everything else. He would be kind and friendly. He would look after his children and cook and play with them. He would take his children to beaches, parks and to camp. He

would be funny, friendly, responsible and go to church. He would help people and his wife and always be kind. He wouldn't shout at his children unless they were being naughty. He would sometimes give the children surprises when he came from a trip or take them to a park or something as a surprise and he must be at all the children's birthday parties

I'd like my kid's dad to be just like my dad. I'd like him to play games with me and the kids. I'd like him to have a job that isn't a bother in our lives like all the men in business suits who neglect their families. I'd like him to help out around the house. I'd like him to support us and help the kids with homework when I can't. I'd like him to keep the peace between the kids because I wouldn't be able to

Many children idolise the men who are their fathers, by describing them as perfect and heroic, they see them as perfect just as they are. Others make use of metaphoric constructions to accentuate the imagery. Children make a number of allusions to father archetypes who are heroic, carry kingly status, who are famous and who rule.

I want father like my father because my father is a hero, angel, king and star of stars. I want the father that would work the of money.

I would like to be a father like Thabo Mbheki because de do good thing not every time and I want to take care of my family and I like to be the great man and I want to be a man that will have a good man.

I like to be like David Beckham.

I wants my father to be a president or a king Nelson Mandela.

My dad has dark black hair he's medium in size and has a hart of a lion.

5.2.4 Socio-economic differences

Much of what has been explored thus far has not focused on evident similarities between children from different socio-economic backgrounds and in different schools. It has been

established that collective constructions of contemporary fatherhood, father imperfections and idealised fatherhood are fairly uniform across the socio-economic strata. On closer examination, however, it is evident that there are significant differences to be found between socio-economic strata for some of the constructs. There are innumerable configurations of the family in South Africa across racial, economic, religious and class divisions and, simultaneously, there are many factors that undermine and weaken stable, supportive family structures in different ways in different contexts.

Table 5

Socio-economic differences by schools

| | Moral guide | Provider | Protector | Disappoints | Morally wrong | Physically abusive |
|---|-------------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|
| School A (historically Black, disadvantaged, lower-income, state school) | 66 | 34 | 7 | 10 | 21 | 18 |
| School B (lower- to middle-income, state school) | 17 | 11 | 1 | 31 | 11 | 2 |
| School C (historically White, privileged, upper-income, private school) | 21 | 11 | 2 | 34 | 6 | 1 |
| *Total extracts | 104 | 56 | 10 | 75 | 38 | 21 |

* Total number of extracts reflects the number of times that children made reference to a particular construct.

Most obvious in the constructions is that children from School A (poor Black African children) gave greater weight to the contemporary construct of fathers as moral guide and teacher (66 references to father as moral guide), with only 17 and 21 respectively from schools B and C (Table 5). Interestingly, as much as children from School A place high value on fathers fulfilling their roles as moral guides, they also feel that fathers are failing them most by exhibiting morally wrong behaviours (21 of total references regarding morally wrong behaviour were made by children from School A).

Historically, Black men have fulfilled a critical role in the lives of their children by acting as moral guides and teachers, conferring social identity and transferring knowledge and skills in teaching children (Nsamenang, 2000; Mkhize, 2006). Adverse social conditions such as unemployment, poverty and migrancy have severely undermined some Black fathers' esteemed position in the home and availability to fulfill this critical role (D. Dlamini, personal communication, September 28, 2005). In the face of the cumulative evidence and effects of drinking, gambling and theft, Black children's constructions seem to speak to the need for a reinstatement of their father's 'destabilised' role as moral guides and teachers.

Additionally children from School A rated provision (34 references) as markedly more important to them than children from schools B and C (Table 5). This marked difference seems to speak significantly to incongruencies between race groups in terms of access to material and economic resources in South Africa. Where it cannot be said with certainty that children in a certain race group will have more or less than others, broader divisions in South African society are reflected in these results. Again, the legacy of apartheid in the form of unemployment, fathers' absence from the home and lack of resources has severely affected the capacity of many Black men to

adequately feed their families. In contrast, up to the mid-1980s, apartheid created safe White suburbs where men were assured of decent employment, stable homes and the ability to take care of their families. Children from Schools B and C respectively made 11 references each to the importance of their father's role as provider, possibly pointing to sufficient resources in the home.

Although only 21 instances of physical abuse were recorded in the questionnaires, not enough to draw significant conclusions, in most of the cases it was children from School A who reported that the abuse was a problem for them (18 extracts). Children from schools B and C made far fewer references to physical abuse, 2 and 1 extracts respectively (Table 5). What is disturbing is that in most instances of abuse reported by children in School A, this was violent in nature. Children in impoverished homes are often the most vulnerable, and child abuse in South Africa is reported to be mostly perpetuated by men (Richter et al., 2004). Black children, living in economically strapped environments, where resources are at their most scarce, appear to be exposed to greater risk of violent physical abuse (Behr, 2004). Migrancy, poverty and violence cumulatively threaten to undermine the fabric of family life and negatively affect men's ability to fulfill their responsibilities as fathers (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Wilson, 2006).

The things that my father do that make me unhappy is when he hait (hit) us. He hait us, he hait us with a big stick and when he hait my aunt he hait him to had and she cry so loudly and my father when he hait my aunt he likes to hait him when it night.

While abuse was more commonly reported by children in School A, children from schools B and C made 31 and 34 references respectively regarding disappointment. Interestingly only 10 references regarding disappointment were made by children from School A. Children in the first two schools rated disappointment with their fathers as the most significant of failings. The turn

of the century saw the emergence of a middle and upper class with increasing numbers of men working outside of the home context (Fagan & Palm, 2004). Similarly in South Africa, along with the emergence of White middle- and upper-income households during the *Apartheid* era, came increasing pressure on fathers to work harder and provide more, hence spending longer hours away from home. Children's constructions spoke of the intensity of their feelings of disappointment as a consequence of father's strong work orientation, absence, and focus outside of the home. In this instance, fathers are 'providing' economically, but are absent as far as filling a space that is deeply emotional (Palkovitz, 2002).

Increasingly, rising rates of divorce and single parenthood are producing families where children reside with one parent. Conventionally speaking, dominant behaviours of working hard, being emotionally and often physically absent, are approved of among White South Africans (Morrell, 2006). This all speaks to the tension that modern fatherhood raises where, on one hand, fathers are expected to work hard to provide financially for their families (with an implication of absence), and on the other, be positively engaged in their children's lives (Bonthuys, 1997).

Chapter 6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although it was not the intention of this dissertation to generate specifically generalisable results, nonetheless, efforts were made to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study. Clearly however, there are limitations to this study.

6.1 Subjective nature of the study

The subjective nature of this study has already been acknowledged. Popular conceptions of fatherhood and positive images of the *Fatherhood Project* may have influenced the researcher's search interest. Additionally, the research questions could have prejudiced the researcher to the outcome of the project, interpretation of the data, and the generation of results. Certain research questions may have been included to the detriment and exclusion of others.

6.2 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed with a view to capturing, in as wide-ranging a manner, as many of children's thoughts and perceptions about their fathers as possible. Hence one of the key limitations of the design may have been its 'over-inclusivity'. In retrospect, although the data gathered was expansive and rich, there were flaws in the questionnaire design. Firstly, although 'middle-year' children are credited with being able to write well, eight questions may have been more than they could have answered. Secondly, once the data was gathered it became clear that

some of the questions were repetitive in nature and children did not see the point of answering the next question. For example, many children answered all eight questions in question one when they described their father. Thirdly, the questionnaire was written (and answered) in English which potentially discriminated against the children in School A and some in School B for whom English is not their home language. This being said, once the data was analysed it became apparent that written English at this age was not particularly 'easy' for all the children. Although responses were grammatically incorrect and spelling was not always good, this was fairly uniform across all schools. What children did manage to do was to express themselves and communicate meaning quite well. On reflection the potential for confusion in the similar and contradictory nature of the questions is acknowledged, although most children were able to answer at least five of the questions.

6.3 Data collection

Although precautions were taken to ensure that researchers did not influence the results, the very nature of the project itself and the way questions were posed may have influenced children's responses. In order to reduce researcher influence, it was decided that teachers of respective classes hand out and collect the questionnaires afterwards. There was no guarantee, however, that the teachers themselves may not have influenced children's responses by encouraging them or telling them what to write. This being said, teachers had been briefed beforehand as to the manner in which the questionnaire was to be administered. Data had to be collected at a time that was convenient to the school. Although every care was taken to ensure that children were

able to write at their own pace and in quiet, 'normal school interruptions' and children leaving the classroom if they did not wish to continue, may have been disrupting.

6.4 Analysis

Separating out the voice of researchers in the interpretative process is impossible. Clough (2002, cited in Jones, 2004) contends that separating out the 'voice' - the subjective experience and preconceived notions of the researcher given that s/he has chosen the topic, designed the questionnaire and interpreted the data - is not feasible. As alluring as the phrase 'through the voices of children' is we can never entirely observe their world though our eyes, we see through many layers of experience and theory. Jones (2004), however, contends that although interpretations are adult-centered, studying children in context is still an ideal worth pursuing.

The analysis of the data could have been influenced by the researcher's unconscious interests or selective attention to certain details. Although the development of the tree and free node classification was done in consultation with the supervisor of this thesis, this may have been compromised by subjective interpretation of varying definitions of father involvement presented in the literature, and by the research aims of the project. Due to the size of the data set, the nature of the extracts, nature of the nodes, overlaps in children's descriptions, and subsequent inability to exclusively code each sentence - certain instances of text may have been coded twice, not at all or 'incorrectly'. The subjective nature of the data may have influenced both analysis and interpretation of results.

The questionnaire results were coded and analysed using NVivo 2000, and like any computer analysis, relies on the accurate coding and input of information. Any errors made in the coding or input of information, may have weakened the reliability of the results. Although the dataset was carefully captured and coded, subsequent analysis may have been subject to human error. Lastly, counts of extracts must be approached with caution as counting was based on subjective interpretation of the data.

The results should therefore be interpreted with caution as the above methodological problems may have impacted on the reliability and validity of the study. Although there are clear limitations to this study and results are not generalisable, it is hoped that this work may well serve the purpose of enriching the neglected debate on children's views and perceptions of fathers in South Africa. Hopefully, from the perspectives of children, this will act as a catalyst for more specific and ambitious fatherhood research.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study attempted to explore the construction of fatherhood through the voices of children and identify key dimensions of this relationship. An open, exploratory, qualitative research design was used to facilitate the aims of the project. In this section a summary of the main conclusions will be presented highlighting significant findings, implications of the study and recommendations for future work.

7.1 The importance of children's views

The fact that children's writing may be highly emotive and unstructured, and that their perceptions may be less accessible than that of adults may be true; however, such writing is nonetheless revealing to their lived experiences and knowledge (Grover, 2004). What the children in this study have done, is offer rich insights into the 'world of fathers', with a noticeable appreciation of their father's positive characteristics as well as their shortcomings and failings. This study has revealed that children of different ages and languages can be extremely truthful and intuitive. Their sincerity and candor was refreshing, displaying an often astute understanding of fathers, indicative of children fulfilling their role as social actors and 'filling' part of the social stage. Hence as subjects of social research, they have a significant role to play in contributing to current adult perceptions and influencing policies that particularly affect their lives.

7.2 Contemporary constructions of fatherhood

Despite socio-economic differences, children's constructions were found to be predominantly contemporary in nature, supportive of the emerging new father paradigm, without, however, completely challenging the traditional discourse of fatherhood. Although children's constructions carry with them a 'reliability warning' (Kellet & Ding, 2004) there seems to be compelling evidence within the results of this study of a change in the contemporary meaning of fatherhood for men, but not so much that men have become fully equal partners in parenting. Children constructed the contemporary father as co-parent, who is available to them, sees to their developmental needs, shares day-to-day care of the children, carries his share of the household load and is no longer the sole breadwinner - constructions that are more than evident in literature (Pleck and Pleck, 1997). Father involvement, therefore, extends far beyond the traditional roles of provider and breadwinner (Halle, 2004).

Additionally, results in this study suggest that children are constructing a contemporary model of fatherhood on two levels, one on a direct level speaking to issues that affect them personally and the other on an indirect and social level. Father involvement may have both direct and indirect effects (Lamb, 1997). On a personal level the mechanisms through which fathers' interact directly with their children include play, love and nurturance, being with them, being available for them, guiding them and taking the time to spend with them. Therefore, regardless of socio-economic circumstances, these children's fathers play a significant role in caring for them. Indirectly, fathers are also playing a crucial role in their children's lives by providing for, protecting and emotionally and tangibly supporting mothers and other caregivers in the home

(Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Lamb, 1997). By bringing so much more to the home than just provision, fathers, through their time and skills, are an important resource to the family (Engle et al., 2006).

7.3 Dualistic existence of traditional and contemporary fatherhood

Notwithstanding children's primary constructions of contemporary fatherhood, children still give some credence and recognition to father's critical role as providers and protectors. Differences in constructions between children from different socio-economic backgrounds were evident here. Children from School A (historically Black, disadvantaged) made greater reference to the issue of provision, suggestive of the essential nature of this role in their lives. The voices of these children seem to point to the unequal distribution of wealth in South African that continues to pervade and disadvantage the lives of Black children. Whereas children from Schools B and C did speak to the issue of provision, this was not within the same parameters. Where greater economic resources are generally assumed to be more available, as with the latter two schools, fewer references to provision were made.

7.4 Father imperfections

Despite concentrated evidence for a newly constructed world of contemporary fatherhood and despite wanting to deny that fathers are failing, it is very clear that children are, at the same time, sharply aware of a multitude of father imperfections. Although there was some evidence of

differences between children's constructions, primarily there was uniformity in the responses that some fathers are engaging in behaviours that are morally wrong.

Whereas the issue of physical abuse was spoken to predominantly by children from the historically Black school, children from the historically White school spoke to the issue of disappointment. What these findings seem to reflect is the effects of a divided society where poverty and its associated 'evils' in South Africa is most concentrated amongst Black South Africans with about 1% of the White population falling in the same category (Wilson, 2006).

To the contrary, children in more stable economic environments are challenged in other ways and have different constructions of father imperfections. Excessive disappointment with fathers, the father imperfection spoken to mainly by children in Schools B and C, seems to substantiate typically middle to upper 'class' dominant behaviours of fathers who work hard and are away from their families often. Such children are not suffering economic neglect, but rather the continued emotional and physical absence of their fathers (Morrell, 2006).

Noticeably, whereas children from School A (Black African children) valued the construct of fathers as moral guide and teacher most highly, this is the area in which their fathers are 'failing' them the most. Traditionally, Black African fathers fulfill a highly regarded and respected role as moral guides, teachers, and custodians of the past (Mkhize, 2006). In the face of continued poverty, migrancy and resultant absence, fathers who are away from home are not able to spend crucial time at home teaching their children, ensuring the transfer of cultural norms and knowledge.

Although fathers fail dismally in many instances, they are still the object of children's deep affection. Children's descriptions indicated an understanding and acceptance of their father's failings, as well as an extraordinary ability to adapt to them. Not only do children acknowledge fathers weaknesses, but they manage to justify and rationalize their inappropriate and sometimes cruel behaviour. Father imperfections, on one hand, and love and acceptance on the other (the 'new involved father' and the 'deficient father') need to be reconciled and addressed (Palkovitz, 2002).

7.5 Idealised fatherhood

In asking children to describe their ideal father this study attempted to assess if children have any idea of what a father is supposed to be or the responsibilities and commitments associated with fatherhood? Palkovitz questions whether the 'new contemporary idealised man and father' really exists in the minds of children, and if so, in what form (2004). In this study it was found that, contrary to the extremely harsh and deficient lived experiences of some children, they are still able to construct an image of an ideal father.

Although there were some differences in constructions of the ideal between socio-economic groups, predominantly children spoke to a contemporary paradigm. These are fathers who are there for them, spend time with them, and love them, who care for their mothers, provide for the family and never miss important events in their children's lives. Children of this age group, in contact with other children at school and other families - learn how well their father does or does not match up to other fathers (Pruett, 2000). They have come to understand his strengths and

weaknesses, as well as other associated factors that make him uniquely their father. Whereas some research suggests that many fathers are not matching up to the contemporary ideal, children in this study suggest otherwise. In spite of the evidence, however, it must be said that children's idealised constructions must be approached with caution. This emergent model of new, positive and engaged fatherhood, albeit an impressive one, must be carefully evaluated against a backdrop of repressive practices and worn-out stereotypes that perpetuate negative fathering roles (Lindegger, 2006). "It is important to seek a balance between rediscovering the importance of fathering, and unhelpfully idealizing the father role, especially in certain rigid and stereotyped ways" (Lindegger, 2006, p 128).

7.6 Social fatherhood

The fathers or father figures referred to by the children participating in the study ranged from biological fathers to non-biological fathers including grandfathers, uncles, brothers and stepfathers. Although several biological fathers did not reside with their children, most children in the sample acknowledged an adult male as a father. Clearly these results indicate that as the ecology of the family continues to change, fatherhood needs to be viewed in a far more fluid way. Conceptualisations need to be broadened with a definition of fatherhood that is inclusive of all social truths (Dubeau, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). Over time a father may live with his children, then fulfill a stepfather role to other children, and still have more children of his own. Some children are still resident with their natural fathers, but many more men (social fathers and grandfathers) step in to fill the gap when this is not the case (Cabrera et al., 2000).

Where biological fathers are absent, whether deceased or absent, other male adults in the community may assume the role of 'social father' and role model (Posel & Devey, 2006).

7.7 Recommendations

Through the process of capturing and analyzing children's 'voices' and their constructions of fatherhood, it became evident that a number of valuable areas of research investigation have been neglected. The following section lists areas of fatherhood research which may need further investigation:

- i) Further exploration and assessment of children's perspectives and constructions of fathering and father's significance in their lives. Specifically, such research should investigate the validity of children's constructions as well as explore gender and socio-economic differences in greater detail. Such research has the potential to advance our understanding of fatherhood and make sense of the complexity, diversity and challenges of fathering and family life in the South African context (Eggebeen, 2002).
- ii) Key factors that threaten to undermine the fabric of family life and negatively affect men's ability to fulfill their responsibilities as fathers need to be identified and addressed. Such data can contribute significantly to the development and implementation of strategies to support men in their attempts to meet the challenges of fatherhood, as well as their inclusion in programmes that primarily include women and children (Cabrera et al., 2000).

- iii) Current national databases are limited in the extent to which they reveal the numbers of fathers in South Africa and estimates may only be reached by making rudimentary inferences from other information. Clearly, in future, national surveys must be inclusive of fathers so as to monitor and measure their presence and involvement in the home (Morrell et al., 2003).
- iv) More research is needed to explore the nature and implications of increasing rates of paternal absence, as well as the changing nature of fatherhood in South Africa across socio-economic strata (Posel & Devey, 2006).
- v) Research regarding legislative practice in family courtrooms, and subsequent implications for children is needed. The context of fathering in South Africa is being reassessed with the growth of the contemporary men's movement and changes in legislation acknowledging the rights of fathers. In spite of this, however, mothers are still most often regarded as the best caregivers and the tender age principle (children under the age of ten are placed with their mother) is consistently upheld in courts (S. van Minnen, personal communication, 5 October 2005).
- vi) The degree to which involved fathering impacts on men's personal development, health and psychological well-being needs to be further explored (Palkovitz, 2004). It is widely accepted that positive father involvement has direct and indirect affects on children and that 'children are good for fathers'. In the South African context, however, little is known of the degree to which positive father involvement in the lives of their children affects men's personal development.

This study has attempted to identify key components of children's constructions of fathers, and explore the dimensions of these constructions. Popular stereotypes of men as violent, disinterested and unsupportive (albeit true in many cases) perpetuate barriers and hinder the inclusion of men in programmes promoting children's development and family life. It is hoped that these findings, despite their limitations, will not only act as a catalyst for further scholarship on fatherhood in South Africa, but provide the impetus for practitioners, researchers and funding agencies to be more inclusive of fathers in programmes designed for mothers and children.

Future challenges include the promotion and restoration of a sense of fatherhood in the aftermath of *Apartheid*, migrancy and subsequent high levels of unemployment. The HIV/AIDS pandemic also poses a number of devastating challenges, including infection of parents in the prime of their life who will become ill and die young, with implications for the care of children as well as men's involvement (or lack) in childcare. Within this context there is a need to draw on existing resources, such as fathers, to meet the needs of children (Desmond & Desmond, 2006). With these challenges in mind, the context of fathering in South Africa is continually being reassessed. Positive developments such as the contemporary men's movement in South Africa, the *Fatherhood Project*, increased appreciation of the rights of fathers and changes in legislation such as the Natural Fathers Act of 1997 cumulatively act to accentuate how important fathers are in the lives of their children.

REFERENCES

- Abramovitch, H. (1997). Images of the "Father" in psychology and religion. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 19-32). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Barbarin, O. & Richter, L. (2001). *Mandela's children: Child development in post-Apartheid South Africa*. New York: Routledge.
- Behr, M. (April 2004). The changing face of father. *Fairlady*, 210-212.
- Belton, T. (2000). Reading beneath the lines of children's stories. *Educational Research*, 42 (3), 251-261.
- Biller, H.B. & Kimpton, J.L. (1997). The father and the school-aged child. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 143-161). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Bly, R. (1991). *Iron John*. Great Britain: Element Books
- Bonthuys, E. (1997). Of biological bonds, new fathers and the best interests of children. *South African Journal of Human Rights*, 13, 623.
- Burman, S. (1986). The contexts of childhood in South Africa: An introduction. In S. Burman & P. Reynolds (Eds.), *Growing up in a divided society*. (pp. 1-15). Johannesburg, SA: Ravan Press.
- Cabrera, N.J., Tamis-LeMonda, C.S., Bradley, R.H., Hofferth, S., & Lamb, M.E. (2000). Fatherhood in the twenty-first century. *Child Development*, 71 (1), 127-136.
- Callister, P. (1999). Iron John or Ironing John: The changing lives of New Zealand fathers. In S. Birks & P. Callister (Eds.), *Perspectives on fathering* (pp. 23-40). NZ: Palmerston North: Centre for Public Policy Evaluation.
- Chrisp, J. (1999). Fatherless sons - a review of the voices. In S. Birks & P. Callister (Eds.), *Perspectives on Fathering II* (pp. 89-104). NZ: Palmerston North: Centre for Public Policy Evaluation.
- Coltrane, S. & Parke, R.D. (1998). *Reinventing fatherhood: Toward an historical understanding of continuity and change in men's family lives*. Philadelphia: National Center on Fathers and Families.

- Davis, J.M. (1998). Understanding the meanings of children: a reflexive process. *Children and Society, 12*, 325-335.
- Demos, J. (1982). The changing faces of fatherhood: A new exploration of American family history. In S.H. Cath, A.R. Gurwitt, & J.M. Ross (Eds.), *Father and child: Developmental and clinical perspectives* (pp. 425-445). Boston: Little, Brown.)
- Desmond, C. & Desmond, C. (2006). HIV/AIDS and the crisis of care for children. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa*, (pp. 226-236). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Dubeau, D. (2002). Portraits of fathers. *Contemporary Family Trends*. The Vanier Institute of the Family.
- Engelbeen, D.J. (2002). Sociological perspectives on fatherhood: What do we know about fathers from social surveys? In Tamis-LeMonda, C.S & Cabrera, N. (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*, (pp. 63-90). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Engle, P., Beardshaw, T. & Loftin, C.R. (2006). The child's right to shared parenting. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 293-305). Cape Town: HSRC Press
- Engle, P.L. & Breaux, C. (1998). *Father's involvement with children: Perspectives from developing countries*. (Report No. X11, no. 1). University of Michigan: Society for Research in Child Development.
- Fagan, J. & Palm, G. (2004). *Fathers and early childhood programs*. New York: Thomson, Delmar Learning.
- Gadsden, V.L., Fagan, J., Ray, A. & Davis, J.E. (2004). Fathering indicators for practice and evaluation: The fathering indicators framework. In R.D. Day & M.E. Lamb (Eds.), *Conceptualising and measuring father involvement*, (pp. 385-411). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Graue, M.E. & Walsh, D.J. (1998). *Studying children in context: theories, methods and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: SAGE Publications
- Greig, A. & Taylor, J. (1999). *Doing research with children*. London: SAGE Publications
- Grover, S. (2004). Why won't they listen to us? On giving power and voice to children participating in social research. *Childhood, 11* (1), 81-93

- Hallden, G. (1994). The family - a refuge from demands or an arena for the exercise of power and control - children's fictions on their future families. In B. Mayall (Ed.), *Children's childhoods observed and experienced* (pp. 63-78). London: The Falmer Press.
- Halle, T. (2004). The meaning of father involvement for children. *Child Trends Research Brief*. Retrieved July 30, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.childtrends.org>.
- Henwood, K. & Proctor, J. (2003). The 'good father': reading men's accounts of parental involvement during the transition to first-time fatherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42, 337-356.
- Hernandez, D.J. & Brandon, P.D. (2002). Who are the fathers of today? In Tamis-LeMonda, C.S & Cabrera, N. (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*, (pp. 33-62). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hickman, D. (2003). The role of fathers in the care and protection of children. *National Child Protection Clearinghouse Newsletter*, 11, 14-16.
- Howard, S.D.; Curtin, P. & Hardy, F. (2003). Fathers: exploring the voices of children and young people. In R. Sullivan (Ed), *Focus on Fathering* (pp. 35 -54). Melbourne: ACER Press.
- Hunter, M. (2006). Fathers without *amandla*: Zulu-speaking men and fatherhood. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 99-107). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- James, A., Jenks, C. & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorising Childhood*. Cornwall: TJ International.
- Jones, A. (2004). Involving children and young people as researchers. In S. Fraser, V.Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellett & C. Robinson (Eds), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 113-190). London: Sage
- Kellett, M. & Ding, S. (2004). Middle childhood. In S. Fraser, V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellett & C. Robinson (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 161-174). London: SAGE Publications.
- Lamb, M.E. (1975). Fathers, forgotten contributors to child development. *Human Development*, 18, 245-266

- Lamb, M.E. (1997). Fathers and child development: An introductory overview. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (pp. 1-18). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lesejane, D. (2006). Fatherhood from an African cultural perspective. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 173-182). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Lindegger, G. (2006). The father in the mind. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa*, (pp. 121-131). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Mboya, M. & Nesengani, R. (1999). Migrant labour in South Africa: A comparative analysis of the academic achievement of father-present and father-absent adolescents. *Adolescence*, 34, 763-767.
- Mkhize, N. (2006). African traditions and the social, economic and moral dimensions of fatherhood. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 183-198). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Morrell, R. (2001). The times of change: Men and masculinity in South Africa. In R. Morrell (Ed.), *Changing men in Southern Africa*, (pp. 3-37). Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Morrell, R. (2004, April). 'I didn't know my father.' *Reflections on the masculine identities of secondary schoolboys in Durban secondary schools*. Paper presented to the South African Historical Association Conference, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- Morrell, R. (2006). Fathers, fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 13-25). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Morrell, R., Posel, D. & Devey R. (2003). *Counting fathers in South Africa: issues of definition, methodology and policy*. *Social Dynamics*, 29 (2), 73-94.
- NEDLAC: National economic development and labour council report. (1998). *Report on the state of social and economic matters in South Africa*. Auckland Park, South Africa: NEDLAC.
- Nsamenang, A.B. (2000). *Fathers, families and child well-being in Cameroon: A review of the literature*. National Center on Fathers and Families. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1990). *Convention on the rights of the child*. Geneva:Switzerland. Retrieved August 10, 2005 from <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>
- Palkovitz, R. (2002). Involved fathering and child development: Advancing our understanding of good fathering. In Tamis-LeMonda, C.S & Cabrera, N. (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*, (pp. 63-90). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Palkovitz, R. (2004). *Involved fathering and men's adult development: Provisional balances*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Parke, R.D. (1981). *Fathering*. Glasgow: Fontana
- Perry, H. & Arends, F. (2003). *Public schooling* (HRD Review). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council. Retrieved February 2, 2006 from <http://hrdwarehouse.hsrc.ac.za/hrd>
- Pleck, E.H. & Pleck, J. H. (1997). Fatherhood ideals in the United States: Historical dimensions. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.). *The role of the father in child development* (pp. 33-48). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Posel, D. & Devey, R. (2006). The demographics of fathers in South Africa. An analysis of survey data, 1993-2002. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 38-52). Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Prout, A. (2001). Representing children: reflections on the children 5 - 16 programme. *Children and Society*, 15, 193-201.
- Pruett, K. D. (1997). How men and children affect each other's development. *Zero to Three*, 18 (1). Retrieved December 4, 2003 from <http://www.zerotothree.org/fathers.html>
- Pruett, K.D. (2001). *Fatherneed: why father care is as essential as mother care for your child*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Richter, L.M. (2003). *Development and evaluation of a media intervention to promote responsive fatherhood*. (Draft). Durban: Child, Youth and Family Development, Human Sciences Research Council.

- Richter, L., Dawes, A., & Higson-Smith, C. (2004). The sexual abuse of young children in southern Africa. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council Press
- Richter, L., Pather, R., Manegold, J., & Mason, A. (2004). Fatherhood: Promoting men's care and protection of children. *Child & Youth Care*, 22 (3), 4-6
- Rohner, R.P. (1998). Father love and child development: history and current evidence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 7 (5), 157-161
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research*. London: Sage
- Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction* (2nd ed). London: Sage
- Statistics South Africa (2004). *General Household Survey*. Retrieved September 4, 2005, from <http://www.statssa.gov.za>
- Sullivan, R. (2000, July). 'Fathering and children - the contemporary context'. Paper presented at the Focus on Fathering Symposium at the 7th AIFS Conference, Sydney.
- Tamis-LeMonda, C.S. & Cabrera, N. (1999). Perspectives on father involvement: research and policy. *Society for Research in Child Development*, XIII, 1-32.
- Tamis-Lemonda, C.S. & Cabrera, N. (2002). Cross-disciplinary challenges to the study of father involvement. In Tamis-LeMonda, C.S. & Cabrera, N. (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*, (pp. 63-90). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Tanfer, K. & Mott, F. (1997). *The meaning of fatherhood for men*. (Rep. No. NICHD Workshop). Urban Institute: Washington, D.C.
- Wilson, F. (2006). On being a father and poor in southern Africa today. In L. Richter & R. Morrell (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 26-37). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THEMES GENERATED FROM CHILDREN'S ESSAYS

80 essays were read. An initial 'first' pilot reading of these essays generated a number of themes as follows -

A. First reading

1. Father as idol

Hero, special friend / man, great teacher, he is dear to us, I want to be like him when I am old.

2. Love

I love my father, he loves my mother, he is so sweet and kind, he loves his home, he hugs and kisses me, he is a good man, he lifts me up and asks what is wrong.

3. Provider

He gives money for food (this is a big one), money for transport and school fees and school uniforms. He buys me pretty clothes. He buys – TV, radio, kitchen unit, barbie doll. He is always buying food, and even 'special food'. He gives money to his parents and is very responsible.

4. Caregiver

He looks after the elderly, takes care of me when I am sick, he sweeps, cooks and cleans. My father washes clothes and dishes, he prepares lunch, he combs my hair and makes sure I am clean. He sings to me. He plays an important role in my family.

5. Support

Helps with homework, helps others (in different ways), when they are sick. He builds houses, checks my homework, helps with general problems.

6. Discipline

He punishes when I do wrong.

7. Health

Checks that I eat healthy food, takes me to the doctor, gives me fruit and breakfast.

8. Religion

Takes us to church, prays with us every night, prays for my mother in times of sickness, teaches me to pray and communicate with God. Children indicated time spent saying night-time prayers and having stories read to them.

9. Gives external support

Helps other people, builds homes, prays for other children and is a great help to the community.

10. Works

My dad works very hard. He farms, works in the garden, fixes things around the house, fixes cars and cleans the house.

11. Protector

From abuse, from rapists and dangers that are outside at night.

12. Friendship

We read the paper together, talk together (this came up often), he plays games with me, sings to me, we watch soccer together, talk and play and laugh, he listens carefully, tells stories, he is a good father and a friend, he tells jokes.

13. Teacher

He teaches us to work hard, how to look after ourselves, not to fight, not to steal, how to be faithful, how to pray, be respectful, not to smoke, how to cook and 'how to be a strong man'.

14. Future goals

Father wants us to achieve, to become a teacher, to become a singer.

15. Physical love

He hugs, kisses, plays, brushes/combs my hair with his hands.

16. Love of mother is important

He drives my mother around, takes her to church, holds her, kisses her, makes her smile, plants flowers, gives her money.

17. Other qualities

Is kind, does not fight, happy, smiles, is responsible, respectful, doesn't lose his temper, is brave, clever, tender and special.

Who are these fathers?

They are biological, grandfathers, uncles, boyfriends, stepfathers.

B. Second reading

Children highlighted the following qualities as important regarding their fathers –

- prays
- feeds
- loves
- educates
- gives money
- provides things for school
- is a caregiver
- loves mother
- friend (talks, listens)
- protector (makes us safe, girls from sexual abuse)
- teacher
- encourager

- hero
- discipliner
- physical love
- storyteller and book reader
- strong

Key themes were identified as (in no particular order)-

1. Father as hero / role model / idol
 - father is responsible, respectful.
 - he always tries to keep his promises.
 - he is a good man.
 - he is honest.
 - “He is my hero because he works very hard at his job and its really tough catching criminal, and writing documents”
 - father plays an important role in my life.
 - “He has been my teacher, my sports coach, my mentor and most of all, my closest friend”

2. Works hard and provides
 - he works hard for us
 - he pays for school fees and clothes
 - he gives me money for lunch at school.
 - provides treats as well.
 - keeps them warm when cold
 - clothed
 - fed with good food

3. Disciplines
 - He corrects us when we have made a mistake.
 - He is very strict about what I should and should not do.
 - Father is very strict but he will never hit us or anything like that he'll only should at us.

4. Loves and is loved
 - I love my father very much.
 - “My father is the best that I ever had in my life. I cherish, care lives him”
 - my father is so special.
 - he is always kind and loving and considerate.
 - “I love my father because he is the best father in the world I ever had”
 - I am so close to him.
 - he hugs, kisses, plays, brushes/combs my hair with his hands

5. Spends time
 - to be a friend, talks, listens, plays, prays, teaches, learn, does homework
 - we chat, we dance we sing
 - he takes us to church, reads and prays with us
 - watch soccer together
 - takes time to listen and talk, to answer questions and solve problems together
 - many references about dad being humorous and telling jokes, time spent laughing together is meaningful.
 - limited time spent together is regarded as very precious
 - he often shares stories

6. Has imperfections

Most often qualified with a 'but I still love him so much'.

 - He can be very nasty if you are naughty.
 - He is fat and bald but
 - He smokes, he drinks, he watches too much TV. He is not the strongest but ...
 - "My dad is not the strongest, most perfect human being in the world, but he is my dad and I really love him a lot"

7. Protector
 - from harm
 - from sexual abuse
 - from dangers in the night

8. Teacher (transfers knowledge)
 - he taught me how to repair some of the small appliances.
 - he taught me how to respect older people
 - he always encourages me and my sister to believe in ourselves

9. Caregiver and supporter

Father does supportive things, these are valued – homework, brushing hair, bathing, making breakfast, cooking.

 - he is a good cooker.
 - he checks my school homework.
 - he makes me bath and brush my teeth.
 - helps out in the community

10. Mother love
 - he loves my mom
 - hugs her, holds her, kisses her, makes her smile
 - gives her money, buys her things
 - he drives my mother around, takes her to church,
 - plants flowers

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Learner,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study about fathers. There are 8 questions for you to answer, please answer the questions as honestly as possible and as fully as possible. Write as much as you can, we are very interested in what you think. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. If you do not understand a question you can ask your teacher to explain it.

Please fill in the information on this front sheet and then you can start answering the questions. Please write clearly so that we can read your answers. After you have finished please fold your answer sheet and put it in the envelope. This way no one else will know what you have written.

Thank you for your help. What you write will teach us - adults, researchers, mothers and fathers - something about how young people see fathers.

.....

PLEASE FILL IN:

Are you a boy or a girl?

How old are you?

Does your father live with you (yes or no)?

You may have more than one father, just tick the one you are going to write about here. Is he your (tick the one that is right for you) -

- Father

- Stepfather

- Grandfather

- Uncle

- Brother

- Mother's boyfriend

- Other (who else is like a dad to you, please say)

Learners were given a full page to answer each of the following questions. Hence the final length of the questionnaire was nine pages.

1. Describe your father -

.....
.....

2. Describe the things that your father does, and the things that you would like him to do.

.....
.....

3. What does your father do (or what doesn't he do) that makes you happy?

.....
.....

4. What does your father do (or what doesn't he do) that makes you unhappy?

.....
.....

5. What does your father do (or what doesn't he do) that makes your mother happy?

.....
.....

6. What does your father do (or what doesn't he do) that makes your mother unhappy?

.....
.....

7. In what way does your father help your mother -
- in the house and,
- to look after you and any other children in your home?

.....
.....

8. Describe the perfect father, or -

Boys - describe the father you would like to be one day

Girls - describe the father you would like to have for your children one day

.....
.....

APPENDIX C
CODING SCHEDULE FOR QUESTIONNAIRES
CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF FATHERS

Broad overview of the coding schedule as follows (details in the table)-

Tree Nodes

Contemporary fatherhood

- Love and nurturance
- Being there
- Caregiving
- Moral guide / role model (have included teacher here)
- Role sharing
- Emotion work

Traditional fatherhood

- Provider
- Protector
- Disciplinarian

Father imperfections

- Physically abusive
- Emotionally abusive
- Verbally abusive
- Disappoints
- 'Morally wrong'

Idealisations -

- Ideal / perfect fathers
- Traditional
- Metaphors

Free Node

Managing the contradictions

This table includes descriptions of each node

| NODES | | DESCRIPTION |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| TREE NODES (constructs) | Sub-constructs | |
| 1. Contemporary fatherhood | | |
| | Love and nurturance | This construct, when expanded includes understanding, caring, being a friend, strong love, hugs and kisses, listening (which expresses love), sensitivity. In short, children see fathers expressing love and nurturance through active, engaged caring, listening, affection, encouragement and understanding. |
| | Being there / availability | About father availability and presence / being there for his child, whether this is in terms of physical contact or not. Whereby children experience fathers expressing concern, investing time, being accessible, showing interest and giving emotional support. Father presence is at the heart of this node - availability to spend time, play, do sport, go on outings, talk together. |
| | Caregiving | Children are cared for by their fathers in a number of ways - fathers care by fetching from school, doing homework, feeding them, looking after them (when mother at work / or out). Caregiving also embedded in fathers caring for other people as well, caring for mother, cares for community. |
| | Moral guide / role model / teacher | Fathers model heroic behaviours, act as role models, live by example. Active engagement with children to develop social competence. Children observe and wish to emulate behaviours such as not drinking or smoking, going to church, being a kind and generous person. Teachers and custodians of the past, transferring life knowledge and skills. |
| | Role sharing | Supportive and cooperative role sharing with the mother / other caregiver of the child. Includes a significant aspect of functionality such as cooking, gardening, washing, cleaning the house, cleaning windows, preparing lunch, bathing children and sweeping etc |
| | Emotion work with mother of the child. | Existence of a healthy relationship with the mother of the child. Supports her financially and emotionally, loves her, hugs and kisses her, very supportive. Actively supporting and contributing to his partner's well-being. |
| | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Traditional fatherhood | | |
| | Provider | Economic and material provision, offering financial support. Includes provision of, school clothes, school fees buying things, toys, food, money for transport etc. |
| | Protector | Father protects children from harm and danger, from abuse, from rapists, from dangers in the night, from all harm. |
| | Disciplinarian | Father punishes children, monitors child behaviour, exerts boundaries, and is authoritarian in approach. |
| 3. Father imperfections | | |
| | Physically abusive | Hits, beats, smacks, hits mother, hits other, hits child. |
| | Emotional abusive | Is cruel, ignores the child, and is uninterested, unavailable, absent, cold, indifferent, hostile. |
| | Verbally abusive | Shouts, swears, fights, and says rude words, fights with mom. |
| | Disappoints | Lets the child down, always lies, isn't around, and embarrasses the child. Doesn't spend time with the child, lazy, comes home late, works a lot, and works late. Says he is going to do one thing and then breaks his promises. |
| | Morally wrong | Drinks, smokes, is drunk, gambles, and sleeps around. |
| 4. Idealised Fatherhood | | |
| | Ideal | Children's creation of the archetypical father, representative of the father they already have, would like to have, or would like to be one day. Fathers who are perfect, heroic, superhuman, caring, kind, loving; put their family first, spends time with children; who goes to church, does not drink or smoke and who looks after them. |
| | Traditional | Fathers as providers of material and financial support, as protectors and disciplinarians. |
| | Metaphoric | Symbolic representations of fatherhood. |
| FREE NODE | | |
| | Managing the contradictions | Children's ability to manage the contradictions between idealised and imperfect fatherhood. This speaks to their capacity to forgive; where they simultaneously contrast the inadequacies of their fathers with their significance in their lives. "I love him, but" |